



The Fundamental Role of Poverty Eradication in the Sustainable Development Goals

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Abstract

Human rights are essential in achieving sustainable development that leaves no one behind and are central to all its three dimensions – social, environmental, and economic. Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is advanced as the answer of achieving a more equitable balance and synergic relationship between social, environmental and economic needs. The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. Sustainable Development Goals or Global Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future". The SDGs were set up in 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly and are intended to be achieved by 2030. SDG 1 aims to eradicate every form of extreme poverty including the lack of food, clean drinking water, and sanitation. Achieving this goal includes finding solutions to new threats caused by climate change and conflict. The most pernicious form of poverty recognized under the SDGs is extreme poverty and it should be removed regardless of where a person lives. Eradicating extreme poverty by 2030 is the focus of SDG target which should be fulfilled as soon as possible.

Key Words *Poverty Eradication, Upliftment of Poor People, Sanitation, Right to Life, Sdgs Targets.*

Introduction:

Human rights are the bedrock of a just and equitable society, representing the inherent, inalienable entitlements that every individual possesses simply by virtue of being human. These rights transcend national borders, cultural norms, and political ideologies, applying universally to all, irrespective of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. They are the moral principles that underpin a world where every person is treated with dignity and respect, and where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The spectrum of human rights is remarkably broad, encompassing fundamental freedoms and essential provisions for a life of dignity. Civil and political rights safeguard

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individual liberties and participation in public life. These include the right to life, liberty, and security of person; freedom from slavery, torture, and arbitrary arrest; the right to a fair trial; freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; the right to peaceful assembly and association; and the right to participate in political processes through free and fair elections.

Economic, social, and cultural rights, on the other hand, focus on ensuring access to essential resources and opportunities for a decent standard of living. These encompass the right to work, to education, to health, to social security, to an adequate standard of living, and to participate in cultural life. They recognize that true freedom and equality require not only the absence of oppression but also the provision of basic necessities and opportunities for personal development.

International human rights law serves as the legal framework for the protection and promotion of these rights. It consists of a body of treaties, conventions, declarations, and customary international law that establishes obligations for states to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. The obligation to respect requires states to refrain from violating human rights themselves. The obligation to protect requires states to prevent human rights violations by non-state actors. The obligation to fulfil requires states to take positive steps to ensure that individuals can enjoy their human rights in practice.²

The United Nations has been instrumental in developing and codifying international human rights law. The UN Charter, adopted in 1945, laid the foundation for a global commitment to human rights, affirming the dignity and worth of the human person and calling for the promotion of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, stands as a landmark achievement in the history of human rights. It articulates a comprehensive set of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights that are considered universally applicable. Although not a treaty itself, the UDHR has exerted a profound influence on the development of international human rights law, inspiring numerous treaties, national constitutions, and legal reforms. It is widely regarded as a customary international law, binding on all states regardless of whether they have formally ratified it.

Building upon the foundation of the UDHR, the UN has elaborated a series of core human rights treaties that address specific rights and vulnerable groups. These include the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which together with the UDHR form the International Bill of Human Rights. Other key treaties include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading

² United Nations (2025). *Human rights*. [online] United Nations. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>.



Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).³

These treaties establish legally binding obligations for states that ratify them, requiring them to incorporate human rights standards into their national laws and policies, and to provide effective remedies for human rights violations. The UN also established various mechanisms to monitor state compliance with their human rights obligations, including treaty bodies composed of independent experts who review state reports and investigate allegations of human rights violations.

Beyond the formal legal framework, the UN plays a crucial role in promoting human rights through advocacy, education, and technical assistance. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) leads the UN's efforts to promote and protect human rights worldwide, working with governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to advance human rights at the national, regional, and international levels.⁴

Despite the significant progress made in the development of international human rights law, the implementation of these rights remains a major challenge. Human rights violations continue to occur in all parts of the world, often with impunity. Poverty, discrimination, conflict, and lack of good governance are major obstacles to the realization of human rights.

Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort by all members of the international community. States must prioritize human rights in their domestic and foreign policies, strengthen their legal and institutional frameworks for the protection of human rights, and ensure that those who violate human rights are held accountable. Civil society organizations play a vital role in monitoring human rights violations, advocating for legal and policy reforms, and providing support to victims of human rights abuses. International organizations, including the UN, must continue to provide leadership and support for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide.

Ultimately, the realization of human rights depends on a fundamental shift in attitudes and values, towards a world where every person is treated with dignity and respect, and where everyone has the opportunity to live a life free from fear and want. It requires a commitment to building inclusive and just societies, where human rights are not just legal principles, but lived realities for all.

