

## WELFARE SCHEMES FOR SCHEDULED CASTES IN PUNJAB: AN OVERVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*The welfare of Scheduled Castes has been placed in the State List.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it becomes the constitutional responsibility of the State Governments to promote and protect the interests of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes within the broad policy framework laid down by the Union Government and NITI AYOOG. Article 46 of the Indian Constitution states that the State shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.<sup>2</sup>*

**KEYWORDS:** Planning Commission, Promoting, Directorate, Administrative.

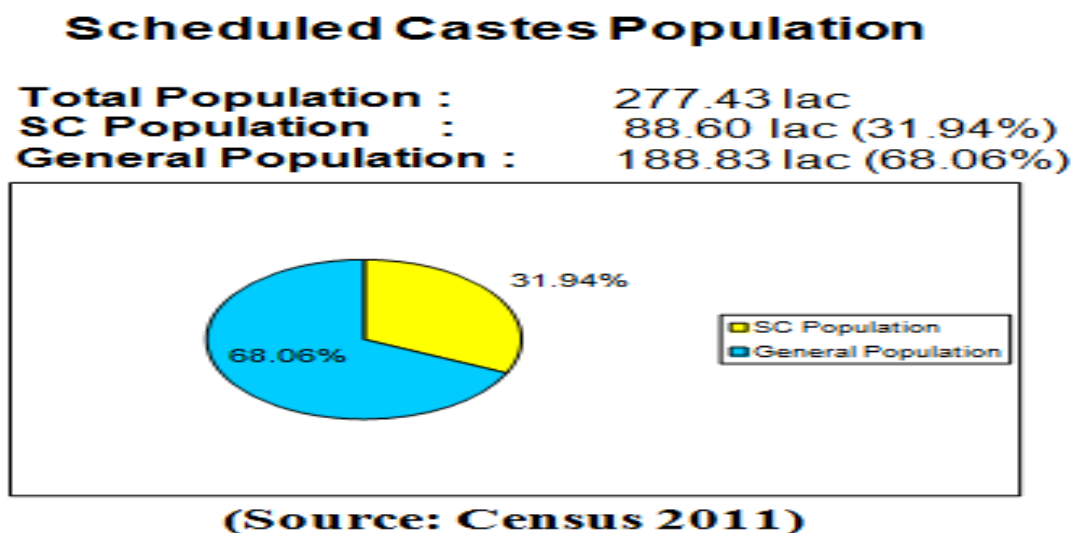
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### INTRODUCTION

The erstwhile Planning Commission now NITI AYOOG allocates appropriate funds under various heads and provides guidelines and consultancy support to states in regard to the welfare and development of Scheduled Castes. The various State Governments have evolved and strengthened the Social Welfare Departments entrusted with the responsibility of developing and promoting the interests of Scheduled Castes. Every State has three level of administrative structure which is engaged in the activities relating to the welfare and development of Scheduled Castes. These three levels are the Minister, Social Welfare, the Secretariat and the Directorate. Invariably these levels operate from the State Head Quarters (SHQ) or any other specified place identified by the State Government. The field staff of the Directorate is located at District, Tehsil, and Block and Village levels. [1]

