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Social inclusion and the multidimensional poverty measures: People's perception and way forward

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Abstract

It cannot be denied that a lot has been done through many Government Schemes that aimed to reduce poverty either through employment creation or income generation. However, the benefits of the most of these schemes have accrued not only to the population Below Poverty Line (BPL) but to the Above Poverty Line (APL) as well. And the reasons for this have been numerous such as corruption, political favours and so on. Thus the magnitude of reduction of poverty through these Schemes has not been large. Since, the poverty measurement measures have so far been uni-dimensional. Therefore, the main aim was to provide the goods of basic necessities which at present will not suffice, if social inclusion is kept in mind. Poverty manifested itself in different forms in different time periods and it varied across different regions of the world. The methods and measure to define poor too varied across time and space. And now, it is widely agreed both in academia as well as in practice that poverty is multidimensional. Therefore, the main aim of the present paper therefore, shall be to highlight how a national multidimensional poverty index if formed can make a way forward for social inclusion and resource provision. Besides, the focus has been also been to bring out the perception of people about the poverty and ways of its removal.

Keywords: Poverty, multidimensional poverty, social inclusion, income

Introduction

Albeit, a well known trade-off between the 'Poverty and development' has been in existence since time immemorial. But the history of concrete efforts to reduce it is not long known. In the colonial period, when many of the countries were not so hugely populated and hence needed population as a means to exploit the resources. Therefore, to these colonials, the poor were 'asset' (in the form of cheap labour) rather than 'liabilities'. This was the case with the countries under colonial rule and now the 'developing countries'. And hence reduction of poverty did not get a due recognition. It is only after the end of the colonial rule that the countries started thinking about their development and manifested 'reduction of poverty' as a part of their growth and development.

In India, it happened only after the inception of planning Commission in 1950, that it manifested poverty reduction as a main plank of its Five year plans (i.e. in the Fifth Five Years plan as 'Garibi Hatao'). This led to the development of various Government schemes with the aim, primarily either to reduce poverty through employment generation programmes or to provide income generation avenues to meet the basic needs. The targeted beneficiaries of these schemes were of course 'the poor', but it also cannot be denied that most of them for larger times remained unaware to tap the benefits owing to their illiteracy and less time from the work and hence less access to the offices/ authorities providing benefits. And this reason of unawareness still is not an exception. But the benefits of these schemes did not only accrue to the below poverty line (BPL) but to the above poverty line as well (APL). This led, either to the up gradation of the existing schemes under the consecutive governments or the development of new schemes encompassing more beneficiaries.

These social security schemes have without doubt uplifted the poor and reduced poverty still the millions of people fail to have adequate access to the resources to be out of poverty. As per Asian Development Bank's report, the estimates from 2011 show that India still has 21.9% of its population living below the national poverty line. And the reason for the same is failure to restrict the benefits to the targeted beneficiaries. Owing to their less awareness about the procedure to avail benefits and the typical and time consuming procedures, the

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the targeted population fails to tap the benefits. The other reasons associated are the corruption, less access to the authorities providing benefits, less time from daily labour works that provide them subsistence, prior self-investments to seek the benefits, discrimination due to political rivalries and on and on.

On the other fronts, the poverty measurement being uni-dimensional too fails to suffice the cause. Since, the per-capita income of the people (rich and poor) has increased, so have their demands and needs. And with the prevalence of imitation effect within the developing countries and the economies been open and free, the demand for basic necessities and resources too has changed. This has led the countries around the world to adopt multidimensional poverty measures to define people as 'poor, not-poor and relatively poor'. And this can be seen in the case of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) in association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publishing the estimates of people (Multidimensionally poor) of over one hundred (100) developing countries on certain set indicators.

In line with this, some countries such as; Mexico, Colombia, Bhutan and Philippines have switched to their National Multidimensional Poverty Index to classify their people as 'poor' and for the provision of the resources.

