

## **Education and the Poverty Trap in Rural Areas**

Ritu Chandra  
Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University  
Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, India

### **Introduction:**

In the words of Late President of India, Shri. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam “Almost half of the population of the world lives in rural regions and mostly in a state of poverty. Such inequalities in Human development have been one of the primary reasons for unrest and in some parts of the world, even violence.”

With nearly 80% of the poor living in rural areas, it is imperative that efforts be made for revival and progress of the rural economy in general with thrust on agriculture in particular. Transformational change in rural areas is only possible by linking Education to such areas to build the architecture of an Inclusive Nation. In a world based on science and Technology, it is Education that determines the level of prosperity, Welfare and security of the people. India in its journey to achieve Sustainable Development Goals has the potential to guide other developing countries, as the strategies introduced by Government of India for development, address National priorities aligned with SDG targets. The Flagship Programmes of Government of India like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid Day Meal, Swachh Bharat Mission, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yozna, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yozna, Mission Antyodaya, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yozana, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala yozana and many more showcase the government’s commitment for ensuring equitable society by ensuring that development reaches one and all. Sustainable Development Goals have been localized by introducing centrally sponsored schemes and related interventions to reach the most marginalized persons by participatory approach.

### **Role of Education in Rural Areas**

The Education must contribute for the upliftment of socio-economic status and development of rural areas. Due to lack of Education, Social and Economic development of rural areas become a challenge. Education can help for specialized training, decision making, creating more opportunities for employment and income generation sources. It can lead to increased productivity and public participation of the rural people. The educational development of rural individual can empower him to reap the benefits of various Government schemes and hence pave the way for an escape from poverty trap. Educational programs pertaining to local needs for the development of family, community and society will definitely reduce poverty and lead to equity of income. The role of education is to trigger social change and transformation. Noble Laureate Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach understands poverty beyond income. It refers poverty beyond a range of means available to achieve human capabilities like Literacy, longevity and access to income.

In the words of Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, “Economic transformation cannot happen without public participation. Development must become a ‘jan-andolan’ (participation of masses)”. Quality Education for survival and sustainability in rural environment is the need of the hour. It can enhance the standard of living, control migration to urban areas which leads to increase in unorganized labor sector and provide critical ability to diagnose and control the decisions affecting the lives of rural people.

Quality Education will be instrumental for entrepreneurship, which will create more employment opportunities that will induce growth and prosperity of individual as well as that of any nation. There are about 271 million poor people in India. The 2018 multi-dimensional poverty index provides the most comprehensive view of the many ways in which 1.3 billion people world-wide experience poverty in their daily lives. Poverty eradication requires actions on all fronts of water, energy, food-security, livelihood creation, securing the health of natural resources on which the livelihoods of people depend, reducing vulnerabilities, ensuring equity and a just governance framework. In 10 years, India has nearly halved its number of multidimensional poor – a massive climbing down to 27.5 percent from 54.7 percent between 2005-06 and 2015-16. These are the promising signs that poverty can be tackled. Over half of all multi-dimensionally poor in India live in the four poorest states. Pockets of poverty are found across India, but multidimensional poverty is particularly acute – and significant – in the four states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. These accounted for 196 million MPI poor people – more than half of all MPI poor in India. Across nearly every state, poor nutrition is the largest contributor to multidimensional poverty and not having a household member with at least six years of basic education is the second largest contributor.

### **Vicious circle of Poverty**

Education has a major role to play in helping the individual in the rural areas to cross the hurdle of poverty trap. As per research conducted the investigator found that Socio-economic status of the family coerces the individual to fall in this vicious circle of poverty. It is further observed that the educational level of such individuals is almost negligible, as low Socio economic status does not allow the privilege of healthy environment and good schools with proper infrastructure and facilities. The academic achievement is lowered and those who attend school, fail to attain the optimum level of expected learning outcomes resulting decline in productivity, which leads to poverty trap. Through the research it has further been observed that Socio economic status influences the Intelligence and academic achievement of the individuals. As per Stefan Ceci’s Bio- Ecological Theory, IQ is dependent on context. Intelligence is a biological disposition, which develops within an environment. Hence, children from low SES have stunted growth due to mal-nutrition and environment, and hence not able to academically perform well. As a result they are bound to lag behind economically and socially. Such children cannot be human resources and it prevents them from becoming human capital due to which they remain poor as adults too and it is transmitted in the

next generation as well.