Tracing the Path to the Sustainable Development Goals:

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a set of ambitious global objectives aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges facing humanity, have a history rooted in a growing recognition of the interconnectedness between environmental, social, and

³ United Nations (1966). *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. [online] OHCHR. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>.

⁴ United Nations (2021). *Protect Human Rights*. [online] United Nations. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/protect-human-rights>.



economic well-being. Their genesis can be traced back to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2012 – often referred to as Rio+20, marking the 20th anniversary of the original 1992 Earth Summit. This conference served as a pivotal moment for the international community to reassess its progress on sustainable development and chart a new course for the future.

Prior to the SDGs, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) had guided global development efforts from 2000 to 2015. The MDGs, consisting of eight goals, focused primarily on poverty reduction, education, health, and environmental sustainability in developing countries. While the MDGs achieved notable successes, particularly in reducing extreme poverty and improving access to education, they were criticized for their limited scope and lack of universal applicability. They primarily targeted developing nations, with less emphasis on the responsibilities of developed countries.⁵ Recognizing the limitations of the MDGs and the evolving global landscape, the Rio+20 conference provided a platform for discussions on a more comprehensive and universally applicable set of goals. The outcome of these discussions was a mandate to develop the SDGs, which would build upon the achievements of the MDGs while addressing a broader range of sustainable development challenges.

In 2015, after extensive negotiations and consultations, the UN formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which included the 17 SDGs. These goals, applicable to all countries, represent a commitment to transform the world by addressing critical issues such as poverty, hunger, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and peace and justice. The SDGs are interconnected and indivisible, recognizing that progress in one area often depends on progress in others.⁶

The SDGs are more than just a set of aspirational targets; they represent a call to action for governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals to work together to create a more sustainable and equitable world. The 2030 Agenda provides a roadmap for achieving these goals, emphasizing the importance of partnerships, innovation, and evidence-based policymaking.

Human rights are intrinsically linked to the SDGs. The fundamental principles of human rights, including equality, non-discrimination, participation, and accountability, are essential for achieving sustainable development. Many of the SDGs directly address human rights concerns, such as the eradication of poverty (SDG 1), the elimination of hunger (SDG 2), the promotion of health and well-being (SDG 3), the provision of quality education (SDG 4), the achievement of gender equality (SDG 5), and the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies (SDG 16).⁷

⁵ United Nations (2015). *The 17 Sustainable Development Goals*. [online] United Nations. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

⁶ United Nations (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. [online] United Nations. Available at: <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

⁷ United Nations (n.d.). *OHCHR / OHCHR and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. [online] OHCHR. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/sdgs>.



The Human Rights Day, celebrated annually on December 10th, serves as a reminder of the importance of upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. It provides an opportunity to reflect on progress made, to identify challenges that remain, and to reaffirm our commitment to building a world where everyone can enjoy their human rights. Similarly, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, observed annually on October 17th, highlights the urgent need to address poverty as a human rights violation. It raises awareness about the millions of people around the world who are denied their basic human rights because they live in poverty.

The SDGs and human rights share a common vision of a world where everyone can live in dignity and enjoy their full potential. By working together to achieve the SDGs, we can create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world for all, where human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled. The journey towards achieving the 2030 Agenda requires a holistic approach, integrating human rights principles into all aspects of sustainable development efforts. This includes ensuring that development policies are participatory, inclusive, and accountable, and that they prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The Intertwined Nature of Human Rights and Sustainable Development

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) establishes a broad spectrum of rights essential for human dignity. These include access to adequate food, water, sanitation, clothing, housing, medical care, and social protections for circumstances like disability, widowhood, unemployment, and old age. This article underscores the holistic approach necessary to ensure a life of well-being for all.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and human rights are fundamentally intertwined, forming a mutually reinforcing framework. The Agenda explicitly anchors itself in international human rights law, recognizing that sustainable development cannot be achieved without upholding the inherent rights of every individual. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are designed to "realize the human rights of all," with over 90% of their targets directly reflecting principles enshrined in international human rights and labour standards. The Agenda's core commitment to "leave no one behind" directly embodies the human rights principles of non-discrimination and equality, ensuring that the most vulnerable are prioritized.⁸

The SDGs provide a concrete framework for implementing the broad principles outlined in the UDHR and other human rights instruments. Conversely, a human rights-based approach strengthens the effectiveness and equity of SDG implementation by ensuring accountability and focusing on the needs of marginalized groups. The alignment of SDG and human rights reporting mechanisms offers a significant opportunity to bridge accountability and implementation gaps at the national, regional, and international

⁸ HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS. (n.d.)



levels. A diverse range of actors, including governments, civil society organizations, and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), contribute to both SDG and human rights reporting.

