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## REVIEW ARTICLE

# HOUSING SCENARIO AMONG THE POOR AND MARGINALIZED NON-URBAN HOUSEHOLDS: A CASE STUDY INDIRA AWAAS YOJANA

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# Housing Scenario among the Poor and Marginalized Non-Urban Households: A Case Study Indira Awaas Yojana

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## INTRODUCTION

There are three basic necessities in life: food, clothing, and shelter. While all three are equally essential, the third one plays the more important role of harnessing a feeling of "belongingness" to the household/family.

The physical dwelling unit is not the sole element of housing; equally important is the provision of basic services in the house like potable water, sanitation, drainage, and electricity. It is these services that make a 'house' a 'home'.

Allotment of the IAY house shall be jointly in the name of husband and wife except in the case of a widow/unmarried /separated person. The State may also choose to allot it solely in the name of the woman. In the case of beneficiaries selected under the quota for persons with disabilities, the allotment should be only to such persons. The allotment order should be in a form which may be prescribed by the State conferring the title to the house. In the case of house sites, the land identified may be assigned in the name of the eldest woman of the household except in the case of all-male households and pucca title granted as patta and house for the assignee of the land should also be allotted to that person. There should be a provision for non-alienation for at least 15 years.

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), a flagship scheme of the Ministry of Rural Development has since inception been providing assistance to BPL families who are either houseless or having inadequate housing facilities for constructing a safe and durable shelter. This effort has been part of a larger strategy of the Ministry's poverty eradication effort, supporting the development of an environmentally sound habitat with adequate provisions for incremental expansion and improvement.

Ministry's commitment of shelter for all gained further momentum when India became a signatory to the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlement in June 1996 recognizing thereby the need for access to safe and healthy shelter and basic services as are essential

of a person's physical, psychological, social and economic wellbeing. The object of the habitat approach is to achieve adequate shelter for all, especially the deprived urban and rural poor through an enabling approach leading to development and improvements in access to basic facilities like infrastructure, safe drinking water, sanitation, electricity etc.

## BACKGROUND

Indira Awaas Yojana aims at providing houses to the members of SCs and non-SCs free of cost in the rural areas. Beneficiaries are selected from the list of eligible BPL households. The scheme is being implemented on 75:25 basis between Gol and GoP. Funds are released by Gol on the basis of incidence of poverty in rural areas of the State. A grant of Rs 35,000/- per unit was being provided in the plain areas and Rs 38,500/- in hilly/difficult areas for construction of houses from the years 2008-09 and 2009-10 which had been enhanced to Rs. 45,000/- and Rs. 48,500/- respectively from the year 2010-11. A grant of Rs. 70,000 per unit in plain areas and Rs. 75000 in hilly / difficult areas will be provided from 1.4.2013. For conversion of katcha houses into pucca/semi pucca, the maximum assistance is limited to Rs 15,000/- per unit. All the dwelling units are provided with smokeless chullas and sanitary latrines. The scheme is being implemented effectively in all the villages of the State.

IAY originated as a sub-scheme within the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) in 1985, and was later made a part of the Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY) in 1989. As a sub-scheme of JRY, IAY was allocated six percent of total JRY funds. This was raised to 10% in 1993- 94 when the scope of IAY was extended to non-SC/ST households, provided that not more than four percent of the total JRY allocation was used for non-SC/ST beneficiaries. In 1996, IAY was delinked from JRY and made an independent scheme in recognition of the need to tackle the growing housing problem. It is currently part of a suite of rural housing schemes that

were launched in 1999 and 2000 that collectively aimed to eliminate shelterlessness by the end of the Ninth Five Year Plan ending in 2002. The other schemes that form this suite of rural housing schemes includes the Samagra Awaas Yojana, Credit-cumsubsidy Scheme for Rural Housing, Rural Building Centres, Innovative Stream for Rural Housing and Habitat Development, and Pradhan Mantri Gramodya Yojana-Gramin Awaas.

Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) is the biggest and most comprehensive rural housing programme ever taken up in the country. It has its origin in the wage employment programmes of National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), which began in 1980, and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), which was started in 1983, as construction of house was permitted under these programmes. However, there were no common norms.

### **TECHNIQUES:**

While the housing subsidy (IAY, RHS) and housing grant schemes (MMAY) have helped the poor, both these programs suffer from certain gap areas. The current project aims to upscale the best practices from both these models to develop a generous scheme to assist the poor in building pucca houses. The housing subsidy schemes had limited funding support but flexible design and were owner driven and resulted in mostly repair of existing houses or new construction of kutcha houses. It is difficult for a poor household to build a pucca house with the limited subsidy amount. On the other hand, the housing grant schemes had generous grant amount, were implemented through local contractors with fixed design and were often delayed. Consequently, it was decided to use the implementation model of the housing subsidy schemes (RHS, IAY) and provide a generous grant so as to enable the poor households to also realize their dream of owning a pucca house.