The gaps identified by the researcher refers to irregularity in attending schools due to employment for daily wages to enhance family income, ignorance of family members especially parents, parent's Education level, low IQ level and low academic achievement due to environmental factors and malnutrition, lack of trained teachers, non-accountability of teachers, requirement of remedial classes for slow learners and children with low IQ and low SES and disparity between Government and private schools.

Table1

*Comparisons of Academic Achievement scores of Low, Average and High Socio Economic Status*

*Students*

SES Category	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T-Value		
				High	Average	Low
Low SES	39	52.62	11.329	13.344	6.487	----
Average SES	312	64.48	10.696	12.265	-----	6.487
High SES	263	74.91	9.484	-----	12.265	13.344
Total	614	68.19	12.094			

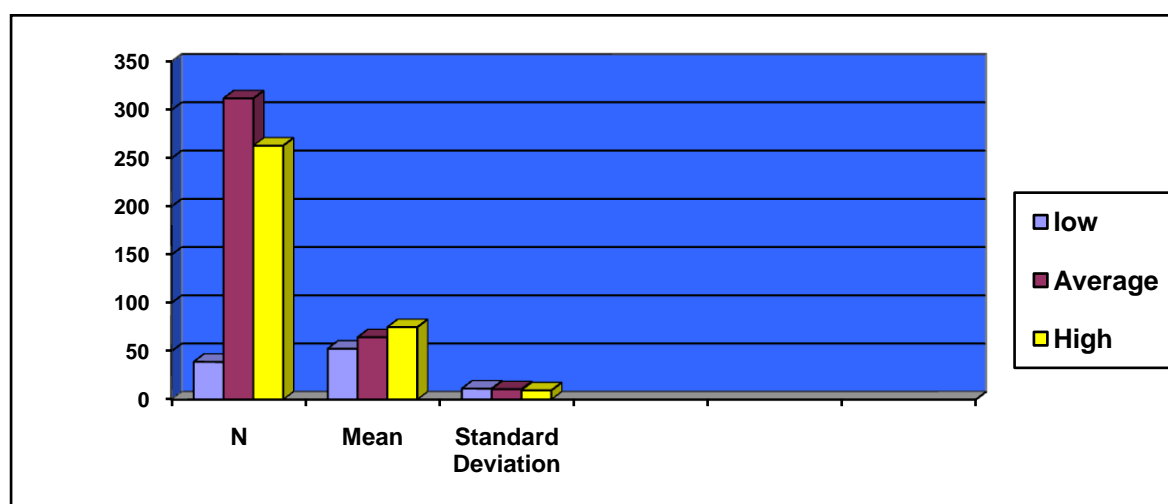
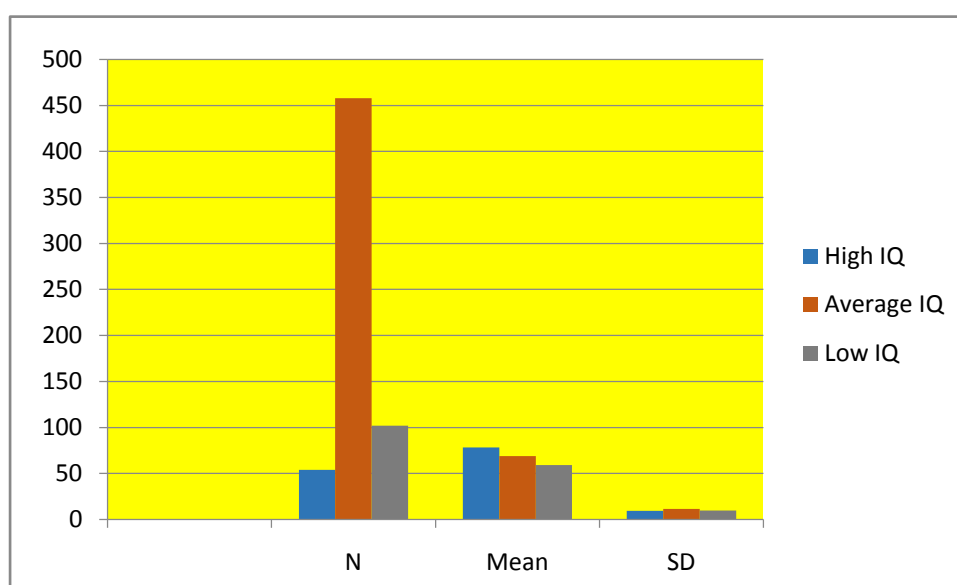


