

VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1

APRIL 2022

# POLICY MATTERS

---



**THE RISING TIDE OF WELFARISM**

# CONTENTS

— *Foreword* **1**

**2** *Editors Speak*—

— *In Focus* **3**

**8** *Opinions Matter*—

— *In Jest* **22**

**24** *Policy Catch*—

— *Meet the Team* **26**



# SPECIAL THANKS TO



***Prof. Biju Toms, Director,  
Department of Professional Studies***

***Dr. Kavitha D, Head of Department,  
Department of Professional Studies***



***Dr. Budha Anuradha, Co-ordinator  
M.A. (Public Policy),  
Department of Professional Studies***



# FOREWORD




In the globalised world order, the prominence of the welfare state seems to prevail, despite many challenges. The *welfarist* preferences of every nation-state, irrespective of differences in forms of governments, constitutional and institutional structures, and leadership styles, have been very apparent. This is because gross economic inequality engulfs many societies across the world. Hence, corrective redistribution of resources becomes mandatory for the survival of the underprivileged sections of society. The importance of *welfare* and *welfarist* measures has once again underscored its inexorable necessity in the wake of the ongoing pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities, and livelihood crises have aggravated like never before. Such situations necessitate social and public welfare policies that reach every person who is in need. The pandemic has also highlighted the fragmented, inadequate, and exclusionary nature of social welfare policy regimes in countries like India and others. Therefore, a more extensive and universal social welfare mechanism that benefits those vulnerable populations outside the social safety net is the need of the hour in times of crisis.

The pandemic has reiterated the need for a robust welfare system to at least mitigate, if not completely eradicate, the effects of an unequal society. Only then can the democratic welfare state, true to its ethical obligation of care towards its people, thrive. Meanwhile, in response to the call for reimagining welfare strategies, we should build cultures of mutuality, respect, and belonging, whereby gaps between welfare and well-being are addressed.

Thus, the most compelling case for the welfare state goes beyond narrow economic arguments. Arguments for social justice factor in these questions - What kind of society do we want to live in, and what kind of individuals do we want to be? For those who support the welfare state, its central role is in creating compassionate individuals with a social conscience and a sense of solidarity towards their fellow citizens. For policymakers, it is in the relentless negotiation of policy formulation and implementation of welfare at various levels of governance, in constantly changing communities, that determine the nature of welfare outcomes.


*Dr. Kavitha D, Head of Department, Department of Professional Studies*





There is no aspect in anyone's life that is not impacted by policies. Something as fundamental as living in a well-sanitised environment is affected by the decisions our policy makers and implementers take. Oftentimes, we are unaware of policies being implemented or amended, despite a plethora of our day-to-day activities depending on their smooth functioning. Policy is a dynamic and vibrant discipline, and the platform for its study and applications must mirror this characteristic. It is in light of this background that the M.A. (Public Policy) course, under the aegis of the Department of Professional Studies, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), proudly presents to you its flagship magazine, *Policy Matters*. Policy and governance have become buzzwords in areas of contemporary research, and there is a need for professionals from diverse fields to be involved in policy making and policy analysis. Although the magazine is an initiative of the M.A. (Public Policy) cohort, we believe *Policy Matters* would serve as a multidisciplinary platform for the CHRIST (Deemed to be University)'s fraternity to ruminate on matters of policy and articulate their opinions. We hope that the continued publication of *Policy Matters* will help create an easily accessible repository of varied inputs on all things policy.

The first edition of this novel publication is themed along the lines of welfarism, an umbrella term that encompasses the policies of a welfare state. India is portrayed to be a welfare state under the provisions of its Constitution, and governments, both at the central and state levels, have enacted a multitude of policies aimed at enhancing the 'welfare' of their citizens post independence. As a country, we have traversed a long journey since, and it becomes imperative to pause and analyse the effectiveness of previous policy decisions, which continue to be relevant in contemporary settings. It is also crucial to give thought to predictable outcomes of upcoming policy decisions. Unprecedented incidents, like the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, have highlighted various loopholes in the existing policy frameworks. Avenues like education, health and nutrition, possible poverty alleviation alternatives, and population policies, among others, have gained renewed focus against the prevailing socio-economic backdrop. The pages of this issue bring to you, the reader, opinions on some of these issues in concise and well-written articles submitted by authors from the CHRIST fraternity. As we launch this maiden edition, we are eager for you to peruse its contents. Just as we gained new insights as we put this all together, we hope that you, the reader, do as well.





Z -



FOCUS





---

## The Indian Welfare State: A Judicial Perspective

*Priyanka Vaidyanath on the judiciary's role in promoting a welfare state*

The idea of the Indian State as a welfare state has been widely debated. A welfare state is typically understood to mean a State that ensures that a minimum standard of life is maintained in its jurisdiction, and provides its citizens a basic income, social security, healthcare, etc. Its *raison d'être* is to address the needs of its citizens, but prioritising these needs is left to the government of the day. Scholarly literature shows that a State tends to protect its legitimacy by addressing the needs of its people.

The Indian State has been established as a welfare state, as envisaged in Part III and Part IV of the Constitution. *Prima facie*, the onus of promoting welfarism rests on the government, particularly the political party at the helm. This article, however, explores the judiciary's influence on the concept of a 'welfare state.' The responsibility of interpreting the Constitution to fit the dynamic socio-political needs of the society rests with the judiciary. While the Constitution itself imposes this responsibility on the judicial branch, the mere interpretation of laws is insufficient to highlight the judiciary's endeavour towards promoting welfarism. Over time, various judicial concepts and doctrines of interpretation have evolved to aid the realisation of the objectives of the framers of the Constitution in pursuance of the Indian State as a welfare state. Doctrines and concepts such as judicial review, and the substantive due process of law, along with judicial activism, are innate features of the Indian judiciary that have fostered the Indian welfare state.