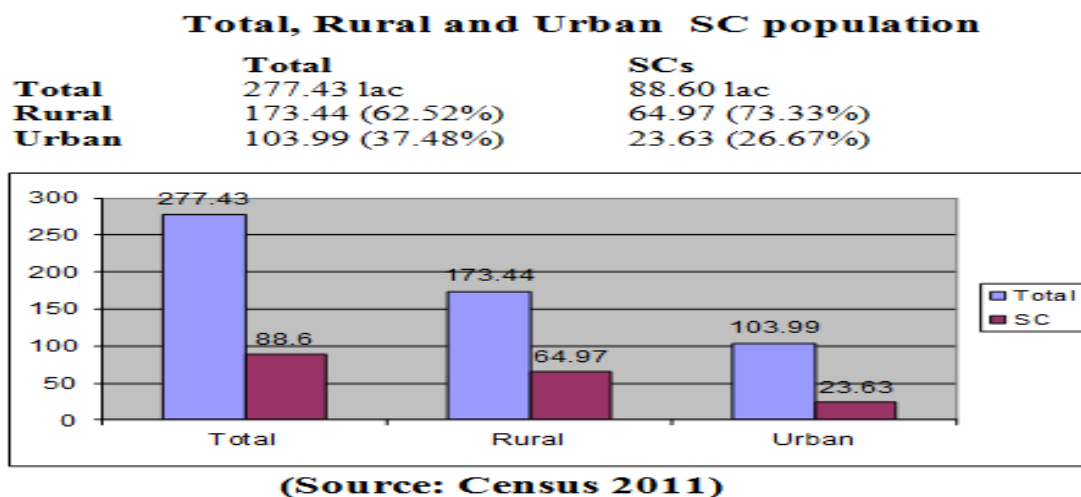
As per the Census 2011, the State of Punjab has the highest percentage of Scheduled Caste population amongst all the States of the Country. The Scheduled Caste population in Punjab is 88.60 lac which is 31.94% of the total population (277.43 lac) of the State. Punjab accounts for 2.3% of the total population and 4.3% Scheduled Caste population of India. The decennial growth rate of the Scheduled Castes population in the State was 26.06% as compared to 13.89 % for the State as a whole. However, a sizeable number of SC families still live below the poverty line. The Figure 6.1 shows the Scheduled Castes in Punjab: [2]

**Figure-6.1**



The Scheduled Caste population is predominantly rural by residence. As per the Census 2011, 73.33% of the Scheduled Castes population lives in the rural area, whereas 26.67% reside in the urban area of the State. The distribution of SC population among the districts of the State indicates that percentage of the Scheduled Castes population is high in the districts of Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar 42.51%, Sri Muktsar Sahib 42.31%, Firozpur 42.17%, Jalandhar 38.95%, Faridkot 38.92%, Moga 36.50%, Hoshiarpur 35.14%, Kapurthala 33.94%, Tarn Taran 33.71%, Mansa 33.63%, Bathinda 32.44%, Barnala 32.24% and Sri Fatehgarh Sahib 32.07%. This indicates that in the majority of the districts in Punjab have one third or more of their population belongs to the Scheduled Castes. Out of the total 12,168 inhabited villages in the State, 57 villages have 100% SC population and 4,799 villages (39.44%) have 40% or more SC population. Among 217 towns, 175 towns have 20% or more SC population, and the majority of them are either small towns or census towns. The Figure 6.2 depicts the same:

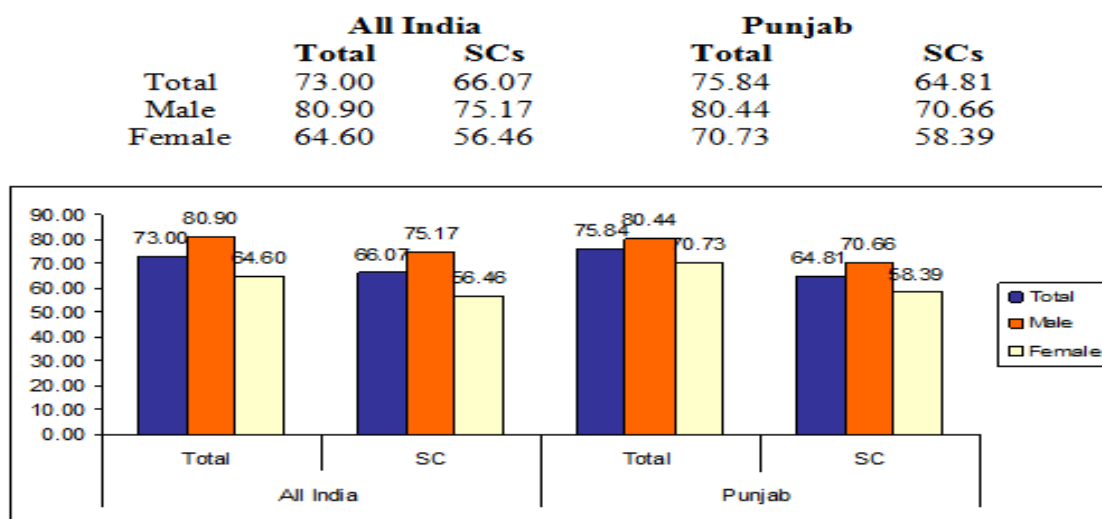
**Figure-6.2**



The Census shows that the literacy rate among SCs is 64.81% as compared to the total literacy rate of 75.84% of the state and 73.00% of the country as a whole. The SC female literacy rate at 58.39% in the State also lags behind that of the total 70.73% of the State. However, it is better than the SC female literacy rate at 56.46% of the Country. The SC male literacy rate at 70.66% of the State is also lower than the total male literacy rate of 80.44% in the State. The Figure 6.3 illustrates the same:

**Figure-6.3**

**Total and sex-wise literacy rate of SC Population (in %age)**



(Source: Census 2011)

Out of the total SC population, the SC labour force constitutes 35.88%; out of which, 79.20% and 20.80% are main and marginal workers respectively. The majority of this segment of society is agricultural labourers or is engaged in low wage and arduous occupation. [3]

This segment of the SC population constitutes an important stratum in Punjab, not because they form about 31.94 percent of Punjab's population, but because they occupied and still occupy a unique position as 'untouchables'. They are the disadvantaged sections of society who suffered from social neglect and economic backwardness and were denied access to education for a long time till independence which, in turn, had its impact on their occupational status and socio-economic backwardness. [4] Now the State Governments are committed to uplift this underprivileged section of the society by improving the socio-economic and educational development by providing them with technical skills for vocational jobs and link their present occupation/activity with the larger activity. In this regards the State Government's major schemes of social justice and empowerment especially related to the development and upliftment of the Scheduled Castes have been highlighted as under:-

### **WELFARE PROGRAMMES FOR SCHEDULED CASTES ADOPTED BY PUNJAB GOVERNMENT**

The Punjab Government has taken many concrete steps to uplift the interests of the Scheduled Castes. To quote a few;

1. Shagun to Scheduled Castes, Christian Girls, Backward Classes and other Economically Weaker Families (State Plan);
2. The Attendance Scholarship to Scheduled Castes Primary Girl Students;

**1. SHAGUN SCHEME TO SCHEDULED CASTES, CHRISTIAN GIRLS, BACKWARD CLASSES AND OTHER ECONOMICALLY WEAKER FAMILIES (STATE PLAN SCHEME)**

The Shagun Scheme was started by the Government of Punjab on April 1, 1997. Under the Scheme financial assistance (Shagun) of Rs.15000 is given to the parents/guardians of girls belonging to the Scheduled Caste/Backward Classes/Castes, Economically Weaker Sections/Widows/Divorcees/Daughters of widows of any caste of Punjab domicile on the occasion of their marriage, subject to the condition that annual income of parents/guardians from all sources does not exceed Rs. 32,790. The scope of the scheme was extended for the Christian girls' w.e.f. September 1, 1997 on the same terms and conditions. The scheme was renamed as Ashirwad on January 26, 2004.

There is a provision in the scheme that the applicant will have to submit his application for getting financial assistance in prescribed performa before the date of marriage or after the 30 days of the marriage of the girl. The girl should be 18 years old or above. The Scheme is limited up-to only two girls of a family. The disbursement of financial assistance (Shagun) is transferred through DBT Scheme directly into the accounts of beneficiaries, which has been proved very successful method in favour of poor beneficiaries, delay and harassment of beneficiaries is also reduced.

**2. ATTENDANCE SCHOLARSHIP TO SCHEDULED CASTES PRIMARY GIRL STUDENTS (STATE PLAN SCHEME)**

The Attendance Scholarship to Scheduled Castes Primary Girl Students scheme was introduced in 1992-93 as the district-level scheme on Plan Side. Subsequently in the year 2008-09, the scheme has been transferred to State Plan Sector. The prime objective of the scheme is to adopt some ways and means so that the dropout tendency is checked initially at the primary stage and to provide financial assistance for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes girl students studying in primary classes. Generally, it has been observed that the number of Scheduled Caste girl students in educational institutions is much less than their population because of the fact that the parents/guardians of these girls are very poor and they do not pay heed to the education of the female child. If all of these girls are admitted to the school, they drop out of school to assist their parents to augment the family income by taking up nominal jobs. Keeping these circumstances in view the Government of Punjab decided to adopt this Scheme.

