

Social Security Programmes

3.2.28 Democratic decentralisation and centrally-supported Social Assistance Programmes were two major initiatives of the government in the 1990s. The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), launched in August 1995 marks a significant step towards fulfillment of the Directive Principles of State Policy. The NSAP has three components:

- National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS);
- National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS);
- National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS).

3.2.29 The NSAP is a centrally-sponsored programme that aims at ensuring a minimum national standard of social assistance over and above the assistance that states provide from their own resources. The NOAPS provides a monthly pension of Rs. 75 to destitute BPL persons above the age of 65. The NFBS is a scheme for BPL families who are given Rs. 10,000 in the event of the death of the breadwinner. The NMBS provides Rs. 500 to support nutritional intake for pregnant women. Table 3.2.1 provides details of expenditure and the number of beneficiaries covered under the scheme since inception.

3.2.30 The coverage under NSAP is limited due to resource constraints. For example, against the target of 8.71 million eligible beneficiaries for old-age pension in 1999-2000, only about 5 million beneficiaries were provided assistance from central funds. Many states implement the pension scheme from their own resources. However, in the states that do not have their own scheme, a central pension of Rs. 75 per month is clearly inadequate to provide relief to old, indigent persons. A redeeming feature of the scheme, though, is that the benefits have indeed reached the poor and leakages under the scheme are low compared to many other government programmes.

3.2.31 In addition to NSAP, the Annapurna scheme was launched from 1 April 2000 to provide food security to senior citizens who were eligible for pension under NOAPS but could not receive it due to budget constraints. The scheme seeks to cover 20 per cent of persons eligible for NOAPS. These beneficiaries are given 10 kg of foodgrains per month free of cost. However, there have been major problems in the implementation of the Annapurna scheme. Haryana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu did not agree to implement the scheme in its present form. Many other states wanted modifications before implementing it. During 2000-01, only 19,000 metric tonnes (mt) of foodgrains was lifted by ten states. As against an allocation of Rs. 99.05 crore in 2000-01, actual expenditure was only Rs. 17.44 crore. The performance in 2001-02 was equally unsatisfactory. Against a targetted coverage of 1.34 million persons, the actual

Table: 3.2.1
Financial and Physical Performance under the National Social Assistance Programme

		(Rs. crore)	Beneficiaries	(Rs. crore)	Beneficiaries	(Rs. crore)	Beneficiaries
1	1995-96	109.88	2,937,677	43.44	2,84,260	24.50	6,57,891
2	1996-97	319.55	4,760,327	92.00	1,66,090	52.63	1,282,025
3	1997-98	365.19	5,087,830	130.56	2,18,456	54.70	1,557,292
4	1998-99	467.15	5,080,821	188.02	2,66,411	70.43	1,562,072
5	1999-00	456.25	5,017,542	194.98	2,15,815	73.40	1,299,719
6	2000-01	476.66	5,148,226	200.93	2,02,999	83.90	1,456,079
7	2001-02 (P)	362.08	5,052,568	97.96	1,04,298		

Note : (P) = Provisional