The Constitution of India, particularly certain provisions, supports the idea of the Indian State as a welfare state, primarily articulated in the Preamble. The people of India are assured:

*JUSTICE, social, economic and political; EQUALITY of status of opportunity...*

Access to justice is highlighted in Article 38 of the Constitution—the State shall promote “welfare of the people”—read with Article 39, which seeks to ensure that justice is served in furtherance of it. Thus, welfarism is conspicuous in the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) stated in the Constitution. The judiciary was confronted with a long-drawn battle of whether DPSP should be given importance than fundamental rights, since fundamental rights are envisioned as a means to achieve DPSP. H.M. Seervai, in his commentary on Constitutional Law of India, traces the origin and development of India as a welfare state, delineating the political choices made by the statesmen of our country. Their impact on the concept of a 'welfare state' influenced the judiciary in enumerating a few imperative rights of citizens.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, during the drafting of the Constitution, agreed with the view that though DPSP have no legal force, they act as a framework to guide the elected government, regardless of which political party is in power. Under no circumstances or conditions can the government overlook the obligations listed under DPSP; though not answerable to a court of law, it is certainly answerable during elections to the electorate.

This interpretation posed a challenge for the judiciary: In times of conflict, should prominence be given to fundamental rights or to DPSP? In a series of cases, such as *Madras v. Champakam Dorairajan*, *Mohd. Hanif Quareshi v. Bihar*, and *In Re Kerala Education Bill*, the view was that fundamental rights should be chosen over DPSP. However, in *Minerva Mills v. UOI*, the Supreme Court held that the prominence of one over the other would disturb the “harmony of the Constitution”, and therefore, fundamental rights and DPSP need to be interpreted harmoniously. The Supreme Court has since actively balanced the aims under the DPSP with the mandates of the fundamental rights.



A few essential rights have been granted fundamental status through the judiciary's active approach in interpreting the Constitution. For instance, in the context of Article 21—right to life to include right to live with dignity—the Apex Court, while considering the issue of bonded labour, concluded that the right to life includes the right to live with dignity, deriving this interpretation through Article 39(e) and (f), and Articles 41 and 42. Article 21 also includes workers' right to health by reading Article 21 with Articles 39(e), 41, 43, and 48A. Rights such as the right to livelihood, the right to privacy, the right to shelter, the right against handcuffing, the right to hearing, the right to information, the right to education, and the right to freedom from noise pollution have been read into the existing constitutional rights.

The substantive due process of law protects the general welfare of people by balancing it against the police power of the State. In this regard, the judiciary has identified a few rights that may be regarded as indispensable in the modern day.

A historically famous case in point from the United States is *Roe v. Wade*. It paved the way for nations such as India to incorporate similar interpretations. A pregnant woman filed a suit against the validity of a statute that made abortion illegal. The court held that a statute that does not recognise the termination of pregnancy by a woman, who has a right over her body, violates due process under the Fourteenth Amendment. The right to abortion was read into 'Liberty' and the right to privacy was deliberated in wisdom. In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the court upheld the right to abortion following *Roe's* case and reaffirmed the presumptive right of individual liberty. In this manner, the welfare of an individual, especially their definition of self, is protected through substantive due process.

The Supreme Court of India, in *Maneka Gandhi v. UOI*, held that the fundamental rights mentioned under Part III of the Constitution are part of the integrated constitutional scheme that realises the aims set out in the Preamble; isolated, their purpose is defeated.

A mere formal procedure does not satisfy the vision of Article 21, and such a procedure has to be fair, just, and reasonable. Further, the court expressed that a fair and just procedure alone does not empower the State to deprive life and liberty. Such a provision has to also satisfy the requirement under Articles 14 and 19. This interpretation by the Supreme Court upholds the doctrine of substantive due process.

According to Adv. Abhinav Chandrachud, this doctrine in India arose from three kinds of cases: the basic structure case, 'arbitrariness' under Article 14, and the expansive interpretation of the right to life under Article 21. The outcome of this doctrine is that it enables the Supreme Court of India to align the fundamental rights of citizens with the dynamics of society. A few cases that highlight the Indian judiciary's application of the doctrine of substantive due process are mentioned below.

In the case of *Indian Hotel and Restaurant Association v. State of Maharashtra*, the insertion of Sections 33A and 33B into the Bombay Police Act, 1951 was questioned based on Article 14. Section 33A prohibited the performance of dance in eating places, permit rooms, and beer bars—the owners of the establishment, if found guilty, had to shut down their business. Section 33B exempted some establishments, allowing dance performances—these were more or less elite establishments. The purported objective of the said amendment was that such performances in dance bars depraved public morality and decency. However, the court held that though the classification was made on intelligible differentia, there was no nexus with the object of the statute, and that the amendment was arbitrary, thereby failing in providing equal protection of the law. Hence, the ban on dance bars in Mumbai was lifted. In this case, the Supreme Court made use of the "direct inevitable effect test" laid down in the *Maneka Gandhi* case. Along with the arbitrariness doctrine, the substantive rights of the dance performers, i.e., right to livelihood (Article 21), right to practice their profession (Article 19(1)(g)), and right to freedom of speech and expression (Article 19(1)(a)) through performance of dance were upheld.