The current strategy aims at providing Rs. 3.50 lakh housing grant to a household residing in a kutcha house to convert it into a pucca structure of approved design having certain minimum quality standards. This grant will be released in four installments subject to the house construction attaining pre-defined milestones and will include a material support of 54 GCI sheets. The beneficiary selection criteria will be a local household, residing in a kutcha house as on 1st Jan, 2011. The selection will be through a ward sabha and gram sabha with final approval by a Block Rural House Construction Committee (BRHCC) constituted under the chairmanship of the concerned local area MLA which will also supervise the construction of the house. Wherever the beneficiary is found incapable of constructing the house, the BRHCC will take up the implementation as a special case.

IAY has not been able to meet allied goals relating to improving living conditions for the rural poor. For example, houses built with IAY funds were also

supposed to sanitary latrines, and those built are not always used. An even lower percentage of houses have smokeless chulhas, and three years after it was launched only 30 infrastructure projects had been sanctioned under the Samagra Awas Yojana.

Since reduction of shelterlessness is the primary objective, 75% weightage is given to housing shortage and 25% to the poverty ratios prescribed by Planning Commission for State level allocation. For district level allocation, 75% weightage is given again to housing shortage and 25% to SC/ST population of the concerned districts. From April 2007 onwards, an online monitoring mechanism has been put in place to enable DRDAs to upload their monthly progress reports into the website of the Ministry. The Ministry has also launched a web-based local language enabled MIS programme to capture beneficiary-wise data to monitor the scheme. The Rural Housing Division has launched IAY Management Information System (IAY-MIS) software, AWAAS Soft.

AWAAS Soft is a local language enabled workflow based transaction level Management Information System to facilitate e-governance in the System. The MIS will be accessible not only to all the staff not only to all the stakeholders including beneficiaries but also citizens at large.

### **INDIRA AWAS YOJNA PROGRAMME:**

Under the Indira Awaas Yojana programme, altogether 14,895 families have been provided with financial assistance and GCI sheets for construction of new house at a total cost of Rs. 3518.39 lakh and 5,596 households have been provided with up gradation grant of Rs. 852.86 lakh since the inception of the scheme. During 2010-2011, it is proposed to cover 1,478 families with new houses with financial assistance of Rs. 716.99 lakh.

Ongoing programs over the last decade funded from the State Plan and with Central Assistance have helped reduce the Kutcha houses to about 6000 (5%). Pilot studies show that these households who still reside in Kutcha houses are the poorest of the poor and do not have the capacity to upgrade their Kutcha houses to pucca structures even with the support of the existing rural housing subsidy programs (IAY, RHS). Other hurdle is that they are landless and share-croppers, and their houses are on land that does not belong to them. The land owners discourage them from upgrading their house to a pucca structure fearing permanent tenancy and future ownership claims.

The unit cost of an IAY house in plain areas and in hill states and difficult areas (including IAP districts) would be as given in the Schedule attached. Difficult areas are those where due to reasons like low availability of materials, poor connectivity and adverse geographic, climatic and geological conditions, the cost of construction goes up significantly. The identification of

difficult area 'within a State shall be done by the State Government based on the methodology developed by it and approved by the Empowered Committee for the programme. Village Panchayats may be treated as the unit.

The IAY prescribes a multi-level monitoring system but the mechanisms at both the state and central level are inadequately implemented.

Progress reports sent by the state to the centre resulted in no follow-up action, and field visits by officials responsible for monitoring were inadequate or simply did not take place. Inventories of constructed or upgraded houses were not maintained in 26 states and two Union Territories, implying that verification of the construction is nearly impossible.

Bharat Nirman Programme is a business plan comprising six different components addressing the rural sector and housing is one of them.

Rural Housing was one of the six components of Bharat Nirman Programme. Under Bharat Nirman, 60 lakh houses were envisaged to be constructed under the Scheme of Indira Awaas Yojana in four years from 2005-06 to 2008-09. Against this target, 71.76 lakh houses were constructed thereby exceeding the target of Bharat Nirman period.

The Target under Phase-II "Bharat Nirman" is for construction of 120 lakh houses for a period of five years starting from 2009-10. During the first three years of the Bharat Nirman Programme Period-Phase-II, approx. 85.72 lakh houses have been constructed. The year-wise break-up is given below:

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF IAY APPROACHES**

The five year priority list of IAY beneficiaries and the list of landless households generated from the above process and the list of beneficiaries from the identified habitations should be presented in the Gram Sabha and its approval taken. The meeting should be attended by a representative of the District Collector and it should be videographed. In order to correct errors of inclusion and exclusion, the process of appeal indicated for SECC may be adopted. The five year priority list once approved by the Gram Sabha should be uploaded on Awaas Soft for habitations and for scattered households.

