

Kerala Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Sub Plan outlay on Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation

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Abstract:

This paper presents the trends in public expenditure for social welfare activities and poverty alleviation programs for the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population of the state. The data collected from 2011 till 2019 shows that the fund allocation and utilization has increased over the years, thus resulting to the better livelihood of SC/ST population. A two pronged strategy followed by the state government shows the state interest in the upliftment of the weaker sections. The role of Local Self Government institution in supporting the SC/ST population has got special importance in this study and a case study is conducted in Kanjirapally Grama Panchayat. An important finding of the study is that the public fund allocation and utilization has a positive impact in the rural livelihood and employment generation programs. Kerala Government earmarks fund for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) from State Plan outlay in proportion to the percentage population of Scheduled Caste, and allocates fund for Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) more than that of ST population percentage. A two pronged strategy is followed for the development of SC/ST in the State. One is the assistance provided through the LSGs and the other through SC/ST Development Department. Out of the total SCSP/TSP Plan outlay, a certain percentage of funds are allocated to Local Governments for implementation of schemes under decentralized planning and the remaining to the SC/ST Development Department. A system of earmarking certain amount of SCSP/TSP as pooled fund under SCSP

and TSP supports the social welfare and employment generations programs in the state. In this paper, an attempt is made to examine the allocation and utilization of fund for SC/ST population and its impact on their standard of living. To evaluate the effectiveness of the programs, a case study from Ward X11 of Kanjirappally Grama Panchayat is explained. The findings from the study proved that, there occurred a considerable improvement in the socio- economic conditions of the SC/ST population. But, it is also observed that a lot has to be done to improve the vulnerable condition of this section of population.

Key Words: Schedules caste, Scheduled tribe, public fund allocation, public fund utilization, social welfare programs, rural livelihood and poverty alleviation

Introduction

According to 2011 Census, the Scheduled Castes distribution in India by state and union territories, then State of Punjab had the highest percentage of its population as SC (~32%) while in the Scheduled Tribes distribution map, Mizoram and Lakshadweep had the highest percentage of its population as ST (~95%). The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6% and 8.6%, respectively, of India's population (Census, 2011). The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are officially designated groups of historically disadvantaged people in India. The terms are recognized in the Constitution of India and the groups are designated in one or other of the categories. During the British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes. From different points of view, it is interesting to note that the combined percentage of people in scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is essentially the official percentage of people, in the lowest part of Indian society. The Constitution lays down the general principles of positive discrimination for SCs and STs' development and provides resources and benefits to bridge the socioeconomic gap between these sections and other communities.

The Scheduled Caste (SC) population of Kerala is 30, 39,573 persons as per Census 2011, which constitute 9.10 per cent of the total population of the State. According to the amendment to the constitution in 2006, there are 53 communities among the Scheduled Caste. Many studies and researches have indicated that majority of SC and ST population live below the poverty line, compared to communities in India. The morbidity and mortality rates are also high in this section of people. The settlement pattern of Scheduled Caste in the state is entirely different from other parts in the country. Major share of the Scheduled Caste in the state live as scattered along with other people. The Vedar, Vettuvan, Nayadi, Kalladi, Arundhathiyar/ Chakkiliar are the vulnerable communities among Scheduled Caste. They constitute 3.65 per cent of the SC population. The Scheduled Tribe population (ST) of Kerala is 4, 84,839 persons

constituting 1.45 per cent of the total population of the State (Census, 2011 and SC and

ST Amendment Act, 2002). The table below (Table 1) shows the percentage of SC and ST population of India and Kerala to the total population.

Table 1 SC and ST population in India and Kerala

Year	SC		ST	
	India	Kerala	India	Kerala
1981	15.81	10.01	7.83	1.03
1991	16.48	9.94	8.08	1.10
2001	16.23	9.81	8.15	1.14
2011	16.60	9.10	8.60	1.45

Source: Census, 1981,1991,2001,2011

In India, as per Census 2011, population of SC is 16.6 per cent and ST is 8.6 per cent, together forming a quarter of the total population. The Scheduled Caste population of Kerala is 3,039,573 persons constituting 9.10 per cent of the total population of the State. The Scheduled Tribe population of Kerala is 484,839 persons, constituting 1.45 per cent of the total population of the State.