Hussainara Khatoon v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar (1979) concerned under-trial prisoners in Bihar who had been imprisoned for a period longer than what their sentence would have carried, and those who had committed bailable offences but were too poor to apply for bail. Their situation was found to be violative of Article 21, and attracted the precedents set by the Maneka Gandhi case—the “procedure established by law” under Article 21 has to be just, fair, and reasonable without depriving individual life and liberty. It is clear that the under-trial prisoners’ rights were arbitrarily and unfairly deprived. The court cited Article 39A of the Constitution, emphasising free legal aid as an element of a reasonable, fair, and just procedure, and held it to be an implicit part of Article 21.

In Sheela Barse v. State of Maharashtra (1983), the petitioner, a journalist who interviewed women prisoners, realised that they were victims of custodial assault. Her letter to the then Hon’ble Chief Justice of India was treated as her writ petition. These two cases enunciated the right to free legal aid and the right to a speedy trial as essential facets of Article 21 to safeguard liberty.

In Unni Krishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1993), a petition was filed regarding the correctness of the judgement in Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka. The latter case was regarding the fee structure of engineering and medical colleges in India, which directly affected the students’ access to education. The court held that the right to education is important to realise the right to life and dignity, and extended the State’s obligation to provide education for its citizens. The court here stated that, “Right to education is not stated expressly as a fundamental right in Part III. This Court has, however, not followed the rule that unless a right is expressly stated as a fundamental right, it cannot be treated as one”.

This sufficiently demonstrates the court’s understanding of substantive due process by which unenumerated rights are read into the Constitution. The Supreme Court opines that this is not a new concept under Part III of the Indian Constitution. A logical issue that cropped up in this case was that Article 21 is applicable only if the State, by law, violates the fundamental right to education. Since there was no such instance, a violation of Article 21 could not be upheld. Therefore, the fundamental right to education cannot be deprived by the State except through procedure established by law. The extent to which the right is granted was elicited by the court, relying heavily on the DPSP. It concluded that every child under the age of 14 has a fundamental right to education. Based on the DPSP, the court enumerated a right, reading it under an existing right. To reiterate, substantive due process is when the courts protect certain fundamental rights from governmental intervention, regardless of such a right being textually mentioned in the Constitution. The court recognises such rights as imperative. Here, the court considered not only the State’s duty to protect fundamental rights but also its obligation to recognise and preserve them. Hence, the doctrine of substantive due process of law enables the judiciary to bring into existence a new right by dynamic interpretation.

On ‘welfarism’ promoted through the judiciary, it is important to analyse whether India follows a need-based approach or a right-based approach. An analysis of the case laws mentioned above and the approach of the judiciary suggests that the Indian conception of welfarism lies somewhere between the two, and a need can become a right. But in addition to implementing policies and schemes to support the welfare and growth of citizens, it must not be forgotten that a true welfare state empowers citizens to claim entitlements such as education, health, and equality not merely as benefits but as rights.

*The author is a research scholar of law at CHRIST (Deemed to be University).*



**O  
P  
-  
N  
-  
O  
N  
S**



**M  
A  
T  
T  
E  
R**





Photo Credits: Chris Fleming Anthony  
M.A. Media and Communication Studies,  
CHRIST (Deemed to be University)



## First in the Race, But Karnataka Ain't Winning Any Trophy

**Vedika Shivam** on how the National Education Policy, 2020 hampers education in Karnataka

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 envisages India to be a world-class destination for high-quality education in the span of the next fifteen years and to reclaim its position as Vishwa Guru that it enjoyed when Nalanda, Takshashila, and Ujjain universities flourished as educational hubs for students from across the globe. The NEP 2020 attempts to bring about structural changes in early childhood education, middle school, higher education, vocational training, adult education, qualification of teachers, and the administration of education itself.

The new policy aims at replacing the previous National Policy on Education, 1986, and purportedly deals with the issues that were left unaddressed. The NEP 2020 was sanctioned by the Union Cabinet of India on the 29th of July 2020, and Karnataka became the first state to implement it in August 2021.

In theory, it seeks to revolutionise the field of education, but it lacks the infrastructure and clarity in its implementation. When the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on all educational and other activities, the Government of Karnataka rolled out the implementation of NEP 2020. While the impact of COVID-19 on education was novel to deal with in itself, embracing a new structure and methodology of education amidst the chaos comes across as a hasty move, possibly a sycophantic attempt to appease the Centre. Now that Karnataka holds the pride of having become the first state to implement NEP 2020, it has also become the first state to deal with the implementation gap in the policy, which it is struggling to bridge with no precedent to look up to.

Since education is a concurrent subject, the state has the provision of adding its own regulations to the policy. Therefore, the Government of Karnataka has now mandated an additional paper, 'functional Kannada' for undergraduate courses. Although it is aimed at promoting the language, it is feared that the mobility of students from other parts of the country may be restricted because of the difficulties in learning a new language at the undergraduate level with exams for the same. Hypothetically, if all states were to come up with similar policies, students would hesitate to

move to other states to pursue their education, preferring to stay back in their home states. This would deprive students of the benefits of diverse, multicultural experiences.

The policy also proposes four-year degree programmes with multiple exits, in addition to proposing one-year master's programmes. However, since the policy is not uniformly implemented across all states, students who have completed four-year degree programmes in Karnataka may not be offered one-year master's programmes in other states. This compels such students to undertake two-year master's programmes even if they have studied four years of an undergraduate course. This shows how the policy has been implemented without any prior preparations and lacks sufficient vision.

