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Impact of the Special Central Assistance Scheme on Scheduled Caste Beneficiaries – A Field Study of Two South Indian States

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ABSTRACT

The Constitution of India is very articulate about improving the lot of the weaker sections of society, especially the Scheduled Castes. The Government of India has been equally vocal about proving equitable justice to all and improve the quality of life of the hitherto deprived sections of society. The SCSP is one initiative in this direction. Under this Plan, the Centre is providing financial support to the State Governments for improving the living conditions of the SCs. This paper will seek to examine the impact of special central assistance on scheduled caste beneficiaries in one district each of Andhra Pradesh (East Godavari) and Telangana (Nizamabad) States. The intention is to gauge the satisfaction level of the beneficiaries and see whether any mid-course correction is necessary.

KEYWORDS SCSP, SC, SCA, quality of life, socio-economic development

Introduction

India is a welfare State, committed to the welfare and development of its people, in general, and of the vulnerable sections of society, in particular. The Preamble, Directive Principles of State Policy, Fundamental Rights and specific sections, namely, Article 38, 39 and 46 of the Constitution of India stand testimony to its commitment towards citizens. As a matter of strategy, the Government of India has adopted planned development for minimizing inequality in income, status and opportunities for its people. This strategy is directed to secure equitable justice and utilization of economic resources to subserve the common good.

Development is essentially a process of change initiated with an objective of improving the quality of life of the people. For certain sections of society, who are considered as weaker sections, the process of change seeks to bring them into the mainstream of the socio-economic system. Left to itself, the process of change, even if initiated by an external stimulus, would not be sustainable for these sections. Inclusive growth demands that all social groups have equal access to the services provided by the State and equal opportunity for upward economic and social mobility. It is also necessary to ensure that there is no discrimination against any section of our society. In India, certain social groups such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) have historically been disadvantaged and vulnerable.

Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan

Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) is a central scheme under which 100% grant is given to the States/UTs as an additive to their Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP). The main objective is to give a thrust to family-oriented schemes of economic development of SCs below the poverty line, by providing resources for filling the critical gaps and for providing the missing vital inputs so that the schemes can be more meaningful. Since the schemes/programmes for SCs may be depending upon the local occupational pattern and the economic activities available, the Sates/UTs have been given full flexibility for utilizing SCA. The only condition is that that the funds provided should be utilised in conjunction with SCP and other resources available from other sources like various Corporations, financial institution, etc. State Governments have been given flexibility in choice of schemes to be implemented out of Special Central Assistance, within the overall frame work of the scheme. The Special Central Assistance as an additive is provided to Scheduled Castes Sub- Plan (SCSP) of the States/UTs. This paper assesses the impact of the scheme in the increase of income and employment generation among the intended beneficiaries among the SCs.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. While the secondary data was collected from various institutional sources at the Centre, State, and District level for Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP) for Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCSP). The schedules-cum-questionnaires were developed for collection of primary data from the Scheduled Caste beneficiaries and also from the non-beneficiaries as control sample.

With a view to assess the impact of the schemes sanctioned under the Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan on the Scheduled Caste beneficiaries in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, empirical studies were conducted in one district (Nizamabad district of Telangana and East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh) each of the two States during March and April 2012. While selecting the districts, it was ensured that one district has received the highest Special Central Assistance allocation and the other one has received the lowest Special Central Assistance allocation. In each selected district, three villages from three Mandal of each one were identified for collection of primary data from at least 10 Scheduled Caste beneficiaries of schemes financed under the Special Central Assistance. Thus, our samples in the two districts included 60 beneficiaries. Data regarding the highest and lowest allocations of the Special Central Assistance, and list of beneficiaries were furnished by the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes Co-operative Finance Corporation.