Development Programs for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe

The social and poverty alleviation sectors are placed either in concurrent or state list of the Indian Constitution in which case it is the state's responsibility to make such investments. The state use both own resources as well as resources transferred by the central government, as per the recommendations of finance and planning commission. Based on the State list provision, Kerala Government earmarks fund for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP) from State Plan outlay in proportion to the percentage population of Scheduled Caste, and allocates fund for Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) more than that of ST population percentage (Economic Review, 2020). In order to smoothen the process of investment plans to SC and ST communities, assistances are provide through Local Self Government institutions as well as through SC/ST Development Department.

A system of earmarking certain amount of SCSP/TSP as pooled fund under SCSP and TSP for taking up schemes, provide LSGs and Department to plan and execute specific projects for SC and ST population. There is wide range of schemes with varied objectives and physical targets, which put together, will help the all-round development of the targeted groups. The total plan provision set apart for the development of

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes during 2016-17 is 2354.40 crore and 682.80 crore respectively. During the XII Five-Year Plan (2012 – 17), 9,326.98 crore was earmarked (9.81 per cent of the State Plan). Of which, 4,780.09 crore was allocated for SC Development Department and 4,546.89 crore for the Local Self -Governments. The Scheduled Caste Development Department expended 81 per cent (3,855.19 crore) for the implementation of various schemes and 6,244.90 crore was allotted to Local Self Governments including opening balance for implementing various schemes under SCSP (Economic Review, 2020).

Looking into the socio-economic and geographical differences in the states of India, it is very important that SC and ST are weaker sections compared to other advantaged sections in the society. Therefore, special provisions are taken and maintained to ensure equal opportunity provisions in the state. These provisions and programs are specifically funded by the state to improve the certain indicators, such as nutrition, shelter, health, education, clothing, leisure, recreation, security etc. The following Table 2 explains the specific schemes adopted by the State of Kerala.

Table 2 SC and ST Schemes and Objectives in Kerala

Schemes	Objectives
Educational	Pre-matric studies, Post-matric studies, Running of Model Residential Schools, Functioning of ITIs
Housing	House to houseless, completion of partially constructed houses and improvement of dilapidated houses
Land to landless	Purchase of land to the poor and eligible landless SC families for house construction

Development Programs	Rehabilitation of landless, Providing infrastructure, connectivity, communication facilities, education, treatment, drinking water, electricity, road etc
Health Schemes	Illness assistance for treatment of serious diseases like cancer, heart/kidney/brain ailments to SC families below poverty line
Assistance to Marriage	Financial assistance to daughters of SC parents to reduce the burden of marriage expenses
Self Employment	Financial assistance for promoting new ventures

Since there are plan funds and non-plan funds for the social and economic welfare of the total population of the States, it is seen that there are some specific reasons for which special funds are allocated to implement welfare schemes for the weaker sections of the people. Although there is a national importance for special allocation of funds, various studies have proved that SC and ST population really require special attention. A study conducted by Parvathamma, C (1984) revealed following facts, such as;

- i) Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are predominantly residing in rural areas
- ii) The size of the family is relatively small and usually includes parents and Children
- iii) Majorities of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes live in separate Colonies outside the village
- iv) Nearly 40 (Forty) percent are living in huts, an equal percentage in houses
- v) More than 80 (eighty) percent of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are landless agriculture labourers working in others land in the village
- vi) Modern conveniences like electricity, radio, watch, car, and motor cycle are not found with them.

In most of the times, the above facts remain same even if there is specific funding for these sections of people. Time has changed, therefore needs have also changed. Needs and requirements have dramatically changed due to the advancement of time and technology. Now a days the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are exposed to outer world of industrialization and urbanization, and their migration to industrial urban areas has developed a new consciousness for closer inter caste relationships in a changing situation (Chaudhary, S.N, 1988). Compared to the earlier times, economic evolutions of the hills tribes shows regional variations and tribal people are confronted

with several socio-economic problems (Kunhaman, M, 1989). Official records of the government shows that there have been increase in the funding pattern to SC and ST sections through various schemes and projects, but a closer look into the spending pattern shows some irregularities. Although funds were disbursed to improve the life standards of the people of these sections, they have not been able to gain the intended benefit out of these concessions (Kumari, S R, 1980 and Vakil, A.K, 1985).

From the above discussions, it is clear that social welfare and poverty alleviations can be achieved by various measures and specific schemes and programs can directly and indirectly result to the betterment of the life standard of the people.