Mandating the mother tongue as the medium of instruction may further present inconveniences. On the positive side, it may enhance the learning capacity of children, but on the contrary, it might be difficult to implement because most cities are becoming cosmopolitan. Sticking to the mother tongue may disadvantage those who have migrated from other states. Another issue at hand is, how do we come to a consensus on which language constitutes the mother tongue in a particular region? Often, the varied dialects of the same language are dependent on the caste of the community. Emphasising one dialect would passively perpetuate the caste system, and deciding the mother tongue based on the majority present in the region would lead to majoritarianism, with minorities losing out on the advantage of learning in their own mother tongues.

The NEP 2020 also proposes the opening of preschools for children aged between 3 and 6 in rural and urban areas under the Department of Education. However, Anganwadi workers are still uncertain about the role they are expected to play, the approach to be followed to implement the integrated child development routines, and fear that the number of admissions may decrease in Anganwadis.



---

While the outcomes of quality education are manifold, objective parameters that reflect its success would be a steady rise in the rate of employment and innovation over the next decade. An increased rate of employment and a higher rank in the Global Innovation Index would indicate that the aims of the education policy have been met. This policy can be considered successful if it achieves SDG 4, ensuring the inclusive and equitable quality of education and enabling access to lifelong learning for all.

Ideally, the NEP 2020 should also enable greater achievements in arts and sports. Special importance is given to them with their integration into mainstream education right from the secondary level of schooling.

A predictable failure of having the mother tongue as the medium of instruction would be that students may not gain fluency in English. Evidently, students in Karnataka have become the guinea pigs of the new policy, with the policy having been implemented without establishing the required infrastructure.

Further, there is no clarity provided to those stakeholders who guide and mentor students.

Regarding the budget for this revolutionary change in education, Anil Swaroop, Former Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy, opines,

*"The NEP 2020 advocates that at least 6% of GDP should be spent on education to build in the fundamental infrastructure necessary for its implementation, however, this year's budget has come down to less than 2%. The education budget may have crossed a landmark of 1 lakh crore but it has been decreasing as a percentage of total expenditure."*

With a vision so great, it becomes imperative for the government to show immense commitment towards achieving it. However, with the present gaps in its implementation, and the fact that people are still suffering from the after-effects of COVID-19, the Government of Karnataka could not have chosen a worse time to implement the policy.

*The author is a student of M.A. (Public Policy) at  
CHRIST (Deemed to be University).*







## The Scapegoat of Politics, Economics, and Media: Overpopulation

*Sidak Singh Puri on the myth of overpopulation in India through varied perspectives*

The idea that India can thrive only if population growth is controlled is rooted in popular consciousness, which stems from the perception that until recently, only the capitalist and less populated states of the West (excluding Japan) witnessed economic growth. It is only now that countries like India and China are becoming some of the world's largest economies. A key factor influencing India's obsession with population control is the religious polarisation around it. Recent statements made by the respective Chief Ministers of Assam and Uttar Pradesh taking jibes at a particular community with regard to population control highlight this phenomenon.

India is set to overtake China as the world's most populous country by 2025. However, this does not mean that India is witnessing population explosion. Based on the United Nations' population projections, India's population peaked decades ago, and is expected to rise by a multiple of 1.09 between 2021 and 2031. In comparison, this number was 1.25 in the period between 1981 and 1991. The decrease in the population multiple dispels the myth that India is facing a population explosion crisis and undermines the need for legislation or policies to tackle the same.

According to the same United Nations report published in 2020, India will begin to witness a decline in its population by 2060. By 2100, India's population will reach 1.45 billion after touching a peak of 1.65 billion in 2059.

On the political front, in his Independence Day address at the Red Fort in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi publicly used the term 'population explosion,' and equated having less children to being more patriotic, becoming the first PM to do so since the period of Emergency in the 1970s.

The recent introduction of population control bills in Uttar Pradesh and elsewhere point towards a worrying trend of penalizing couples who have more than two children. The suggested penalties, like losing the right to contest in local elections, infringe upon the rights of the citizens guaranteed by the Constitution.

In contrast, when India signed the International Conference on Population and Development Declaration, it honoured its citizens' right to decide the size of their families and to plan according to their own will.

The theory that a large population leads to poverty and hinders development is based on myths. Countries like South Korea and Taiwan, which are relatively similar to India in terms of economic development, witnessed rapid population growth throughout the second half of the 20th century without their per capita incomes being negatively impacted. Moreover, the implications of enacting a forced family planning policy, as in the case of China, are evident, with China now facing a demographic crisis. After more than thirty years of promoting a 'one child' policy, China is now asking its citizens to have two children. In India, communities such as the Dalits, the Adivasis, and other minority groups, may stand at a higher risk of having to bear adverse consequences of any population control measure.

Another overlooked aspect is the patriarchy-driven preference for a male child, which is an important reason for higher fertility rates among women. Such attitudes are believed to skew the sex ratio, increase female foeticides, etc. Contrary to popular belief, many studies point to the fact that this attitude seems to be more prevalent in the relatively well-off societies.

On the economic front, Dr. Raj Bahadur, in his report, *The Impact of Overpopulation on Economic Growth and Development in India*, stated:

*"Since the correlation coefficient  $r = 0.019$  do not fall in the rejection region (in the Tail;  $\pm 0.444$ ) at 5% level of significance and  $df = 27$ . Therefore, there is enough evidence to conclude that there is no significant linear correlation between annual population growth and inflation in India."*



---

This is one of the many reports dispelling the myth that a large population leads to stunted economic growth. India now stands at a historic juncture, where according to the government's population projections, 53.6% of India's population in 2021 is under the age of 29. More than a quarter of India's population is aged 14 years or younger. This demographic group can become extremely productive or unproductive depending on the skill sets it acquires. Rather than formulating policies based on myths, India needs to exploit its demographic dividend.

