SOCIAL SAFETY NETS FOR URBAN INDIA - EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE PROGRAM AND PUBLIC CANTEENS IN URBAN RAJASTHAN

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Social Safety Nets for Urban India –

Employment Guarantee Program and Public Canteens in Urban Rajasthan

by

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Social Safety Nets for Urban India - Employment Guarantee Program and Public Canteens in Urban Rajasthan**" being submitted by **Krishna Priya Choragudi** to Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, in Humanities and Social Sciences is a record of the original Bonafide research work done by her under my supervision. The thesis has fulfilled the requirements and has reached the requisite standard for the submission relating to the degree. The contents of this thesis, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other Institute or University for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Abstract

This thesis studies recent state-led experiments in urban social protection in India, focusing on Rajasthan's Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (Indira Gandhi Rozgar Guarantee Yojana (IRGY)) and a public canteen initiative (Indira Rasoi Yojana). Both programs emerged in response to the vulnerabilities exposed during the COVID-19 lockdowns, particularly among low-income informal workers in cities. Through fieldwork in Jaipur and Udaipur, including household surveys, interviews, and administrative data, the thesis examines how these schemes were implemented, who they reached, and what shaped their outcomes. It builds upon the following strands of literature within development economics: public works programs, women's work and urban social protection. It is found that IRGY enables women's entry or re-entry into the labour force and provides a suitable wage employment opportunity for many. In a context where female labour force participation rates have historically been very low, IRGY represents a novel intervention in urban employment policy by expanding the pool of working women, not just redistributing work among those already employed. Half of the IRGY participants in the survey (comprising 8% of the total sample of working-age women) joined the workforce for the first time through this program. The wages earned through the program amounted to nearly 10% of their annual household incomes and contributed to the personal savings of nearly half of the workers in the sample, helped one-third fulfil essential needs and reduced indebtedness for almost a quarter. However, the program still needs to overcome several challenges to effectively improve outcomes, including effective self-selection, program implementation, generation of days of work and payment delays. The challenges in implementation also highlight deeper governance issues in urban areas and the complexities of informality. The public canteens in Rajasthan are found to address food insecurity by offering affordable, nutritious meals and ensuring access to all through their universal design, especially for those excluded from targeted welfare schemes and migrants. The One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) initiative introduced in the Public Distribution System tries to enable portability of ration benefits across states, however, it is found to have low uptake in addition to a fundamental limitation in catering to mobile and migrant urban households. The thesis recognises that programmes like IRGY and Indira Rasoi Yojana represent a shift in how welfare is understood, treating core necessities such as work and food as guaranteed entitlements rather than things people must secure through the market.