By utilizing human rights recommendations derived from tools like the SDG - Human Rights Data Explorer, stakeholders can adopt a human rights-based approach to sustainable development, ensuring that SDG implementation is aligned with international human rights obligations and effectively addresses systemic inequalities. Therefore, this Guidance Note examines various ways to leverage human rights recommendations identified through resources like the SDG - Human Rights Data Explorer in different processes and at various levels to promote a human rights-based approach to sustainable development. This approach ensures that development initiatives are not only effective but also equitable and just, upholding the dignity and rights of all individuals.

Eradicating Poverty: a Pathway to Sustainable Development

Poverty is the inability to meet basic human needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, education, and economic security. It manifests in multiple dimensions, affecting individuals' well-being and limiting opportunities for a dignified life. Poverty not only affects individuals but also hampers national economic growth, leading to social unrest and inequality. It restricts access to essential services, perpetuates cycles of deprivation, and exacerbates vulnerabilities in marginalized communities.

Key Characteristics of Poverty

There are few characteristics of Poverty mentioned as follow.

- a) **Food Insecurity & Malnutrition:** Poor individuals often suffer from starvation, hunger, and malnutrition due to inadequate food intake. Insufficient access to nutritious food weakens immunity, increases susceptibility to diseases, and affects cognitive and physical development, particularly in children.
- b) **Lack of Education & Skills:** Limited access to education and vocational training reduces employment opportunities. Without basic literacy and numeracy skills, individuals struggle to secure stable jobs, leaving them trapped in cycles of poverty with little upward mobility.
- c) **Insufficient Basic Amenities & Healthcare:** Many poor communities lack clean water, electricity, and healthcare services, increasing vulnerability to diseases. The absence of adequate sanitation and medical facilities leads to high infant and maternal mortality rates and a lower overall quality of life.
- d) **Unemployment & Informal Labor:** The poor often work in unstable jobs, such as agricultural laborers or informal sector workers, earning low wages. Many lack social security benefits, making them highly susceptible to economic downturns, layoffs, and exploitative working conditions.
- e) **Chronic Indebtedness:** Dependence on high-interest loans from moneylenders leads to financial exploitation and persistent debt cycles. Without access to



formal banking services, the poor rely on predatory lenders, deepening their financial instability and making it harder to escape poverty.⁹

Causes of Poverty

Poverty is driven by a combination of structural and socio-economic factors, including:

- a) Conflict & War – Displacement and economic instability worsen poverty. Armed conflicts destroy infrastructure, disrupt trade, and force millions into refugee camps, cutting them off from employment and basic services.
- b) Refugee Crisis – Forced migration disrupts livelihoods. Displaced individuals often lack legal recognition, making it difficult to secure employment, education, and healthcare in host countries.
- c) Unemployment – Limited job opportunities lead to financial insecurity. Without stable income sources, individuals and families struggle to afford basic necessities.
- d) Inflation – Rising costs reduce the purchasing power of the poor. Essential goods such as food, fuel, and housing become unaffordable, increasing economic stress.
- e) Agricultural Productivity Issues – Low yields result in economic hardships, particularly in rural areas. Climate change, soil degradation, and lack of access to modern technology hinder food production and income generation.
- f) Overpopulation – High population growth strains resources. In densely populated areas, demand for housing, food, and jobs exceeds availability, worsening poverty conditions.
- g) Lack of Education – Poor literacy rates hinder access to better employment. Education is essential for economic mobility, yet millions of children worldwide lack access to quality schooling.
- h) Insufficient Government Support – Weak social welfare policies exacerbate economic disparities. Inadequate safety nets fail to protect the vulnerable from economic shocks.
- i) Income Inequality – Unequal wealth distribution widens socio-economic gaps. Economic growth does not always translate to equal opportunity, leaving marginalized communities behind.
- j) Natural Disasters – Floods, tsunamis, and other calamities destroy homes and livelihoods. Disasters displace populations, disrupt economies, and create long-term financial instability for affected individuals.¹⁰

Global Commitments and Targets for Poverty Eradication by 2030

⁹ Nougués, T. (2025). Social debtfare policies and the rise of the creditor-state: The creditization of social policy in Argentina. *Socio-Economic Review*. [online] doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwaf015>.