Instead of focusing on skill development and increased opportunities for the youth, the government is focusing on the wrong problems, which is evident from the fact that, according to the latest All India Survey on Higher Education, India's higher education sector is still being held back by deep structural inequalities. The fact that India's economy has grown exponentially over the last two decades (India is now the world's third largest economy with a GDP (PPP) of \$10.40 trillion), proves that a large population has not affected the country's growth. However, owing to unequal distribution of resources and income, India is still ranked 116th in terms of per capita income, and 130th in terms of Human Development Index. These are the issues that the government needs to address.

India is still not in a position to adequately use its abundant resources for the welfare of the growing population. Poverty and malnutrition prevail not because of higher population, but because of poor access to housing, nutrition, and medical care. Even today, villages in India lack electricity and education facilities. Solving problems like these should be the focus of the government rather than formulating policies based on myths and misconceptions.

The media's coverage on the issue is questionable both on ethical and moral grounds. Rather than highlighting facts, the media has been promoting myths and baseless arguments, supporting the government's misinformed decisions. The media propagates the myth that India's population is limiting its economic growth.

To provide a holistic view of the topic: rather than formulating discriminatory policies penalizing citizens for exercising their rights, generating avenues for employment and the consequent development of industry would help citizens achieve a better standard of living, thereby enabling enhanced economic growth. It is imperative that the government promotes similar strategies to aid societal progress and facilitate economic growth rather than formulating policies to combat crises without sufficient data supporting the same.

*The author is a student of B.A. Economics, Media Studies, and Political Science  
at CHRIST (Deemed to be University).*

---







## Universal Basic Income: The Final Piece of the Welfare Puzzle?

*Akshaye Mavinkurve on how a Universal Basic Income programme can be an effective poverty alleviation measure*

Juliana Bidadanure, Faculty Director at the Stanford Basic Income Lab, defines Universal Basic Income (UBI) as:

*“A radical policy proposal of a monthly cash grant given to all members of a community without means test, regardless of the personal desert, with no strings attached and, under most proposals, at a sufficiently high level to enable a life free from economic insecurity”.*

On a primary level, UBI aims to help elevate people from poverty, and to provide them with an opportunity to have a decent standard of living. When considered on a much wider scale, it aims to be the solution to the inevitable phenomenon of job automation, which can be described as a process of robots and machines replacing human labor. Economists from different political backgrounds, like Yanis Varoufakis, Greece's former Minister of Finance, and Milton Friedman, the American economist and Nobel laureate, recognise the need for and importance of Universal Basic Income. However, its aims and methods of implementation are where the debates take place.

Each economist or policy officer has their unique idea(s) about how UBI can work. However, UBI is essentially a program through which an adult individual or a household would get a certain amount of cash irrespective of any socio-economic factors. The stakeholder is given complete freedom to use this cash in a manner of their choice, and there are no conditions upon the stakeholder to receive the money. Unlike popular socio-economic programs like free food distribution or a special needs welfare program, UBI does not provide an “in-kind” benefit. UBI also covers households or individuals from all income backgrounds, thereby meaning that people below the poverty line, as well as the those who own most of the country's wealth, are all beneficiaries of the program. This conception of an Individual-Adults-Unconditional-Universal-Regular UBI is the simplest and one of the most popular ways to implement this policy on all sides of the political spectrum.

Economists and Libertarian politicians, such as Gary Johnson, are open to this version of the UBI because it allows the elimination of other welfare programs, thereby fostering liberty of choice among beneficiaries, thereby reducing bureaucratic complexity. On the other hand, economists and politicians such as Yanis Varoufakis endorse UBI as it provides an opportunity to restructure the source of funding for a UBI program in itself, as well as to fund other welfare programs and implement them. Ultimately, the program aims at providing stakeholders the opportunity to have a secure financial status and a decent standard of living, while also providing greater freedom and choice.

In July 2020, Rebeca Hasdell, currently a senior policy analyst in the Government of Canada, documented and published a synthesis of reviews and experiments of various UBI models from around the world. The experiments and reports that have been synthesised show that there is a measurable decrease in poverty with the unconditional cash model in low and lower-middle-income brackets. There is also a measurable increase in food security and an improvement in health systems. The report also points to higher access to credit lines, thereby minimising barriers that prevent an increase in savings. There are more gaps to be covered through future research, but ultimately UBI is a programme that has a record of alleviating low-income individuals and households from poverty and providing them an opportunity for a decent standard of living. As pointed out earlier, it also is a programme that has proponents on multiple sides of the political spectrum, making it easier to formulate and implement.

One of the most prominent examples of such a programme is from Alaska, a state in the United States of America. Since 1982, the state government has been putting 25% of the revenue earned from the oil and gas reserves into a Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD), which has been paying out anywhere between 1000 to 2000\$ annually to every individual in Alaska.



Since then, the state has seen a 20% reduction in poverty. While employment rates have remained stagnant, the programme has given an opportunity for rural Alaskans to live a decent standard of living, and eliminating the programme would put them closer to poverty due to lack of employment opportunities. The programme is also putting the government in a tough position as it takes up a significant amount of the state budget, and it has come to be known as one that cuts down government spending and functioning in other areas of administration. The growing political polarisation of the PFD posed challenges to its efficient implementation. The dividend paid, which stood at 2000\$ a year, was cut down to 1022\$ in 2016, but, the incumbent Governor of Alaska, Mike Dunleavy, increased the amount of dividend paid as part of the PFD. The increase has come at the cost of massive cuts for other avenues in the budget. Despite the popularity and positive effect of the PFD, it is now seen more critically and looked upon as a contemporary warning of unsound policy formulation and lack of farsightedness.