सार

यह शोध भारत में शहरी सामाजिक सुरक्षा के क्षेत्र में हाल ही में किये गए कुछ राज्यों के प्रयोगों का अध्ययन करता है, जिसमें राजस्थान की शहरी रोज़गार गारंटी योजना (आईआरजीवाई) और एक सार्वजनिक कैंटीन पहल (इंदिरा रसोई योजना) पर ध्यान केंद्रित किया गया है। दोनों पहलें कोविड-19 लॉकडाउन के दौरान उजागर हुई कमज़ोरियों के प्रत्युत्तर के रूप में सामने आईं, विशेष रूप से शहरी क्षेत्रों के कम आय वाले अनौपचारिक श्रमिकों के बीच। जयपुर और उदयपुर में फील्डवर्क के माध्यम से, जिसमें घरेलू सर्वेक्षण, साक्षात्कार और प्रशासनिक डेटा शामिल हैं, यह शोध इस बात की पड़ताल करता है कि इन योजनाओं का क्रियान्वयन किस प्रकार हुआ, इनसे कौन-कौन लाभान्वित हुए, और किन कारकों ने इनके परिणामों को आकार दिया। यह विकास अर्थशास्त्र के भीतर साहित्य के निम्नलिखित पहलुओं पर आधारित है: सार्वजनिक कार्य कार्यक्रम, महिलाओं का कार्य और शहरी सामाजिक सुरक्षा। यह पाया गया है कि आईआरजीवाई महिलाओं को श्रम बल में प्रवेश या पुनः प्रवेश करने में सक्षम बनाता है और कई लोगों के लिए उपयुक्त वेतन रोजगार के अवसर प्रदान करता है। ऐसे संदर्भ में, जहाँ महिला श्रम बल भागीदारी दर ऐतिहासिक रूप से कम रही है, आईआरजीवाई शहरी रोज़गार नीति में एक महत्वपूर्ण नवाचार है, यह पहले से कार्यरत महिलाओं के बीच काम बाँटने के बजाय नई महिलाओं को श्रम बाजार में लाने का प्रयास करता है। सर्वेक्षण में आईआरजीवाई प्रतिभागियों में से आधे (कामकाजी उम्र की महिलाओं के कुल नमूने का 8%) इस कार्यक्रम के माध्यम से पहली बार कार्यबल में शामिल हुए। कार्यक्रम से मिली मजदूरी ने श्रमिकों की वार्षिक घरेलू आय में औसतन लगभग 10% का योगदान दिया। इससे नमूने में लगभग आधे श्रमिकों ने व्यक्तिगत बचत बढ़ाई, एक-तिहाई ने आवश्यक जरूरतें पूरी कीं, और करीब एक-चौथाई ने अपनी ऋणग्रस्तता घटाई। हालाँकि, कार्यक्रम के प्रभाव को बेहतर बनाने के लिए अभी भी कई चुनौतियों का समाधान आवश्यक है जैसे प्रभावी स्व-चयन सुनिश्चित करना, कार्यान्वयन में सुधार करना, पर्याप्त कार्यदिवस सृजित करना और भुगतान में देरी को दूर करना। राजस्थान में सार्वजनिक कैंटीन रियायती और पौष्टिक भोजन उपलब्ध कराकर, तथा अपने सार्वभौमिक डिज़ाइन के माध्यम से सभी के लिए पहुँच सुनिश्चित करके, खाद्य असुरक्षा को कम करने में प्रभावी साबित हुई हैं। इसके विपरीत, सार्वजनिक वितरण प्रणाली के तहत शुरू की गई वन नेशन वन राशन कार्ड (ONORC) पहल का उद्देश्य विभिन्न राज्यों में राशन लाभों की पोर्टेबिलिटी सुनिश्चित करना है, हालाँकि, यह पहल गतिशील और प्रवासी शहरी परिवारों की ज़रूरतों को पूरी तरह संबोधित नहीं कर पाई है, और इसके कार्यान्वयन में भी कई व्यावहारिक चुनौतियाँ सामने आई हैं। यह शोध दिखाता है कि आईआरजीवाई और इंदिरा रसोई योजना जैसे कार्यक्रम कल्याण की परंपरागत धारणा से एक कदम आगे बढ़ते हैं, वे काम और भोजन जैसी बुनियादी ज़रूरतों को बाज़ार से प्राप्त होने वाली वस्तुओं के बजाय गारंटीकृत अधिकार के रूप में पुनर्परिभाषित करते हैं।

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List of Abbreviations

AAY	Antyodaya Anna Yojana
ASPIRE	Atlas for Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity
AUEGS	Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme
BPL	Below Poverty Line
DUET	Decentralised Urban Employment and Training
FLFP	Female Labour Force Participation
FPS	Fair Price Shop
HPEC	High Powered Expert Committee
IMPDS	Integrated Management of Public Distribution System
IRGY	Indira Gandhi Rozgar Guarantee Yojana
LIFE	Livelihood Inclusion and Financial Empowerment
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MMSAGY	Mukhya Mantri Shahari Ajeevika Guarantee Yojana
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
ONORC	One Nation One Ration Card
PDS	Public Distribution System
PLFS	Periodic Labour Force Survey
PMAY	Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana
PSK	Pragya Seva Kendra
PWD	Public Works Department
SJSRY	Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana
TNUES	Tamil Nadu Urban Employment Scheme
UEG	Urban Employment Guarantee
ULB	Urban Local Body
UPSNP	Urban Protective Safety Net Program
UWEP	Urban Wage Employment Program