The then Andhra Pradesh state had released Rs.39972.29 lakhs towards Special Central Assistance to SCSP during 2002-03 to 2009-10 and placed it at the disposal of A.P. Scheduled Castes Cooperative Finance Corporation Ltd. The districts with highest and lowest allocations are East Godavari (Rs. 2560.14 lakhs) and Hyderabad (Rs.992.59 lakhs) respectively. As Hyderabad district is predominantly a metropolitan city, the second lowest district with Rs.1302.90 lakhs. District wise data are given below:

Table 1: Andhra Pradesh: District wise SCA Allocation to SCSP (Rs. In lakhs)

Sl. No.	Districts	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	Total
1	Srikakulam	83.33	150.39	98.20	93.33	143.26	90.7	308.64	199.32	1166.54

2	Vizianagaram	109.49	201.65	135.06	142.87	163.80	103.29	296.68	308.07	1460.91
3	Visakhapatnam	256.35	225.61	233.46	163.99	192.40	89.32	276.67	241.39	1679.19
4	East Godavari	282.17	455.37	566.45	195.94	226.59	174.02	387.39	272.21	2560.14
5	West Godavari	216.66	325.99	237.64	284.54	180.35	116.16	393.85	205.20	1960.39
6	Krishna	272.59	368.71	366.39	348.96	150.99	146.93	237.28	274.02	2165.87
7	Guntur	227.54	169.19	490.56	268.81	161.69	100.87	376.13	199.25	1994.04
8	Prakasam	240.63	276.24	184.85	215.04	193.04	138.67	358.35	346.70	1953.52
9	Nellore	173.10	276.50	269.02	417.19	243.30	138.79	400.54	292.83	2211.27
10	Kurnool	386.95	342.57	261.18	295.46	258.05	120.86	279.44	217.86	2162.37
11	Kadapa	295.96	199.97	153.31	164.25	268.84	173.65	360.66	124.14	1740.78
12	Anantapur	217.72	308.89	244.19	288.61	169.03	68.77	165.92	100.99	1563.92
13	Chittoor	267.72	303.84	195.04	449.90	217.05	140.30	232.31	293.01	2099.17
14	Adilabad	192.55	129.40	278.32	200.36	119.15	41.21	282.86	219.28	1463.13
15	Nizamabad	36.12	191.66	92.94	217.57	129.34	98.88	336.83	199.56	1302.9
16	Karimnagar	72.23	294.39	329.54	308.18	178.50	94.69	373.45	204.17	1855.15
17	Nalgonda	132.43	246.49	247.88	201.19	176.95	95.49	514.72	306.71	1921.86
18	Mahaboobnagar	203.99	208.30	149	356.37	174.09	82.78	300.33	240.14	1715
19	Khammam	133.41	154.12	233.72	236.22	103.82	69.08	168.51	138.75	1237.63
20	Warangal	265.09	233.75	159.62	166.12	327.24	95.02	230.66	232.60	1710.1
21	Medak	193.48	258.10	245.93	64.92	108.72	102.30	351.72	229.13	1554.3
22	Ranga Reddy	43.41	158.44	249.26	268.52	251.85	55.80	259.72	215.07	1502.07
23	Hyderabad	131.17	118.57	156.28	146.90	136.85	69.26	0.00	233.56	992.59
Total		4433.88	5598.13	5577.90	5495.22	4274.34	2406.21	6892.65	5293.96	39972.29

Source: Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes Cooperative Finance Corporation, Ltd

The then Government of Andhra Pradesh had placed SCA to SCSP funds at the disposal of the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes Cooperative Finance Corporation Ltd., Hyderabad which, in turn, further allotted it to 23 District level Societies under its control. SCA allocation to two districts during 2002-03 to 2009-10 was as under:

Table 2: SCA allocation to two districts during 2002-03 to 2009-10
(Rs. in lakhs)

Year	East Godavari district	Nizamabad district
2002-03	282.17	36.12
2003-04	455.37	191.66
2004-05	566.45	92.94
2005-06	195.94	217.57
2006-07	226.59	129.34
2007-08	174.02	98.88
2008-09	387.39	336.83
2009-10	272.21	199.56
Total	2560.14	1302.90

Source: Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes Cooperative Finance Corporation, Ltd

Socio-Economic Profile of Scheduled Castes Beneficiary Respondents

Out of 60 respondents selected for the study in the two districts i.e. East Godavari (in Andhra Pradesh) and Nizamabad (in Telangana), the Malas were 60%; Madigas, 31.7%, Mehtars, 6.7% and the Rellis, 1.7%. There were 12 Respondents belonging to vulnerable groups, of whom Jogins were 9 and Scavengers, 3. Gender-wise distribution of respondents indicated that the percentage of males was 60% and that of females 40%. Age-wise distribution indicated that 23.3% of them were in the age group of 20-29 years; 33.1%, between 30-39 years; 11.7%, 40-49 years, 16.7%, 50-59 years and15%, 60 years and above only 8% of the respondents were disabled informants.