One of the most prominent pilot studies in India took place in rural Madhya Pradesh. The study was conducted by Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and covered 22 villages, nine of which received the benefits, and 13 villages were part of the control group. The study showed that the people who accessed the benefits were able to improve their living standards with better access to food and improved infrastructure of their houses.

The program also influenced the burden of debt many people included in the program had, with one village reporting that 73% of the beneficiaries in the village were able to reduce their debt. The sort of Universal Basic Income program that is being discussed today is still in its earliest stage, and there is a lot of research and planning that needs to be done in order to implement a programme of such large scale anywhere in the world. It is imperative to approach a policy discussion with its nuances, while also looking at the big picture. There is no doubt that the Basic Income programme in Alaska helped many Alaskans rise from poverty, and gave them an opportunity to live a decent standard of living. Despite that, when Alaska passed legislation for the PFD in the 1980s, there was no foresight on how the changing media and political landscape would politicise the programme, putting the state government in a precarious position. If elected officials take the time to understand economists and policy analysts from various ends in the political spectrum, it will help them formulate and implement the policy in a holistic manner.

A Universal Basic Income is ultimately a programme people can pursue, based on the promising results that have come out of multiple pilot projects. It is a programme that aids governments to empower citizens to lead a better lifestyle, rather than controlling and regulating them. It is a solution that addresses the major issues of the future, such as the imminent rise of automation and AI, and the resultant disruption of labour markets.

*The author is a student of M.A. (Public Policy) at  
CHRIST (Deemed to be University).*







## Multifarious Views on Malnutrition: A Neglected Parameter of Development

**Manush Shah** on malnutrition being a persistent issue despite various policy measures, and efforts to combat the same

Malnutrition has resulted in a loss of GDP in low- and middle-income countries, and specifically in India. A report titled *Food For Thought* is based on the case studies of four countries, namely India, Peru, Vietnam, and Ethiopia. The study estimates a loss of 0.8-2.5% of GDP, which amounts to \$15-46 billion due to micronutrient malnutrition. Malnutrition severely impacts children's ability to learn, and impairs their cognitive and physical development. Adults who were malnourished as children earn 20% less than those who were well-nourished in their childhood. Malnourished children score 7% lower on their maths tests and are 19% less likely to even read a sentence. This negative impact of malnourishment on education has a direct impact on their individual contribution to the economy. Every dollar spent towards nutritional improvement can result in public economic outcomes of \$34-38. A recent report reiterates that malnutrition can reduce 8% of the nation's economic growth due to reduced schooling, low productivity, and high-cost burden of health-related issues.

Thus, India bears a loss of 10 billion dollars annually as the economic cost of malnutrition. This is not only due to malnutrition in children, but also the rampant increase in the number of cases of anaemia in 60% of women. Schemes and programmes implemented to combat malnutrition also burn a hole in the government's pocket. The Public Distribution System (PDS) absorbed one percent of GDP in 2017. The World Bank has assisted India with \$753 million over the last 18 years to combat malnutrition. This sum is equivalent to more than a quarter of the assistance provided for nutrition programmes worldwide.

India is ranked 94th out of 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index, but the issue does not get enough attention in dominant electoral discourse. In India, more than 9.3 million children under the age of five are affected by Severe Acute Malnutrition. Such children are addressed in multiple ways, most popularly with the help of an Anganwadi worker under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS). A malnourished child is referred to a nutritional health centre where s/he is given a monitored intake of F75 and F100 formula for 15-20 days.

The child is discharged after this period, and home visits are mandated to ensure progress. An estimate of more than 1.28 million Anganwadi workers and 90,000 ASHA workers are employed towards eradicating malnutrition, but they have achieved little success.

Although the National Nutritional Policy launched in 1993 was a step taken in the right direction to combat malnutrition, it was not implemented properly. The Midday Meal Scheme administered pan-India in 2002 is rife with problems, such as caste discrimination, irregularity, and low nutritional value.

Malnutrition is the cause of 15% of the total disease cases in India, and needs to be addressed in the national efforts to improve healthcare. The fourth round of the National Family Health Survey (2015-16) found that the prevalence of the following among children under five:

1. Underweight – 35.7%
2. Stunted growth – 38.4%
3. Wasted – 21.0%

Round five of the NFHS in 2019-20 indicated that in 13 out of 22 states, the number of children with stunted growth had increased, with Gujarat accounting for the largest proportion of all cases, at 39%.

At the same time, the mere abundance of foodgrain stocks does not guarantee adequate nutrition. Sufficient purchasing power and stable employment are also required.

The ICDS, which was launched in 1975, caters to children under six years of age. It provides nutritional services to children along with immunisation and healthcare facilities. The services of Anganwadi workers have been instrumental in implementing the various projects under the ICDS. The scheme provides 500 kilocalories to each child every day. It is funded by UNICEF, the World Bank, and the central and state governments.

The 'Scheme for Adolescent Girls' aims at breaking gender barriers, and providing nutritional, social, and educational support to out-of-school adolescent girls.



It is expected to provide nutritional supplements, healthcare checkups, and iron and folic acid supplements, and is sponsored partly by the state and central governments.

In addition to providing daycare facilities for the children of working women, the National Creche Scheme also caters to the nutritional needs of children up to six years of age.