In order to understand the reality in this subject matter, we have conducted a case study in selected area of the state of Kerala. During the time of study (2018 – 2020), primary data was collected from the SC and ST households. Direct interviews were conducted and data was collected with the help of structured questionnaire. Questionnaire was prepared based on the State Government schemes and objectives (as given in Table 2). In addition to the primary sources, data was collected from secondary sources, such as Panchayat and Municipality headquarters. The collected data was analyzed with basic arithmetic calculations. In the following section, details about the case and findings are explained.

Case Study and Survey Results from Kanjirapally Grama Panchayat

Kanjirapally is a large village located in Kottayam district, Kerala with total 7668 families residing. The Kanjirapally village has population of 32680 of which 16073 are male while 16607 are females (Census 2011). Kanjirapally, a little town on the foothills of the Western Ghats of Kerala, India is historically called as "the Queen of Malanad (The Land of Mountains)" and "the Gateway of Malanad". The geographical position of Kanjirapally ensured that from ancient times it served as an excellent trade junction among the commercial centers of the east and the west.

Kanjirapally is now the headquarters of a Taluk comprising Elikulam, Chirakadavu, Kootikal, Erumely, Kanjirapally, Manimala, Mundakayam and Parathodu Panchayats. Earlier it covered a larger area stretching from Meenachil to the Pamba River enveloped mainly by vast virgin forests. Kanjirapally village has higher literacy rate compared to Kerala. In 2011, literacy rate of Kanjirapally village was 96.97% compared to 94.00% of Kerala. In Kanjirapally male literacy stands at 97.66% while female literacy rate was 96.31%. As per constitution of India and Panchayat Raj Act, Kanjirapally village is administrated by Sarpanch (Head of Village) who is elected representative of village. This area has a great representation of people in SC and ST sections and the authorities have considered welfare of this section as important. The fund allocation over the years shows that improvement in the standard of living of this special section of people is of a

great importance to leaders of the area as well as to the other privileged sections of the society. The following Table 3 shows the fund allocation for SC and ST over the years.

Table 3 SC and ST Fund allocation of Kanirapally Grama Panchayat

YEAR WISE	ST FUND	YEARWISE	SC FUND
2011-2012	93900	2011-2012	1888800
2012-2013	125200	2012-2013	2518400
2013-2014	156500	2013-2014	3248000
2014-2015	187800	2014-2015	3777600
2015-2016	219100	2015-2016	4407200
2016-2017	250400	2016-2017	5036800
2017-2018	281700	2017-2018	5666400
2018-2019	313000	2018-2019	6296000

Source: Grama Panchayat Records (various years)

The above table shows the year-wise fund allocation to SC and ST funds by the Kanjirapally Grama Panchayat. Although there are less number of population in the above sections of people, administration has allocated sufficient funds to the socio-economic development and welfare creation of the SC and ST people. It can be seen from the table that the fund allocation over the years has increased in a significant figure. Therefore, we can assume that various welfare creation and poverty alleviation schemes have implemented successfully.

In order to understand the reality in fund allocation and to see whether there occurred any improvements to the beneficiaries, direct interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted with the help of structured questionnaire. In order to understand the process of fund allocation, the study team had several visits and discussions firstly to the Panchayat officers and had direct and indirect consultations with officials. From those visits, it was understood that special committees were formed to plan, process and execute SC and ST development activities for the Panchayat. Since there were less number of families belonged to SC and ST sections, elected members were given special charge to take care of fund processing and allocation for various schemes. In addition to the inputs from the officers, the study could obtain important data from field

visits. Direct interaction with beneficiaries revealed the fact that the beneficiaries are almost fully satisfied with the fund allocation and utilization of funds for their various purposes. Important insights from the study are given in the following Figure 1.