Educational Level of Beneficiaries
During personal interactions with the respondents, it emerged that 60% of the informants were illiterates; 8.3%, educated up to primary level; 18.3%, up to middle level; 8.3%, up to secondary level; 1.7%, up to graduate level and only 3.3% beneficiaries were diploma holders.

Annual Income
Proportion of beneficiaries in the annual income group upto Rs. 20,000 was 58.3%, those in the range of Rs. 20,000 to 40,000, 31.7% and 10% of the beneficiaries earned an annual income of Rs. 40,000 and above.

Impact of the Scheme
Out of 60 beneficiaries 68.3% have become the members of the Self Help Groups. Similarly, out of 60 beneficiaries, nearly half of them have preferred schemes under the industry and small business sector, followed by 30% related to agriculture and 23% pertaining to animal husbandry. The details are given below:

Table 3: Schemes accepted by the Beneficiaries

District	Mandal	Village	Agriculture	Animal husbandry	ISB	Total respondents
East Godavari	Pedapudi	G.Mamidada	-	6	4	10
	Karapa	Aratlakatta	-	7	3	10
	Kakinada (Rural)	Recharla peta	-	1	9	10
Nizamabad	Nandipet	Badguna	10	-	-	10
	Bodhan	Chekarnagar	8	-	2	10
	Nizamabad (Urban)	Gandhi Chowk	-	-	10	10
Total			18 (30%)	14 (23.3%)	28 (46.7%)	60 (100%)

Note: ISB stands for small enterprises

An important feature emerging out of this Table is that Scheduled Caste persons of East Godavari district are no more interested in pursuing agriculture as a vocation. Instead, they have preference for animal husbandry and ISB sectors. Animal husbandry scheme is not very popular in Nizamabad district.

The information pertaining to the year in which the scheme was taken up by the beneficiaries is given in the Table below:

Table 4: Year in which schemes were grounded among Beneficiaries

District	Mandal	Village	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	Total respondents
East Godavari	Pedapudi	G.Mamidada	-	-	-	-	6	-	1	3	10
	Karapa	Aratlakatta	-	-	-	-	1	-	9	-	10
	Kakinada (Rural)	Recharla peta	-	-	-	-	-	1	9	-	10
Nizamabad	Nandipet	Badguna	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	1	10
	Bodhan	Chekarnagar	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9	10
	Nizamabad (Urban)	Gandhi Chowk	4	-	1	3	2	-	-	-	10
Total			4 (6.7%)	9 (15%)	1 (1.7%)	3 (5%)	9 (15%)	1 (1.7%)	20 (33.3%)	13 (21%)	60 (100%)

It can be seen that out of 60 persons, 33 persons, i.e., more than half of them received financial assistance during 2008-09 and 2009-10, while 17 persons got the assistance during the period 2002-03 to 2005-06. There were only a total of 10 beneficiaries during 2006-07 and 2007-08.

The average unit cost of the scheme preferred by 63% of the beneficiaries was Rs. 30,000 and more, 28% wanted assistance in the Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 30,000 range, and only 8% had opted for assistance in the range of Rs. 10,000 to -20,000. Details are given below in the Table.

Table 5: Average Unit Cost of the Scheme preferred by the Beneficiaries

District	Mandal	Village	Rs 10001 to Rs 20000	Rs 20001 to Rs 30000	Above Rs 30000	Total respondents
East Godavari	Pedapudi	G.Mamidada	1	6	3	10
	Karapa	Aratlakatta	-	7	3	10
	Kakinada(Rural)	Recharla peta	4	4	2	10
Nizamabad	Nandipet	Badguna	-	-	10	10
	Bodhan	Chekarnagar	-	-	10	10
	Nizamabad(Urban)	Gandhi Chowk	-	-	10	10
Total			5 (8.30%)	17 (28.3%)	38 (63.3%)	60 (100%)

Choice for Scheme

As regards the choice of schemes, 95% of the respondents said that the schemes were chosen by themselves. When asked about the particular reason for choosing the scheme, half of them mentioned that this was because the scheme had potential of generating additional income. Physically handicapped persons who numbered 8 said that they chose schemes which suited them in their sitting posture. Information on this is given in the Table below:

It is very encouraging that 93% of the respondents stated that they were happy and satisfied with the schemes launched for their welfare. Those who were not happy with these schemes mentioned that veterinary services under the animal husbandry scheme were not upto the mark and resulted in losses for them.