In 1996, with the restructuring of JRY, IAY became an independent Centrally sponsored scheme for providing shelter for the rural poor with resources being shared in ratios of 80: 20 between the Centre and the states. In order to make the programme cost-effective, IAY was modified and implemented in two components, namely: (a) construction of new houses, and (b) upgradation of katcha and unserviceable houses. As

part of the scheme, the states would be allowed to use up to 20 per cent of the funds allocated under IAY for the upgradation of unserviceable katcha houses.

As per the IAY guidelines, the selection of beneficiaries is the main responsibility of the Gram Sabha. The actual role of the Gram Sabha is to prepare a list of potential beneficiaries from the BPL list, record the acceptance from the local people and send the proposal to the DRDA/block level. The Gram Panchayat makes the list by studying the village survey in consultation with government officials, the Panchayat Samiti and block officials. The secretaries then send the names of the chosen beneficiaries to higher levels like the Panchayat Samiti/BDO/DRDA etc.

The functionaries face problems during the selection work in terms of the difficulty in locating the SC population. They often find that the Pallisabha/Gram Sabha is not organized properly due to the dominance of elite groups and political leaders. There are also certain constraints and difficulties in fulfilling the IAY targets. It becomes very tough | to select beneficiaries when the target is very low; so, it is found that the names of the potential beneficiaries are often changed after taking of underhand money from other applicants.

Similarly, it is usually tough to select SC beneficiaries since SCs are not found in some of the talukas. Interference by political leaders is often a major constraint in the achievement of the target. They are overburdened with staff when several schemes are being implemented at the block level at the same time.

The involvement of the local administration and political leaders is a common feature in the selection of beneficiaries. Politics are played out at the village level from above to provide houses to relatives and friends, and often members of the Gram Panchayat replace the names of the previous applicants with the new ones to provide houses to their own people. Only a few functionaries in Orissa cancelled the selection orders or informed the BDO when they found the use of unwarranted practices by the local administration. When there are two parties at the Gram Panchayat level, the one who rules usually offers privileges to their own people. Offering of bribes is also a common practice followed by the beneficiaries. Often, members from a single family make different ration cards with individual names and apply for separate houses. By this, they manage to get separate house allotted in their own names and then rent them out to others.

## **CONCLUSION**

The problem of house lessness continues to persist in India and about half of the houses are either in a barely livable or in dilapidated conditions. In order to overcome this problem, the Government of India introduced Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), a housing schemes for rural areas, launched in 1996, which focused on providing housing for the poor and the marginalized. However, till the date of the survey, less than half of the targets under the scheme were achieved. Some shortcomings were detected in the implementation of the IAY. The guidelines and the list of beneficiaries under the scheme were not Housing Situation among the Poor and Marginalized Rural Households displayed at the village level and absolutely no transparency was found in the operation of the scheme. Unwarranted practices by the local administration and political leaders were seen to obstruct the work of the functionaries in finalizing the list of beneficiaries. Only a few of the functionaries were found to be helping the beneficiaries in arranging materials and labour, and in providing technical assistance to them. None of the functionaries arranged for the provision of disaster-resistant materials and features or even organized workshops for promoting the use of low-cost technologies.

The gap between demand and supply in the case of IAY has not only remained but has, in fact, widened. Most of the non-beneficiaries belonging to the category of SCs/STs and Others are eligible for the scheme as per the IAY guidelines. The existing conditions under the scheme such as poor housing infrastructure, and the absence of sanitation, drinking water and electricity are grim and need urgent attention. Many of the potential beneficiaries have already applied but due to various reasons, they have been unable to get the benefit whereas some are still unaware of the scheme. The low targets of the IAY, and the prevalence of unwarranted practices and other influencing factors constitute some of the reasons for their non-selection.

The National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy of 2007, which is currently in operation, deals with housing for urban areas only. India clearly needs a Rural Housing and Habitat Policy to ensure that the specific character, priorities and potential of life in rural India are adequately and realistically addressed. Adequate housing is not just the mere provision of four walls and a roof but implies, inter alia, access to basic services such as water, sanitation, clean fuel, electricity, healthcare, education and livelihood, all of which are essential for ensuring dignified living, personal growth and social well-being in a productive society. The availability of these services as part of habitat development needs to be ensured through the convergence of schemes and the joint efforts of all the stakeholders.

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