Figure 1 Comparative Academic Achievement scores of Low, Average and High Socio Economic Status Students

Table2

*Comparison of Academic Achievement scores of Low, Average and High IQ Students*

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	T- Value		
				High	Average	Low
High IQ	54	78.24	9.371	-----	5.638	11.745
Average IQ	458	69.00	11.605	5.638	-----	7.883
Low IQ	102	59.25	9.727	11.745	7.883	-----
<b>Total</b>	614	68.19	12.094	--	--	--



*Figure2: Comparative Academic Achievement scores of Low, Average and High IQ scores*

**School Education**

The Indian School System today faces an important challenge to improve learning outcomes. In order to combat this challenge and to fulfill SDG 4.1 initiatives like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and The Right of Children to free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act have been introduced as the flagship schemes of Government of India. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in 2015-16 for grades I-V was 99.2% and for grades VI-VIII was 92.8%. Pupil-Teacher ratio at national level for elementary schools was 24:1 and for secondary schools it was 27:1, the proportion of children in grade III who can read at least a grade I level text dropped from 50.6 in 2008 to 40.3 in 2014, before increasing marginally to 42.5 in 2016 according to Pratham’s Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) data. The proportion of children in grade III who can do at least subtraction fell from 39% in 2008 to 25.4% in 2014, and again increased slightly to 27.7% in 2016.

It has been observed that the traditional factors like more or better infrastructure, lower pupil-teacher ratios, higher teacher salaries and more teachers training have not been effective in improving student learning outcomes.

Rather, effective innovative pedagogy that focuses on teaching at the right level, outcome based education, and governance will enable the system to operate smoothly.

### **Right to Education Act, 2009**

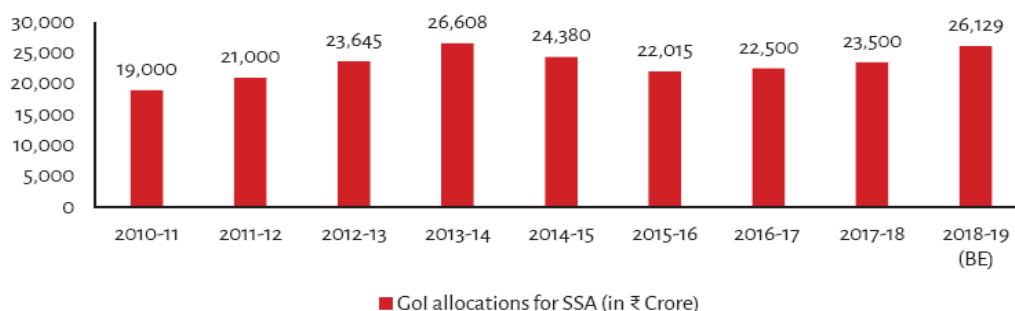
Right to Education Act is a step towards universalizing elementary education. The philosophy behind it is to develop manpower for different levels of economy, so as to make the nation self-reliant. This Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 became operative in the year 2010 to accomplish its objectives through the major programs like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid Day Meal at primary level, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, Model Schools at Secondary level, Vocational Education, Girls' Hostel, Inclusive Education of the Disabled, Saakshar Bharat for Adult Education, Mahila Samakhyas for Women's education, Infrastructure Development of Minority Institutions; Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madarsas for Minority Education.

A good quality basic education equips pupils with literacy skills for life and further learning; literate parents are more likely to send their children to school; literate people are better able to access continuing educational opportunities; and literate societies are better geared to face challenges.