Despite the support of the PDS, a nationally networked and widely popular programme, which has reduced malnutrition to a certain extent by providing food supplies at subsidised rates, there is still an alarming dietary insufficiency of major vitamins and minerals. However, the PDS has surely led to an improvement in the fortification of diets with multiple micronutrients.

The Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) is a flagship programme with an initial budget of 9046.17 crores. It aims to reduce stunting and wasting by 2-3% per annum. POSHAN 2.0, an umbrella scheme that has been recently released, incorporates the ICDS, Anganwadi Services, Scheme for Adolescent Girls, and the National Creche Scheme. The District Collectors shall serve as directors of the National Health Mission, and oversee its implementation in their jurisdictions.

However, data shows higher rates of malnutrition in the Prime Minister's own constituency, Varanasi, with a stunting prevalence of 43.1%, which is much higher than the national average of 35.9%. Amethi, the constituency of the Minister of Women and Child Welfare, Smriti Irani, has ranked second from the bottom in stunting.

Covid-19 has had a huge impact on all the efforts made in the past few decades to combat malnutrition. It has threatened the accessibility, availability, stability, and utilisation of resources. The Anganwadi and midday meal services were disrupted. The lockdown affected around 115 million children who were dependent on government-provided meals. Food prices were inflated due to the reduced availability, and families were forced to reduce their monthly food budget. This directly impacted women, as they are mostly the last

ones in the family to eat and therefore get the least quantity of food. The internal migrant workers' exodus, along with the closure of schools, hampered the collective efforts in the fight against malnutrition.

The Government of Kerala initiated doorstep delivery of rations to homes with children. The PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, which ensured the supply of rations to more than 80 crore people at a cost of more than two lakh crores, is being rolled back with the easing of restrictions.

However, the struggle and inefficacy continue due to myriad problems. For example, in Jharkhand, even before the pandemic, nine out of ten children aged between 6 and 23 months did not get a proper diet. The reasons were: i) the quality of food provided at Anganwadi centres did not meet the appropriate standards; and ii) mothers, who have other household commitments, did not willingly admit their children. In Jharkhand, four packets of take-home ration were given, but neither the Anganwadi workers nor the parents knew about its contents and usage. Anganwadi workers themselves are not given proper facilities and benefits. They are meagerly paid and poorly trained, and are not provided basic necessities like cooking gas and transportation. Currently, the Anganwadi workers in Delhi are protesting against the same. They are insufficiently trained in using the Common Application Software (CAS), which was planned to provide monitoring of the progress of pregnant women in centres. Only around half of the one million Angandwadi workers were trained as of 2019, while CAS is currently not even functional.

The underutilisation of funds remains another major problem. Only 16% of the allocated resources were used by the states in 2018-19. Only 1,570 crore rupees was used out of the 4,300 crores allocated for POSHAN Abhiyaan from March 2018 to December 2019. In terms of infrastructure, the Nutrition Centres need to be equipped with more beds, staff, and other facilities. The partnership with private entities such as the Tata Trust for CSR activities, and the creation of a Nutrition Dashboard are expected to support the overall objective of eradicating malnutrition in India. The latter would help in effective consolidation of data along with micro-level planning across states.



The mere formulation of social development and welfare schemes will not solve the problem. Their effective implementation also requires appropriate communication strategies.

The POSHAN Abhiyaan suggests various pillars for the effective implementation of schemes, including Behaviour Change and Communication (BCC). It motivates people to adopt healthy behaviours. The plan espouses research and surveys of the ground reality, followed by analyses and strategic communication strategies. States have been told to develop their own BCC strategy and most states have used a combination of audio, video, print, and folk media, while keeping in mind their target audience. A behavioural change strategy team called the 'Jan Andolan Strategy Group' has been endorsed by the NITI Aayog.

At the same time, approaches like IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) and SBCC (Social and Behavioural Change Communication) are also used and, along with BCC, form the most important pillars of POSHAN Abhiyaan. The Andhra Pradesh government has released a handbook on nutrition for distribution among self-help groups (SHG) and has filmed videos for adolescent girls. The Rajasthan government has in turn focused on married women, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. They have also directed their communication strategy towards their husbands and in-laws, who function as change agents. Some states have created rankings for healthy competition, while others have chosen model districts. Bihar has implemented sensitisation programmes under its scheme, JEEvika, to create awareness on breastfeeding. This scheme has resulted in better access to health and nutrition by utilising the services of frontline workers, and improved dietary diversification through complementary feeding.

The BCC is the Swachh Bharat Mission. Many *swacchagrahis* are conducting door-to-door awareness drives. Advertorials and media spots featuring popular celebrities are being created to be aired on DD for mass appeal.

Events like *Poshan Maah* and other community-based events such as *Shishu Mangal Diwas* and *Suposhan Diwas* are being organised to create awareness. *Prabhat Pheris* are conducted every few weeks in villages for sensitisation. The government has thus ensured that the schemes are seen and heard among the public through appropriate communication channels.

It is the need of the hour for the government to combine all the above perspectives, and create a comprehensive strategic plan to combat malnutrition. Due to Covid-19, welfare efforts became increasingly difficult to carry out, which might lead to a systemic failure. The economic cost needs to be kept in mind while formulating a plan, and adequate funds must be allocated. Politicians, on the other hand, need to focus on the progress in their respective constituencies. Issues of hunger and malnutrition need to be brought to the forefront, and the public should hold them accountable for the same. The bureaucratic machinery and state governments should focus on communication strategies and use folk media, regional actors, and singers to enhance awareness.

It is estimated that not adequately addressing malnutrition can cost India around 46 billion dollars by 2030. To prevent this from becoming a reality, we need to launch an urgent and comprehensive attack to combat malnutrition.