¹⁰ Topluoğlu, S., Taylan-Özkan, A. and Alp, E. (2023). Impact of wars and natural disasters on emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. *Frontiers in Public Health*, [online] 11. doi:<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1215929>.



Aligning with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, global efforts are focused on:

- a) Eradicating extreme poverty for all people, currently defined as living on less than \$1.25 per day. Addressing extreme poverty requires economic reforms, employment generation, and increased investment in public welfare programs.
- b) Reducing poverty by at least 50% across all age groups and ensuring equitable access to resources. This includes improving access to education, healthcare, and social protection measures.
- c) Implementing social protection measures that guarantee basic necessities such as food, healthcare, and shelter. Safety nets must be strengthened to prevent vulnerable populations from falling deeper into poverty.
- d) Ensuring equal rights to economic resources, including access to financial services, land ownership, and new technologies. Financial inclusion and fair land distribution policies empower disadvantaged groups.
- e) Building resilience against economic, social, and environmental shocks, particularly climate-related disasters. Investments in disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies help communities recover and rebuild.
- f) Mobilizing financial resources through international cooperation to support poverty eradication initiatives. Global partnerships play a crucial role in funding and implementing effective poverty reduction programs.
- g) Strengthening human rights frameworks, ensuring the right to life and dignity is upheld through poverty reduction strategies. Legal protections must safeguard vulnerable groups from exploitation and marginalization.

Policy Interventions and Strategies

To achieve these targets, coordinated action is required at multiple levels:

- a) **National and International Taskforces** – Establishing dedicated bodies to oversee poverty eradication efforts. These agencies must align policies, monitor progress, and recommend reforms.¹¹
- b) **Financial Assistance & Aid Programs** – Supporting developing nations through economic aid and capacity-building initiatives. Fair trade agreements and investments in infrastructure contribute to sustainable growth.
- c) **Implementation of Grassroots Schemes** – Encouraging community-driven poverty alleviation programs. Localized efforts ensure targeted assistance and increased efficiency in aid distribution.
- d) **Education and Skill Development** – Strengthening education systems to create long-term economic opportunities. Vocational training programs equip individuals with marketable skills.

¹¹ The DAC Guidelines Poverty Reduction «INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. (n.d.). Available at: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2001/11/poverty-reduction_g1gh164c/9789264194779-en.pdf [Accessed 1 Apr. 2025].



- e) **Support for Sustainable Livelihoods** – Investing in employment generation and entrepreneurship. Microfinance and cooperative businesses help communities achieve self-sufficiency.
- f) **Human Rights Advocacy** – Promoting policies aligned with global human rights conventions. Laws protecting workers' rights, gender equality, and anti-discrimination measures reduce systemic inequalities.
- g) **Urban Development Initiatives** – Reducing slums and improving access to essential healthcare. Sustainable urban planning ensures affordable housing and better living conditions.

By integrating these strategies, a global framework for poverty eradication can be effectively developed, ensuring long-term economic stability and social equity. The eradication of poverty is not just an economic goal but a fundamental human right that upholds dignity, equality, and justice for all.

Constitutional Perspectives on Poverty: Rights, Policies, and Challenges:

A. Article 14: Equality Before the Law and Equal Protection of Laws

Article 14 of the Indian Constitution guarantees that all individuals are equal in the eyes of the law, regardless of caste, color, religion, region, sex, or economic status. This principle ensures that no person shall be discriminated against or denied justice based on their socio-economic background.¹²

In the context of poverty, Article 14 mandates that the state must provide equal access to legal protection and basic rights, preventing discrimination against economically disadvantaged individuals. This includes ensuring access to education, healthcare, and social welfare programs, so that poverty does not become a barrier to justice and development. The principle of equality also demands that affirmative action and special measures be implemented to uplift marginalized and vulnerable communities, thereby bridging socio-economic gaps.

Article 21: Right to Life and Personal Liberty

Article 21 enshrines the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which has been interpreted expansively by the judiciary to encompass various socio-economic rights essential for a dignified existence.¹³

Key rights derived from Article 21 include:

- a) **Right to Shelter** – Every individual has the right to adequate housing, ensuring protection from homelessness and unsafe living conditions.
- b) **Right to Basic Amenities** – Access to food, clean drinking water, sanitation, and electricity is crucial for a dignified life.
- c) **Right to Pollution-Free Water and Air** – The right to a clean and healthy environment is essential for public health and well-being.