### **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the Government of India's (GoI) flagship elementary education programme. Launched in 2001, it aims to provide universal education to children between the ages of 6 to 14 years. SSA is the primary vehicle for implementing the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), passed in 2009. Funds are shared between GoI and state governments in a 60:40 ratio. In Financial Year (FY) 2018-19, GoI allocations for SSA stands at 26,129 crore, an 11 per cent increase over the previous FY. In FY 2016-17, SSA budgets towards quality related interventions accounted for only 9 per cent of total approved budgets and 69 per cent of this budget was spent. According to the National Achievement Survey (NAS 2015), only 36 per cent of Class V students across India scored more than 50 per cent in reading comprehension and 37 per cent scored more than 50 per cent in Mathematics in 2014.

### GOI SSA ALLOCATIONS INCREASED BY 11% BETWEEN 2017-18 AND 2018-19



**Source:** Union Expenditure Budget, Vol. 2, Ministry of Human Resource Development FY 2010-11 to FY 2018-19. Available online at: [www.indiabudget.nic.in](http://www.indiabudget.nic.in).  
**Note:** Figures are in crore of rupees and are revised estimates, except for FY 2018-19 which are Budget Estimates (BE). Last accessed on 1 February 2018.

### Midday Meal

Government of India has taken many initiatives like Midday Meals to provide nutritional diet for better health and well-being and at the same time to increase enrolment in schools and for maintaining regular attendance in school.

States\UT	% of Schools with Attendance Rates				% of Schools Serving Midday Meals
	90-100%	75-90%	45-75%	<45%	
Andhra Pradesh	66.68	29.16	4.16	0	100
Assam	20.87	25.00	45.80	8.33	62.5
Bihar	0	0	72.00	28.00	60.0
Chandigarh	33.30	33.30	0	33.30	100
Haryana	30.72	53.80	15.30	0	69.2
Himachal Pradesh	46.10	46.21	7.69	0	69.2
Madhya Pradesh	5.50	50.00	44.40	0	83.3
Rajasthan	10.56	73.65	15.77	0	100
Uttar Pradesh	3.12	15.60	50.60	31.20	93.7
Tamil Nadu	96.66	3.33	0	0	100
West Bengal	42.86	38.09	9.52	9.52	100
<b>All states\UT</b>	<b>33.30</b>	<b>28.80</b>	<b>27.90</b>	<b>9.90</b>	<b>85.6</b>

### Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan

The Union Budget, 2018-19, has proposed to treat school education holistically without segmentation from pre-nursery to Class 12. Samagra Shiksha - an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class 12 has been, therefore, prepared with the broader goal of improving school effectiveness measured in terms of equal opportunities for schooling and equitable learning

outcomes. It subsumes the three Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

Research in disciplines like neuroscience, psychology, and economics reveal that early childhood (the age group of 0-8 years) is a critical period during which the foundation of lifelong learning is built. 90% of all brain development takes place by the age of 6. Children should be given the kind of experiences they need in the early years to have positive effects not only on children's academic performance in school, but also on a range of social and economic outcomes even many years later. Hence Quality of Education in early years is very important to prepare the children for future roles in society.

Hence, the importance of Early Childhood Education is widely recognized internationally and is included in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 that were approved by countries around the globe, including India. SDG Target 4.2 states that by 2030 countries should 'ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education'. In India too, the importance of early care and stimulation has been recognized in the National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education (2013), which aims to provide 'developmentally appropriate preschool education for 3 to 6 year olds with a more structured and planned school readiness component for 5 to 6 year olds.'

These recommendations have been incorporated into the recently created Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan scheme of the Government of India, which has brought renewed focus and attention on ECE through the Integrated Scheme on School Education that aims to treat school education' holistically without segmentation from pre-nursery to Class 12'. This scheme aims for greater coordination and convergence with the Ministry of Women and Child Development to focus on preschool education for children aged 4-6 years; states are encouraged to co-locate Anganwadi centres in government primary schools or else implement pre-primary classes of up to two years duration prior to Std I.

The Goal SDG-4.1 states that "By 2030, ensure that all boys and girls complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

Further the SDG 4.5 states that "By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of Education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations"

The scheme envisages the 'school' as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to Senior Secondary levels. The vision of the Scheme is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education from pre-school to senior secondary stage in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education.