Under this scheme, a condition that the attendance scholarship @ Rs. 50/- per month, per student for 10 months in a year is awarded to the girls belonging to the Scheduled Castes, who have domicile of the State of Punjab and are studying in primary classes. Their parents should not own more than five acres of land and should not be income taxpayers. At least 75% class attendance is required for the scholarship award.

**SCHEME FOR SANCTIONING SPECIAL GRANT TO SCHEDULED CASTE GIRL STUDENTS STUDYING IN POST- MATRIC AND POST GRADUATE CLASSES**

The Scheme for Sanctioning Special Grant to Scheduled Caste Girl Students Studying in Post-Matric and Post Graduate Classes was started in the year 1980-81. The prime objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance for the upliftment of the Scheduled Caste girl students studying in post-matric and post-graduate classes. Currently, this is a Non-Plan scheme and is being implemented through the Department of Education/DPI Colleges & Schools, Director of Research & Medical Education and Director of Technical Education.

Under the Scheme, the girl students belonging to the Scheduled Castes residing in the State of Punjab are eligible for Special Grant. The annual income of their parents/guardians from all sources should not exceed Rs.60965. The financial assistance is given to students studying in post-matric and post-graduate classes @ Rs.50 and Rs.60 per month, per girl student, respectively. This grant is in addition to the Post-Matric Scholarship and transferred through DBT Scheme directly into the accounts of beneficiaries by the Department of Welfare. There is a provision in the scheme that the special grant will be paid from the 1st April or from the month of admission, whichever is later, to the month of completion of examinations at the end of the academic year, provided that if the students secure admission after the 20th day of the month, the payment will be made from the month, following admission.

### **3. ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS TO SC GIRL STUDENTS FOR PURSUING 10+2 EDUCATION (STATE PLAN SCHEME)**

The Encouragement Awards Scheme to Scheduled Castes Girl Students for pursuing 10+2 Education is implementing since 2007-08 by the Government of Punjab through the Department of Welfare. The objective of the scheme is to check the high drop-out rate from schools amongst the SC girl students, improve the female literacy rate and also to empower the SC women as well. Currently, the dropout rate among SC girl students is very high being 30.13% at the Primary level, 46.96% at the Middle level and 63.62% at the Secondary level. The Literacy rate of the General Category in the State is 69.70% against 56.22% of Scheduled Castes. The Female literacy rate among SCs is very low being 48.25% against 63.40% of the general female literacy rate. Therefore, on the pattern of the Madhya Pradesh Government, the Government of Punjab has decided to adopt this Scheme to curb the tendency of dropout from schools amongst the Scheduled Castes girl students pursuing 10+2 Education and to provide financial assistance for their upliftment.

Under the Scheme, a lump sum annual amount of Rs. 3000 is provided to each SC girl of 11th & 12th classes. Resident of the State of Punjab is eligible for the Grant. The wards of beneficiaries should not be income taxpayers. The scheme is implemented by the Director of Welfare of SCs and BCs. The demand is sent to the Department of Welfare by the DPI (School).

### **4. GRANT TO SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS STUDYING IN MEDICAL & ENGINEERING COLLEGES (NON-PLAN SCHEME)**

The Government of Punjab has introduced this scheme from the year 1982-83, on the pattern of scholarship fixed by the Government of India, under Centrally Sponsored, "Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Scheduled Castes Students". The students belonging to Scheduled Castes community are financially weak and cannot afford to join professional colleges i.e. Medical and Engineering colleges.

Under this scheme, a special grant is being provided to the Scheduled Castes students studying in Medical and Engineering Colleges @ Rs.125 and Rs.250 per month, for Day Scholar and Hosteller respectively and whose Parents/Guardian's annual income from all sources does not exceed Rs. 60,965. This scheme is being implemented through the Director, Public Instructions (Colleges), Punjab. Under this scheme, recommendations are obtained from the colleges along-with applications of the students. According to the rules of the Scheme, the eligible students are required to apply in time to the Head of Institution in which he/she is studying. Recommendations received from such colleges are scrutinized at the headquarters and approved. Thereafter, the sanctioned amount is disbursed directly into the bank account of the students through the Online Management System.