Preface

My PhD journey began right in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic in September 2020. The visuals of the migrant crisis during the lockdowns followed by the economic distress faced throughout the country made many people realize the scale of vulnerability of the working class in the cities of India. There was a realization that social security was severely lacking for the urban informal workers in the face of such calamities. This was followed by several discussions at the policy level and among the academic community on working towards alleviating such vulnerability among the working class. An interesting proposal for providing employment of last resort to the urban workers was put forward by Prof. Jean Drèze – the Decentralised Urban Employment and Training program. Prof. Drèze is a stalwart in the field and has been an admirable figure for students of development economics. This idea of his particularly interested me. Around the same time, several state governments started public works programs, which were essentially extensions of the NREGA to urban areas, to provide livelihood security to households suffering from the aftermath of the lockdowns. Rajasthan was the largest and latest state to announce such a program by the time I was starting my research.

Based on these recent developments and the tremendous encouragement from my PhD advisor, Prof. Reetika Khera and her equal enthusiasm on the issue, I took on the topic of 'Social Safety nets for Urban India' with an emphasis on livelihood security. In particular, I began studying the recent urban employment guarantee programs. I first did a bit of fieldwork in Himachal Pradesh, which started the MMSAGY program in August 2020, as a pilot to understand the scope and feasibility of this topic. I remember my first ever respondent, Ranjana, from Dharamshala, who warmly welcomed me into her home and was extremely eager to talk to me about her experience of working in the program, and after talking to whom I realized that this project was indeed possible and that people would generally be much kinder and cooperative than I thought.

Following the positive experience in HP, I began studying the IRGY program in Rajasthan which was being implemented on a much larger scale. During the course of the two rounds of surveys I did on the IRGY program, I was nudged by Reetika to also look at the workings of the Indira Rasoi Yojana. Given the positive responses in the pilot visits and the program's complementarity to IRGY, I decided to conduct a short survey on this program as well and explore the theme of urban food security.

Before starting fieldwork, meeting and discussing my research with Nikhil Dey was a huge morale boost to take on the project. Prof. Jean Drèze gave me valuable inputs in designing the questionnaire before starting out and by reading some initial drafts and field notes. In Jaipur, my first point of contact was Dr. Motilal Mahamallik at IDS Jaipur, who introduced me to several important people working at the grassroots on this issue, which included Kavita Srivastava (PUCL) and Shobhita Rajagopal (IDS Jaipur). Prof. Shobhita introduced me to Ravie Kiran Bokam who was working with CFAR Jaipur. I have been extremely fortunate to have met Ravie who played an instrumental role throughout my fieldwork in Jaipur. He helped me select the sample slums, conduct pilot surveys and provided field support. I have come to admire his professionalism and selfless commitment to social work which reflects in the way he and his team extended their support during the surveys. In Udaipur, I am thankful again to Reetika for introducing me to Astha Sansthan, especially Shyam Ji and RDV Ji, whose reassuring presence made my surveys in Udaipur a pleasure. I am thankful to Shyam Ji for helping me select the sample slums and introducing me to the Udaipur Nagar Nigam. Through RDV Ji, I was introduced to Jan Daksha Trust who facilitated my surveys in Udaipur.