The major interventions, across all levels of school education, proposed under the scheme are: (i) Universal Access including Infrastructure Development and Retention; (ii) Gender and Equity; (iii) Inclusive Education; (iv) Quality; (v) Financial support for Teacher Salary; (vi) Digital initiatives; (vii) RTE Entitlements including uniforms, textbooks etc.;(viii) Pre-school Education; (ix) Vocational Education; (x) Sports and Physical Education; (xi) Strengthening of Teacher Education and Training; (xii) Monitoring; (xiii) Programme Management; and (xiv) National Component.

The main emphasis of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan is on improving quality of school education by focussing on the two T's-Teacher and Technology. To meet both the targets SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) programme was initiated to achieve three cardinal principles of Education Policy namely access, equity and quality. The objective of the programme is to provide learning opportunity to all including most disadvantaged. This is done through indigenous developed IT platform that facilitates hosting of all the courses taught in classroom from 9<sup>th</sup> till post graduation to be accessed by anyone, anywhere, anytime. All the courses are free of cost and available to Indian residents designed by best teachers across the country. Swayam will be capable of hosting 2,000 courses and 80,000 hours of learning covering school, UG and PG, Engineering, Law & other professional courses. There is a facility of credit transfer on the academic record of the student for the course done on Swayam by Intervention of UGC.

### **Inclusive Quality Education and Equity in Education**

Sustainable Development Goal 4 ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes life-long learning opportunities for all. In order to achieve all the targets of Goal 4; the total financial requirement for India is of the order of INR 142 lakhs crores (USD 2258 billion). While there is no financial gap identified in case of primary and secondary schooling due to provisions and finance allocations under Right to Education Act, there are significant gaps in case of early childhood development and tertiary and higher education. There is a gap of INR 27 lakh crores (USD 429 billion) out of the total of INR 35 lakh crores (USD 555 billion) required for ensuring access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education. Further, India will require an additional INR 19 lakh crores (USD 301 billion) for ensuring quality technical, vocational and tertiary education. To enhance the standards of Indian higher education to match world standards, additional finance may be required over and above what is estimated here.

India is expected to become the second largest economy by 2050, it will also have the world's largest working-age population which is expected to touch 962 million by 2030. Furthermore, India will be the world's youngest country by 2020 with an average age of 29 years. Thus, India will not only have a young workforce to fulfill its domestic needs, it also has the opportunity to become the global hub for skilled workforce. The youth of India need education and skills to be able to fulfill their promise. India is estimated to require a sum of INR 9 lakh crores (USD 145 billion) to skill India's workforce. Only about 2 per cent of the existing workforce has undergone formal skill



training and about 15 per cent of the existing workforce has marketable skills, whereas 90 per cent of jobs in India are skill based and require vocational training (Simon M.2014). The Government of India has announced a target of skilling 500 million individuals by 2022. However, India's current skilling capacity is only 7 million people per annum. To meet the **target SDG 4.4** for skilling this large workforce PMKVY (Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna) imparts Industry relevant skill training to large number of Indian youth that will help them in securing a better livelihood. Under this scheme, Training & Assessment fee is completely borne by the Government. Individuals with prior learning experience or skills are assessed and certified under the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) component of the scheme. RPL is working to align the competencies of the unregulated workforce of the country.

### **Best Practices**

The vision of transformational change in rural development processes by leveraging knowledge institutions to help build the architecture of an inclusive Nation is visualized through another Programme ' Unnat Bharat Abhiyan'. Through this mission higher education institutions work for development of rural India by indentifying challenges and evolving appropriate solutions for accelerating sustainable growth. It creates a cycle between the society and Academic Institutions by providing knowledge to upgrade the capabilities of both public and private sector in responding to the development needs of rural India. As Participating Institute, SRMU also conducted baseline survey of 5 villages adopted by the University. It also conducted baseline household survey. Gram Sabha were also organized to collect feedback of the problems and on its basis Village development plans are prepared to identify the major challenges and gaps in eradicating poverty and creating more jobs opportunities in rural environment to control migration for work to urban area. This was only possible by participation of the public. Feedback of various policies and flagship programmes of government was conducted on ground.

### **Reforms and Programs for the Rural Economy**

To promote education at all levels it is essential to bring certain social and economic reforms with respect to socio cultural environment of the rural areas. Construction of Roads will enhance connectivity and connect the remotest of villages so that the facility of schools can reach every doorstep. It will also connect the villages to (Mandis) markets so as to get fair price for their produce and become economically better. Education will create awareness among the rural masses for various programmes and help them in decision making.