Table 6: Reasons for Choosing Scheme by the Beneficiaries

District	Mandal	Village	Main Occupation	Technology Input	NSDFDC Dependent	Additional Income Source	Physically Handicapped	Total Respondents
East Godavari	Pedapudi	G.Mamidada	7	-	-	-	3	10
	Karapa	Aratlakatta	-	2	-	6	2	10
	Kakinada (Rural)	Recharla peta	2	-	-	8	-	10
Nizamabad	Nandipet	Badguna	7	2	-	1	-	10
	Bodhan	Chekarnagar	9	-	-	1	-	10
	Nizamabad (Urban)	Gandhi Chowk	3	-	4	-	3	10
Total			28 (46.7%)	4 (6.7%)	4 (6.7%)	16 (26.7%)	8 (13%)	60 (100%)

Recipients of Bank Loan

Out of 60 informants, 97% persons received bank loan, 2 persons mentioned that they had received the subsidy portion and their bank loan applications was under process. In East Godavari district, it was seen that 65% beneficiaries had fully repaid the bank loan and 28.3% had partially repaid the bank loan. It was distressing to note that nearly 4 persons out of 60 did not repay the loan at all and these persons hailed from East Godavari district.

Sources of awareness of the scheme

As regards the source from where they came to know about scheme for the development of Scheduled Castes, it was found that middleman were very prominent persons in disseminating this information and their proportion was almost 1/3rd. Nearly 1/5th of the respondents received the information only during their visits to the district level Scheduled Caste Finance and Development Society. Other sources of information were: the civil society, the MLA, MDO, elected representatives of Gram Sabhas and the daily newspapers.

Basic Knowledge of the Scheme

As regards prior knowledge about the scheme, 93% of the respondents stated that they were aware of the scheme prior to its implementation in their villages.

Support from officials

It was gratifying to note that nearly 97% respondents stated that they got full support from the concerned officials of the corporation.

Verification of the scheme by officers

It is also a very encouraging sign that the concerned functionaries are taking a lot of interest in proper implementation of the scheme. In fact, 92% of the respondents said that officers of the Corporation have been visiting them and ascertaining the progress of the scheme launched for them. As regards frequency of the visits, 15% respondents said that the concerned officials visited them more than twice; 30% stated that they visited twice and 47% beneficiaries mentioned that officers concerned visited only once. However, 8% respondents said that officers did not enquire about the success or otherwise of the scheme.

Difficulties Faced

Another positive sign was that 92% beneficiaries mentioned that they did not encounter any difficulty in running the scheme whatsoever. However, 8% of them faced hardships in arranging for the fodder for their cattle during summer, replacement of tools/machinery when they get damaged and in one case, it was stated that he did not get customers in his kirana shop, because he pursued traditional occupation of pig rearing in his house.

Conclusions

The governments both at the centre and the states have initiated a number of schemes for ameliorating the lot of the Scheduled Castes, who had been deprived for their legitimate rights for centuries together. One of the initiatives has been the SCSP, under which the Centre is providing the necessary financial support to the State Governments to initiate income generating schemes for the SCs.

A study was conducted in two districts - East Godavari (in Andhra Pradesh) and Nizamabad (in Telangana) to assess the impact of the scheme in bettering the conditions of the intended beneficiaries. Some of the positives that emerged were: the high level of awareness about such schemes, the outstanding loan repayment performance and the interest being taken by the concerned functionaries to monitor and take stock of the situation at the grassroots level. It was also seen that the beneficiaries did not treat the funds provided as doles. Instead, the thrust was towards income generation. However, a few respondents did have reservation about the working of the animal husbandry component of the scheme.