*The author is a student of B.A. Economics, Media Studies, and Political Science  
at CHRIST (Deemed to be University).*

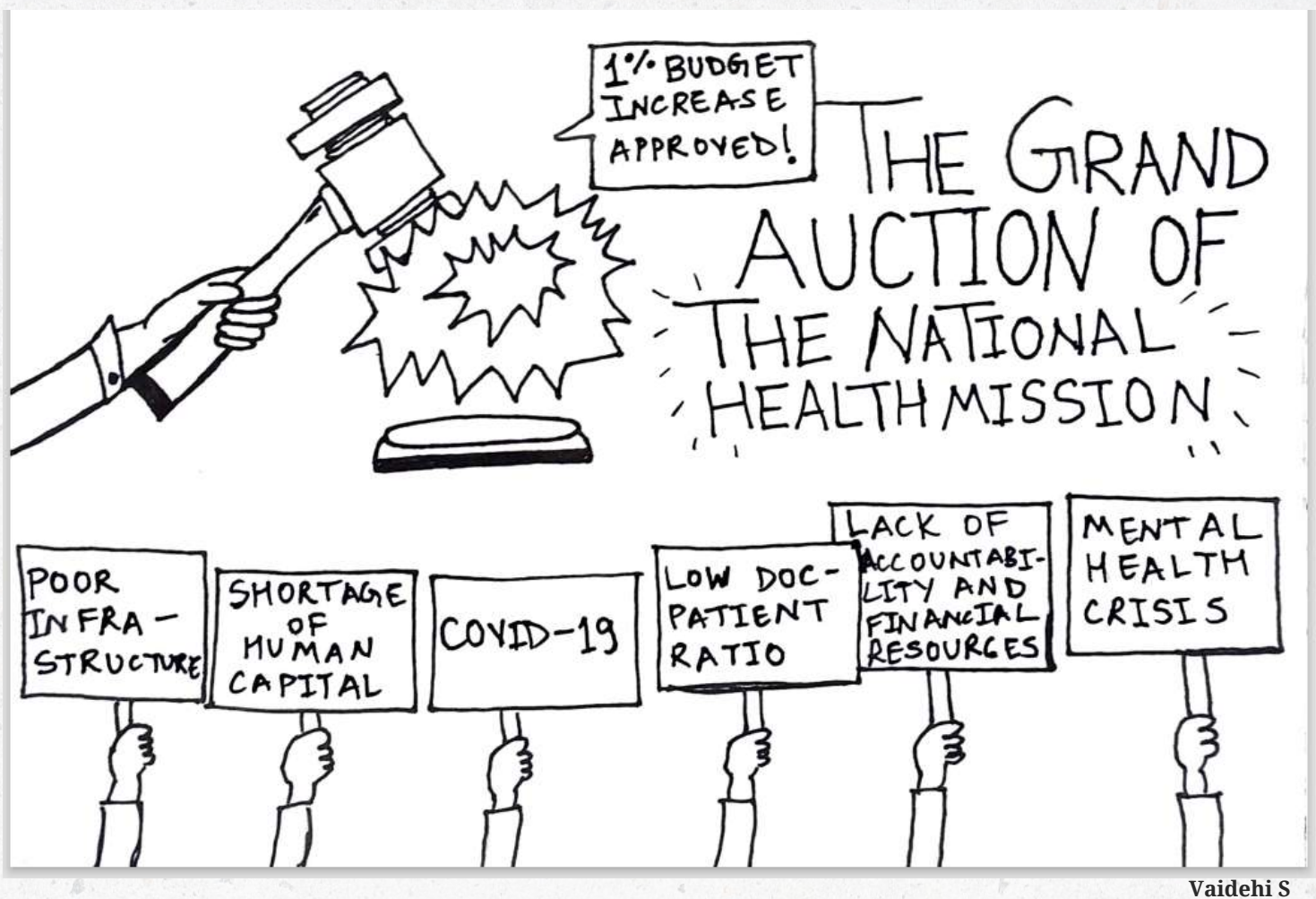


—  
N



J  
E  
S  
T





Vaidehi S

**"The National Health Mission was allotted a budget of 37,130 crores in 2021-2022 and 37,800 crores in 2022-2023 by the central government."**

-PRS India

**"The development of public health infrastructure and the development of skilled healthcare professionals to meet the healthcare needs of the growing population of India didn't find a mention in the budget. This is disappointing in a way as these were badly exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially during the second wave."**

-Dr.Kamat, Senior Medical Administrator, Amrita Hospital, Kochi  
(Swachhindia.ndtv)

**"The worrying part is that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the state healthcare infrastructure which wasn't strong enough to respond to the crisis. There is no question that we need to invest in health. National Health Mission which is one of the largest schemes has often been underfunded."**

- Avani Kapur, Fellow, Centre for Policy Research, and Director, Accountability Initiative  
(Swachhindia.ndtv)





P  
O  
L  
I  
C  
Y

C  
A  
T  
C  
H



## Guess the Policy!

1



2



3



4



5





---

---

**Meet the editorial team from the M.A. (Public Policy) cohort**



**Tejasvi R**  
*Editor*



**Srijani Mishra**  
*Editor*



**Vaidehi Sahasrabhojane**  
*Curator*



**Muskaan Jain**  
*Public Relations*



**Shiv Chhatrala**  
*Designer*





# POLICY MATTERS



**VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 1**

**APRIL 2022**

For queries, reach out to us at: [polycymattersmapp@gmail.com](mailto:polycymattersmapp@gmail.com)