#### **AWARD TO BRILLIANT SCHEDULED CASTE STUDENTS (NON-PLAN SCHEME)**

The Award to Brilliant Scheduled Caste Students Scheme was introduced in the year 1984-85. The aim of this scheme is to inculcate the spirit of the competition among Scheduled Caste students in the field of education.

Under this scheme, the Scheduled Castes students studying from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> classes are awarded @ Rs.100 per month, per student, who secures 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> positions amongst educational block. There are 228 educational blocks and students (3 boys and 3 girls) are selected annually in each educational block on the basis of merit secured at the level of each examination i.e. 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> classes and get an award for 3 years, 2 years and 2 years respectively, conducted by Punjab School Education Board. The Scheme is implemented through the Director, Public Instruction (Secondary Education), Punjab. The sanctioned amount is disbursed directly into the bank account of the students through the Online Management System.

#### **5. AWARD TO SC SPORTS STUDENTS FOR 6<sup>th</sup> TO 12<sup>th</sup> CLASSES (STATE PLAN SCHEME)**

The Award to Scheduled Castes Sports Students for 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Classes State Plan Scheme was started during the year 1990-91. The aim of this scheme is to inculcate the spirit of competition among Scheduled Castes students in the field of sports. Keeping this in view, the Scheduled Castes students studying from 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> classes are awarded @ Rs. 500, Rs. 750 and Rs. 1000 per annum, per student respectively, who secure first, second and third position amongst Scheduled Castes Students in each educational block and in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> class competition. Consequently, 3 boys and 3 girl students are awarded at each level competition and this award is continued for three year, two years and two years respectively.

#### **6. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SC YOUTH FOR FLYING TRAINING OF COMMERCIAL PILOT LICENCE (STATE PLAN SCHEME)**

Commercial Pilots are in great demand all over the world. Flying training being a costly phenomenon, Scheduled Castes who are mostly poor are unable to get the training for Commercial Pilot Licence. Hence, the representation of Scheduled Castes among Commercial Pilots is almost zero. In order to have a fair representation of Scheduled Castes in Commercial Pilot Licence, it is imperative that the State should come forward to provide financial assistance to Scheduled Castes trainees. Therefore, the Financial Assistance to the Scheduled Castes Youth



for Flying Training of Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) Scheme is being implemented by the Government of Punjab through the Department of Civil Aviation from 2014-15.

To obtain a commercial pilot licence, a candidate has to undergo flying training for a total period of 200 hours and the cost of flying operation varies from Rs. 9600 to Rs. 10,500 per hour depending upon the type of aircraft flown by the trainee. Thus, the total cost of the commercial pilot licence training course is around Rs. 25.00 lac. In view of this, the Department of Welfare proposes to provide financial assistance @ Rs. 25.00 lac per candidate to the registered flying clubs in India.

As per the scheme, the candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes residing in the State of Punjab are eligible for Special Grant. The annual income of their parents/guardians from all sources should not exceed Rs.2.50 lac and only one member of a family would be able to get the benefit. A total of 4 fresh Scheduled Castes candidates are to be covered under the schemes annually. The age of the candidate will be 18 to 25 years as on date of registration and the minimum qualification is 10+2 (2nd division) with Physics & Maths and should be a Graduate. Any eligible candidate can register his name with the flying clubs and he has to pass the written examination as well as a "Pilot Aptitude Test" to become a Commercial Pilot. Candidates will also have to undergo a medical examination as per the flying standards. After declared medically fit, the candidate will submit a bank guarantee of Rs. 1.00 lac in favour of the Director, Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, Punjab, which will be refunded after completion of the training. The total cost per beneficiary i.e. 25.00 lac will be provided as financial assistance by State Government. However, the beneficiary has to sign an agreement/bond with the Government that after his/her placement as CPL, he will return 50% (Rs. 12.50 lac) of total assistance provided to him. He/She will return the amount in 12 equal installments within a year. The granted cost of flying training is directly given to the flying clubs not to the candidates.