In Jaipur, along with the CFAR staff, I am grateful to the support of several women residents of the *bastis* for helping me sample the households and introducing me to them. The survey in Jaipur would not have been possible without the help of Sarita, Ginni and Pooja (Ganeshpuri and Transport Nagar), Ayesha, Ishrat and Saira (Rana Colony, Nayak Basti, Balai Basti), Shaheen and Anita (Vijay Nagar 2nd and Shahid Indra Jyoti Nagar), Saira and Reshma (Bapu Basti) and, Sona Sharma, Annapurna and Kajal (Jhalana and Manoharpura). For the survey of the Indira Rasois, I am very thankful to Rajat, Suman, Sona Sharma and Sarita for accompanying me to the *Rasois*. Students and Project Staff at IDS Jaipur, Prem, Jyoti and Korobi gave me company on several days of my stay in Jaipur and have become cherished friends, especially Prem who was a savior during the time I fell severely ill. In Udaipur, I am grateful to the help provided by Alka Vyas, Sanjay Singh, Khemraj and Sushma in conducting the surveys. The officials at the Udaipur Nagar Nigam were always eager to help and provided me details of the ongoing worksites and how the scheme was panning out in the city.

The visits to the worksites were made memorable by the enthusiasm shown by the women workers. Reetika joined me briefly during the revisit survey in Udaipur and I was bowled over

by her continued passion for fieldwork. Her visit kept me going in the last leg of the survey when I was almost exhausted by this undertaking.

After completing my fieldwork and as I was beginning the process of writing this thesis, in the 4th year of my PhD, I was selected for the Visiting PhD Fellowship at UNU-WIDER in Helsinki, Finland. There, I was often told how nice it was that Finland was my first experience of Europe, and I couldn't agree more! Finland was not just a winter wonderland but a wonderland of gender equality and social security. Their world-renowned maternity entitlement programs, school lunch program and education system in general are some of the best practices in the field of social policy. At UNU-WIDER, I received mentorship from Dr. Rahul Lahoti, who pushed my work in directions I was struggling to articulate. He greatly helped me convert what were a bunch of tables and fieldnotes into publishable material and I express my heartfelt thanks to him. Prof. Kunal Sen's ideas and inputs were also very valuable. I also made some lifelong friends as we went backpacking in Europe and over the three months there, managed to tour seven countries. I fondly think of Basit, Evgeniya, Alessandra, Wycliffe and Samira. The summer at WIDER was one of the best summers of my life.

In Delhi and elsewhere, I received suggestions and support from several academics at conferences and otherwise, who showed deep interest in this topic which reassured me of the utility of my research. I especially thank Prof. Veena Naregal from IEG, Delhi and Prof. Amit Basole, Azim Premji University. At IIT, my SRC members – Prof. Geetam Tiwari, Prof. Sourabh Paul and Prof. Ankush Agrawal were always willing to provide thoughtful feedback on my work during the several presentations I made in the department. I also thank Professors Jayan Thomas, Abhijit Banerji, Debasis Mondal and other faculty in the HSS department for their ever willingness to help and provide guidance. IIT Delhi, as an institution, has also been very resourceful and their generous funding allowed me to visit some wonderful countries such as Vietnam and Australia to present my research. The exposure gave me a comparative lens to view questions of gender, development and governance beyond the Indian context. In particular, the HSS department at IIT provided me a sense of belonging and a multidisciplinary space to broaden my perspectives on society and development.

Bharat, my closest friend at IIT, was a witness to the whole journey with his constant support and encouragement. He was also responsible for never letting me dawdle with my work. Since he was based in Udaipur, he would regularly update me on the latest developments in these

programs and often shared local newspaper clippings whenever he found something that would interest me. My best friends outside the academic realm, Smriti and Maninder, offered not just unwavering emotional support throughout, but also material support through free food and treats every time we met. They have been and remain my pillars of support in Delhi. I am also grateful to my hostel friends, Anima, Shanu and Soumya, for their companionship, laughter and warmth through these years. I also wish to remember my batchmate and friend, Anjali, who left us far too soon; her presence and spirit continue to be missed.

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