- a) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) - Efforts have been successfully made in connecting villages to highways though rural roads. Total rural road length constructed has been 36,340 and 36,450 kilometres during 2014-15 and 2015-16, respectively. In March 2016, approximately 65,000 habitats remain to be

connected. This connectivity will enhance the socio economic status of the rural masses.

- b) Prime Minister’s Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) is being implemented in mission mode .Incentives are being provided to expand micro irrigation methods such as drip and sprinkler irrigation. The government is creating soil and seed testing facilities at 2000 retail outlets of fertilizer companies.
- c) Prime Minister’s Jana Dhana Yojana program entered the Guinness Book of Records for opening 1.8 crore bank accounts in one week from 23 to 29 August 2014. By May 2016, the scheme had opened 21.74 crore accounts with Rs. 37,445 crore in deposits for the purpose of direct benefit transfer (DBT) instrumentality backed by the unique Aadhar identity effectively eliminates any scope for an individual receiving benefits multiple times using multiple or ghost identities.
- d) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) focus on augmentation of livelihood of the vulnerable section of the population. Total budget allocation under MGNREGA for FY 2017-18 was 55,167 Crore (highest since the inception. It has provided employment to 5.12 crore households by generating more than 235 crore person days of wage employment covering 177 lakh works.

**Employment generated under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) during 2015-16 to 2017-18**

		2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
<b>1</b>	Person-days Generated (In crore)	235.15	235.65	234.26
<b>2</b>	Scheduled Caste (SCs) person-days (% as of total persondays)	22.29	21.32	21.48
<b>3</b>	Scheduled Tribe (STs) person-days (% as of total person-days)	17.80	17.62	17.60
<b>4</b>	Women Persondays (%)	55.26	56.16	53.46
<b>5</b>	Average days of employment provided per household	48.85	46.00	45.78
<b>6</b>	Average Wage Rate per day per person(Rs.)	154.08	161.65	169.46
<b>7</b>	<b>Total Households Worked (In Crore)</b>	<b>4.81</b>	<b>5.12</b>	<b>5.12</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Total Individuals Worked (In Crore)</b>	<b>7.23</b>	<b>7.67</b>	<b>7.59</b>

- e) Pradhan Mantri Ujjawal Yojana under which 5 crore BPL [below poverty line] households will be provided subsidized LPG cylinders over the next three years. Thus focusing on health issues.
- f) Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is not only critical for a healthy India but is also essential to creating a modern India. Among other things, it proposes to make

India open defecation free by 2 October 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Toilets built have risen from 5 million in 2013-14 to 5.88 million in 2014-15 and 12.7 million in 2015-16. Again to map the SDG target of health and sanitation.

- g) Deendayal Antyodaya yojana- National Rural Livelihoods Mission(DAY-NRLM) Day-NRLM seeks to alleviate poverty through building sustainable community institutions of the poor. In the financial year 2017-18 more than 88 lakh households mobilized into 7.75 lakh self help groups across the country.

## **Conclusion**

The Policy makers must learn from the past and frame such regulations, so as to move the economy forward. Such policies will accelerate growth, make the system sustainable and mitigate poverty.

The strategy for combating poverty must rest on sustained rapid growth that focuses on employment and making anti-poverty programs effective. Sustained rapid growth works by creating jobs that pay real wages, it will directly control poverty and, secondly it will lead to growth in government revenues. The income of poor residing in rural areas, depend on agricultural growth. It is recommended to raise productivity in agriculture, giving appropriate prices to farmers, helping small & marginal farmers by reforming tenancy laws and bringing quick relief to farmers in times of natural disasters. The ultimate effort should be to ensure that the families become capable of earning and sustaining above-poverty level income within few years.

Thus, Education can be an indirect and long - term measure to reduce poverty and promote sustainability. Effective educational programs at primary, Secondary and Tertiary level will lead to human capital formation. This human capital will be trained, skilled and productive with knowledge moving the National economy towards the rise. As very aptly stated in UNESCO's 2014 report "Sustainable Development Begins with Education", accessible quality education is essential to achieving all of the Goals, including poverty: by increasing income, offering better livelihoods, and reducing chronic poverty.

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