In this backdrop, when the concept of development has advanced to human development and sustainable development (encompassing the major goal of Zero hunger and No poverty) and to social inclusion, the fast growing countries like India need to think broader to not just reduce the poverty numerically but to increase the standard of their (people) living as well. This is possible only when the poverty measurement besides being Uni-dimensional is measured on multidimensional fronts. And it can better be implemented if the country adopts its official national multidimensional poverty index for poverty measurement and basic resources provision. This will not only lead to the poverty reduction but the social inclusion through bringing people on the homogeneous platform thereof.

Social inclusion literally means that none of the individuals in any society or community face any discrimination in access to the any opportunities/public provision of goods due to their identity. But as the World Bank defines it 'is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in a society-improving the ability, opportunity and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity'. The aspect of the social exclusion and hence social inclusion that has been talked about in this paper is not related to age, gender, religion or racial cause of exclusion but the one with the lack of access to the resources.

The social inclusion therefore, provides a horizontal platform to the society where they can tap the benefits as per their capabilities, and opportunities. Poverty and social exclusion are almost the two sides of the same coin and are complementary to each other. Hence, removal of one will lead to the removal of the other and vice-versa in number of ways. Therefore, in this paper attempt has been made to bring about the people-centric ways to reduce poverty and provide resources complementing the same.

Aim and Rationale

Since majority of the wealth is owned by a very few percentage of the population in the world i.e. the world's

richest 1 percent of people have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 Billion people have (Oxfam, 2020). And this problem is more prevalent in case of the developing countries. Thus, due to the problem of inequality in wealth and access to basic necessities such as; housing, health and education facilities; the efforts in the present study have been made to address what do the sampled households in the study area think about poverty and what are their perception about removal of the same. Besides this, an attempt has been made to highlight how a national multidimensional poverty index if formed, can make a way forward for social inclusion and resource provision.

Materials and Methods

This study has primarily relied on the primary data collected from the sampled area using a well-designed interview schedule. The sampled population has been the Poonch district of the Jammu and Kashmir which is located on the border of the Indo-Pak. The district Poonch is also considered as one of the 250 most backward districts of the country which has got the infrastructural development grants from the Ministry of Panchayat Raj, Government of India till 2016. The district is also considered as backward in terms of education, health and other infrastructural facilities due to the location of the district, topography and political favoritism etc. Out of the Six Blocks of the district, four Blocks Namely Poonch, Mandi, Bafliaz and Mendhar were selected due to their area and the population. In order to collect data 35 households formed the sampled from each of the mentioned blocks and the Systematic Random Sampling has been used for the same.

Results and Discussion

On the basis of the income-poverty line used as National Poverty Line, the ration cards have been issued to the sampled households in the study area. Therefore, the income status of the sampled households in the area has been assessed through the type of ration cards they possessed. It has been observed from the data in the table 1 that the percentage of the sampled households who were income poor has been the highest at 56.42 percent. This means more than half of the sampled households were observed to be under Uni-dimensional poverty. However, the sampled households who were not observed to be income-poor were 37.14 percent and 3.57 percent were the poorest of the poor i.e. AAY. It has also been observed that 2.8 percent of the sampled households were observed to be not having any type of ration card at all and hence they were unable to get the benefits meant for the ones with ration cards. Thus it follows from the observations that the identification methods of poverty and monitoring of the resources meant for the poor have to be priority.

Table 1: Existing status of people surveyed in terms of income-poverty line

APL	BPL	AAY	None
52(37.14)	79(56.42)	5(3.57)	4(2.8)

Source: Field Survey

Notes: Data in Brackets represent percentages

None= Not possessing ration card

Since, the studies related to the nature of poverty such as; Santos (2019) suggests people's perception of the poverty as the background for the formulation of the MPI. The data in

table 2 represent the perception of the sampled households about the poverty. It has been observed from the data that almost half of the sampled households i.e. 47.85 percent in the study area reported poverty to be result of not merely the monetary aspects such as income but also the non-monetary resources such as not having access to basic necessities, health, quality education, assets etc. Thus it can be inferred from the discussion is about the data in table 2 that the poverty is multidimensional and hence it needs the measures such as multidimensional poverty index for poverty measurement developed by the OPHI (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative). This measure has number of advantage over the Uni-dimensional measure of poverty in both the identification of poverty as well as highlighting the priority areas for the same.