¹² Constitution of India. (n.d.). *Article 14: Equality before law*. [online] Available at: <https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-14-equality-before-law/>.

¹³ Constitution of India. (n.d.). *Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty*. [online] Available at: <https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/article-21-protection-of-life-and-personal-liberty/>.



- d) Right to Live in a Healthy Environment – The state is obligated to take measures to prevent environmental degradation and ensure sustainable living conditions.
- e) Right to Health and Medical Aid – Access to affordable and quality healthcare is a fundamental aspect of the right to life, ensuring that poverty does not deprive individuals of medical treatment.
- f) Right of Every Child to Full Development – Every child has the right to education, nutrition, and a supportive environment to achieve their full potential.
- g) Together, Articles 14 and 21 reinforce the idea that economic status should not deprive individuals of their fundamental rights. The Constitution mandates the state to take proactive measures in eradicating poverty, promoting social justice, and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

India's Government Initiatives In Poverty Eradication: A Pathway To Sustainable Development:

Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

Launched in 2014, the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) is a financial inclusion initiative aimed at providing vulnerable communities with access to essential financial services. This includes banking facilities, savings accounts, credit, insurance, and pension schemes. The program ensures that even the economically disadvantaged have access to formal banking, reducing their reliance on informal moneylenders. It also strengthens the goal of universal healthcare by linking financial services with health-related benefits, making social security accessible to all.¹⁴

Key Features:

- Zero-balance bank accounts with overdraft facilities for economically weaker sections.
- Access to affordable credit and insurance coverage.
- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism for subsidies and welfare benefits.
- Enhancing financial literacy to promote saving and responsible financial management.

Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)

Ayushman Bharat, launched in 2018, is one of the world's largest public health insurance programs. Its primary goal is to provide health insurance coverage of up to INR 5,00,000 per family per year for secondary and tertiary medical care. The

¹⁴ pmjdy.gov.in. (n.d.). *Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana* | Department of Financial Services | Ministry of Finance. [online] Available at: <https://pmjdy.gov.in/>.



initiative aims to reach approximately 500 million beneficiaries, ensuring financial protection against medical expenses for underprivileged families.¹⁵

Key Features:

- Cashless and paperless treatment at empaneled hospitals across India.
- Coverage of pre-existing diseases, hospitalization, and critical treatments.
- Reduction in out-of-pocket healthcare expenditures for low-income families.
- Strengthening of primary healthcare services through Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs).

Housing for All – Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) aims to provide affordable housing with essential services by 2022, ensuring that every Indian has a safe and dignified place to live. The scheme offers financial assistance to economically weaker sections (EWS), low-income groups (LIG), and middle-income groups (MIG) to construct or purchase homes.¹⁶

Key Features:

- Subsidized housing loans with lower interest rates.
- Financial support for building houses with access to water, sanitation, and electricity.
- Encouragement of eco-friendly and sustainable construction practices.
- Urban and rural housing components to address housing shortages in all regions.

Saubhagya Scheme – Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana

The Saubhagya Scheme, launched in 2017, focuses on universal electrification by providing electricity connections to all households in rural and urban areas. The initiative plays a crucial role in improving living standards, promoting economic activities, and enhancing access to education, healthcare, and communication.¹⁷

Key Features:

- Free electricity connections for households below the poverty line (BPL).
- Affordable and subsidized electricity tariffs for low-income families.
- Strengthening of rural electrification infrastructure.

¹⁵ National Health Authority (2019). *National Health Authority | GOI*. [online] nha.gov.in. Available at: <https://nha.gov.in/PM-JAY>.

¹⁶ [Pmaymis.gov.in](https://pmaymis.gov.in). (2019). *PMAY-HFA(Urban)*. [online] Available at: <https://pmaymis.gov.in/>.

¹⁷ Translate.goog. (2017). *Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana - Saubhagya| National Portal of India*. [online] Available at: <https://www-india-gov-in.translate.goog/spotlight/pradhan-mantri-sahaj-bijli-har-ghar-yojana-saubhagya>



- Promotion of clean energy usage and reduction in dependence on kerosene lamps.

Mid-Day Meal Scheme & Akshaya Patra Foundation

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme is a government initiative that provides nutritious meals to school children, ensuring they receive adequate nutrition and remain motivated to attend school regularly. The Akshaya Patra Foundation, a non-governmental organization, works in collaboration with the government to implement and scale up this program across various states.¹⁸

Key Features:

- Free meals to children in government and government-aided schools.
- Improved nutrition levels and reduction in child malnutrition.
- Increased school enrollment, attendance, and retention rates.
- Promotion of education among underprivileged children, breaking the cycle of poverty.