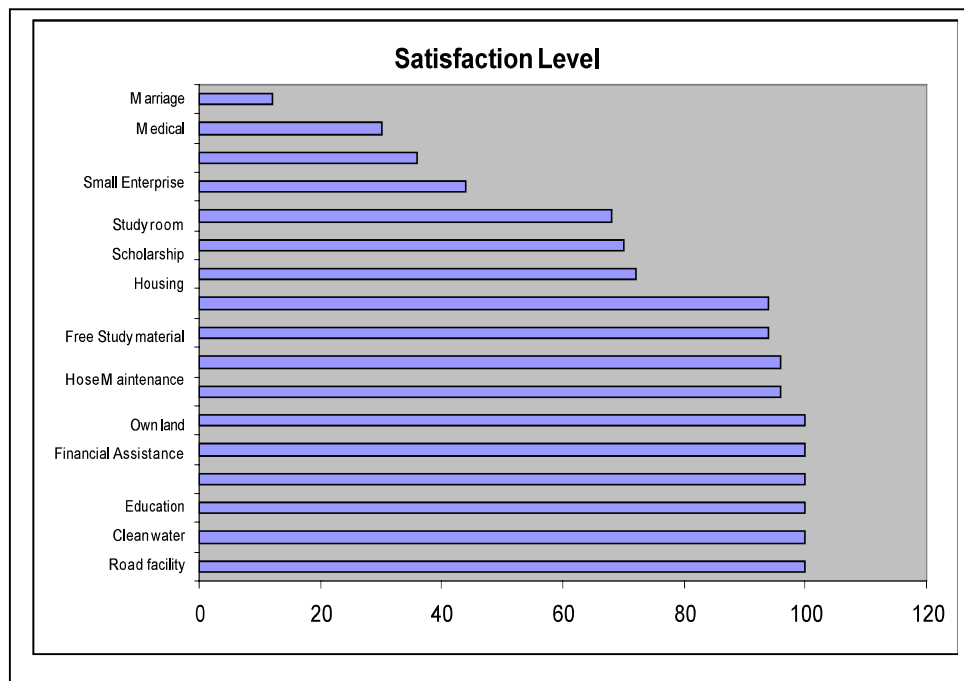


Figure 1 Level of Satisfaction regarding SC/ST Fund

Source: Primary Data

The above figure depicts the satisfaction level among beneficiaries about the schemes and projects implemented solely form SC and ST section of people in Kanjirapally Grama Panchayat. As it was noted in the discussion above, all SC and ST families were approached and directly interacted with questions on various schemes adopted and implemented by the LSGs. From the above results, it is clear that the funds are directed to eradicate poverty and improve welfare among people. Almost all people were aware about various schemes and funds allocated to them, so that they could approach the relevant authority and avail funds directly. It is clear from the above result that a major portion of the funds are used to create basic facilities like shelter, water, schooling, electricity, with which people can make progress in their day to day lives.

The study reveals that, out of 50 respondents 98% of them are belong to SC category and the remaining 2% belong to ST category. In the study, there were 70% male, 30% are female out of the total respondents. Since 96% of them have community certificate most of them got financial assistance from Government. The study reveals that 4% of them are house constructed by own,26% of them constructed by Panchayat funds ,64% get funds from SC/ST office ,and 6% get fund from block office. It was observed that only 28% of the respondents have permanent occupation. Majority of the respondents revealed that the fund allocation for sanitary facilities is increasing from 2010 onwards. All respondents (100%) have electricity in their house and 100% of peoples have water facility. But they are more dependent on panchayat water source by paying a small amount. It was found thatmMajority (72%) got study materials, out of which 44% of them benefited from the new scheme of building a study room.

Conclusion

For socio-economic growth and development, all sections of people in the state should be equally contributing. For that poverty alleviation programs are necessary to build up the human resource. Towards that objective, huge amount of funds are allocated but experiences shows that those funds are not properly utilised. The present study about the Plan Fund outlay for SC and ST sections of Kerala state reveals that fact that the funds are properly managed and utilised by the LSGs and beneficiaries are very satisfied with the fund allocation. The data collected reveals that the State Government is almost achieving the objectives of the SC and ST schemes.

For proper development of socio economic condition of the SC/ST population, a cognate mapping of all the communities living in the state, and an up-to-date statistics is essential. In order to fill in such gaps and fulfil the needs of the people, a corporate effort of individuals, scholars, universities, research and development agencies and voluntary organisations may prove fruitful. It is the universal truth that education is the backbone of a society to develop its socio-economic condition. The main problem of the SC/ST population is the absence of sufficient education in the real sense to enable them

to understand their own problems. In educational institutions, vocational courses should be opened in such occupations. There is a separate directorate for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes. It should be properly oriented and organized in such a manner so that under the leadership of the Director, a group of social workers can study and can make spot enquiries to remove grievances of the Scheduled Caste people. A number of small scale industries should be established in SC/ST populated areas with financial help and technical guidance to enable the young generation to engage in self employment. The government must take effective measure to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation

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