Table 2: Perception of people about poverty

Uni-dimensional (Income terms)	Multidimensional (Every other aspect except income)	Total
73(52.14)	67(47.85)	140(100)

Source: Field Survey

The perception and contribution of the poor in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of 'Eradicating poverty in all its form, and everywhere' can be accomplished only when the perception of those who actually suffer are included. In this context the present study attempts to highlight the perception of the sampled households in the study area about the removal of poverty in table 3. It is clear

from the data in the table that the even the people's recommended measures are multidimensional. The sampled households in the study area have accorded priority to the non-monetary measures or alternates to income-measures for the removal of poverty.

It is clear from the data in table 3 that, 25 percent of the sampled households in the study area recommended 'Work during seasonal unemployment, Subsidized eatables, property to get food from, loan facilities, water facility, better health, awareness related to technology, monitoring of schemes, more people in the house to earn'. This id followed by the 22.17 percent of the sampled households recommended 'Employment and working in any businesses, Self-business, Pension schemes, free education, Road facilities, awareness to utilize resources, skills, schemes reach beneficiaries'. However, 19.28 percent of the sampled households recommended 'Employment and employment generation schemes' as the measures to remove the multidimensional aspects of poverty. Moreover, the other measures recommended by the sampled households in the study area have been comprehensively presented in table 3 along with their number and percentages. One of the unique findings that data portrayed is that 2.1 percent of the sampled households did not have any perception about the removal of poverty due to unawareness.

Thus, it can be inferred from the discussion that in order to bring people on the horizontal platforms i.e. uplifting their social status and standard of living, the poverty in the study area needs to be addressed multidimensionally.

Table 3: People's perception about removal of poverty

S. No	People's recommended ways	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Some labour works to do	3	2.1
2	Employment and employment generation schemes	27	19.28
3	Free Education and Skillful education	3	2.1
4	Schemes should reach the people they are meant for	4	2.85
5	Provide resources	2	1.42
6	Self-business	3	2.1
7	Awareness to avail and utilize Govt. schemes and funds	18	12.85
8	Working hard by yourself	3	2.1
9	Employment and working in any businesses, Self-business, Pension schemes, free education, Road facilities, awareness to utilize resources, skills, schemes reach beneficiaries	31	22.14
10	Free education and development, Income generating assets, road facilities, schemes should reach targeted	8	5.71
11	Work during seasonal unemployment, Subsidized eatables, property to get food from, loan facilities, water facility, better health, awareness related to technology, monitoring of schemes, more people in the house to earn	35	25
12	Indifferent	3	2.1

Conclusion

It follows from the discussions and results that more than half of the sampled households in the study area were observed to be under income-poverty and majority of them also reported the poverty to be multidimensional as well. This means that the deprivations they face is not only due to the lack of income but due to the deprivation on the non-monetary aspects as well. This deprives the poor people to be economically included in the social set up due to poverty, less education and health etc. In order to eradicate the multidimensional poverty in the study area, the multidimensional poverty index can be of great help. This is due to the reason that it complements the income poverty in capturing deprivations which are non-monetary as well and also through one of its advantages of being easier to be decomposed using different indicators, dimensions and

across different population groups and regions as well. Using and decomposing the MPI developed by OPHI and rectifying it for national level, the problem of inequality and social exclusion can be addressed. This would help in bring the social and economic equality and social inclusion of the sampled households in the study area.

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