Impact of COVID-19 on Poverty Eradication

The COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on poverty eradication efforts, pushing millions into economic hardship and reversing years of progress. The global crisis disproportionately affected vulnerable communities, particularly those already living below the poverty line. As businesses shut down and economies weakened, poverty levels surged, creating a widespread socio-economic crisis.¹⁹

Key Challenges Faced During COVID-19

- a) Mass Unemployment and Job Losses
 - Lockdowns and business closures led to widespread job losses, particularly in informal sectors.
 - Daily wage earners, small business owners, and contract workers were severely impacted.
- b) Increase in Homelessness
 - Many people lost their homes due to an inability to pay rent or mortgages.
 - Migrant workers faced displacement, forcing them to return to their native places under dire conditions.
- c) Rise in Hunger and Food Insecurity
 - Loss of income meant that millions of families struggled to afford basic food supplies.
 - Malnutrition rates increased, especially among children and pregnant women.
- d) Severe Health Crisis and Rising Death Toll

¹⁸ Akshaya Patra. (n.d.). *Mid-Day Meal*. [online] Available at: <https://www.akshayapatra.org/indias-mid-day-meal-scheme/>.

¹⁹ www.unicef.org. (n.d.). *COVID-19 impacts on child poverty*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/social-policy/child-poverty/covid-19-socioeconomic-impacts>.



- Limited access to healthcare facilities, medicines, and oxygen exacerbated the crisis.
- Poor healthcare infrastructure in rural areas worsened the situation, leading to high mortality rates.
- e) Decline in Income and Economic Insecurity
 - The economic slowdown resulted in reduced income opportunities, pushing more families into extreme poverty.
 - Small businesses and self-employed individuals faced financial ruin due to prolonged lockdowns.
- f) Disproportionate Impact on the Poor
 - Those living below the poverty line suffered the most, with little to no savings or social security to fall back on.
 - Educational disruptions widened inequality, as low-income families lacked access to online learning resources.

Conclusion:

Government schemes aimed at poverty eradication, social welfare, and sustainable development play a fundamental role in shaping the lives of marginalized communities. These initiatives focus on multiple facets of development, addressing critical areas such as financial inclusion, healthcare, housing, electrification, and education. Through these focused efforts, governments aim to create equal opportunities for all citizens, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and ensure a better quality of life for every individual.

Financial inclusion is one of the core pillars of these government schemes. By providing access to banking services, loans, and other financial tools, these programs empower the poor to break the cycle of poverty. Financial services allow individuals to start businesses, access credit, and secure savings, all of which are essential for improving their livelihoods. Such inclusion also helps bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, facilitating a more equitable economic system.

Equally important is the focus on healthcare. Government health schemes ensure that even the poorest communities have access to medical services, which they otherwise might not afford. These programs address critical issues like maternal and child health, disease prevention, and treatment, thereby improving the overall health and well-being of the population. Health is a foundational element for social welfare, as it directly impacts the productivity and quality of life of individuals.

Housing and electrification are additional areas where government schemes have made significant strides. Affordable housing projects provide shelter to those who live in substandard conditions, helping families build better lives. Similarly, electrification schemes bring power to remote and underdeveloped areas, enabling access to modern conveniences and supporting economic activities such as small businesses and education. These projects are instrumental in uplifting the standard of living and creating an environment conducive to social and economic growth.



However, the most powerful tool in the fight against poverty is education. Government initiatives that focus on universal access to education are perhaps the most impactful. Education is the key to breaking the generational cycle of poverty. By equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the workforce, education opens doors to better employment opportunities and higher earnings. It also fosters greater social mobility, helping individuals rise above their circumstances and build a better future for themselves and their families.

It is critical that these schemes are not only implemented but also supported by the broader society. Poverty is not just a result of individual circumstances but also of systemic barriers that perpetuate inequality. In this context, the role of the state is crucial, but so is the role of the people. By supporting poverty eradication programs, we are contributing to the fight for justice and equality. Helping the state in these efforts ensures that no one is left behind, and poverty is systematically eradicated from society.

As Nelson Mandela once said, “Overcoming poverty is not a task of charity, it is an act of justice.” Thus, we should also help the state and support poverty-eradicating programs. We should keep poverty away and not the poor, and that is why we should help each and every poor individual to make poverty helpless. For this, education is the only weapon to win over poverty and is the only weapon to defeat poverty, and so poor people should not be ignored.