#### **7. NEW COURSE/VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN ITIs FOR SCHEDULED CASTES STUDENTS (STAFF EXPENDITURE & SCHOLARSHIP TO SC AND SC BPL STUDENTS COVERED UNDER ETC.) (STATE PLAN SCHEME & SPECIAL CENTRAL ASSISTANCE)**

The New Course/Vocational Training in ITIs scheme for Scheduled Castes Students was started in the year 2004-05. The aim of the scheme is to provide skill development/vocational training in NCVT/SCVT approved trades to the Scheduled Castes youth. Under the scheme, the Skill training is imparted to the youngsters with minimum qualifications in NCVT/SCVT approved trades by the Industrial Training Institution of Technical Education and the Industrial Training Department of Punjab. The ILO accredited certificates issued after the completion of the training in these trades are valid across the country. Due to this recognition, the youth people with these certificates will also be able to get jobs abroad. As the dropout rate of the Scheduled Caste youth from schools is very high, so it is very important to provide them skill training as well.

As per the scheme, the norms and duration of courses will be prescribed by the National Council for Vocational Training or the State Council for Vocational Training. The National Trade Certificate (NTC) of NCVT or the State Trade Certificate (STC) of SCVT is awarded after qualifying the All India Trade Test or the State Trade Test. The total number of trades approved by NCVT is 124. The duration of these trades ranges from 6 months to three years. However, most of the trades are for a period of one or two years. The number of trades/courses approved

by SCVT is 4, duration for which ranges from 6 months to 2 years. The Apprentices are sponsored by the Welfare Department, who have the required qualifications as per NCVT/SCVT norms. Admission is strictly on Merit.

#### **8. PROVIDING OF EQUIPMENT AND RAW-MATERIAL TO THE TRAINEES OF TRAINING-CUM-PRODUCTION CENTRES OF WELFARE DEPARTMENT (SCA)**

The Scheme of Training cum Production Centre was started in the year 1977-78. The aim of the scheme is to make the Scheduled Caste women, girls and boys trained in technical trades and supplement them for their family income so that they can become self-employed and awaken to live a dignified life. So as per the scheme, the duration of the training is one year. During the training, the items are prepared by the trainees in the centers and are sold by the trainees at 10% profit by putting up exhibitions on different occasions. The funds raised from the income are utilized as revolving funds for the purchase of raw material for the concerned trade to train the trainees. Under the scheme, a stipend of Rs. 500 per month, per trainee, has been provided to 25 Scheduled Caste trainees living below the poverty line at each Training Cum Production Center.

As per the scheme, there is a provision to shift the production centers to those villages, where the population of Scheduled Caste families is more than 40 and most of them belong to BPL families and a well rent-free building with proper arrangement of water and light has been arranged by the concerned village panchayat and the village community is ready to participate in the activities of the center.

#### **9. COACHING FOR STENOGRAPHY TO SCHEDULED CASTE CANDIDATES(NON-PLAN SCHEME)**

The Coaching for Stenography to Scheduled Caste Candidates scheme was introduced in the year 1978-79. The objectives of the scheme are to ensure adequate representation of the Scheduled Castes candidates in the cadre of Punjabi Stenographers and Steno Typists in Punjab Civil Secretariat and other offices of the State Government. The persons who are otherwise qualified in the trade are being given special training to meet the required standard.

The total number of seats under the scheme is 230 (15 in each district and 20 seats at Chandigarh) and a stipend of Rs. 250 per month, per trainee, has been provided. In response to the advertisements in leading newspapers in the month of July, all the applications received from the candidate are scrutinized and selected on merits by the selection committee. The candidate should be a graduate from a recognized university or institution and belong to the Scheduled Caste community. Currently, the scheme is being implemented in 14 Districts of the State through the Department of Language.

#### **10. IMPARTING TRAINING IN DRIVER-CUM-MECHANIC (LIGHT MOTOR VEHICLE AND HEAVY MOTOR VEHICLE) (SPECIAL CENTRAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME)**

The Training in Driver-Cum-Mechanic scheme was started in the year 2005-06 to provide employment/self-employment to the candidates of the Scheduled Castes. Under the scheme, the Department of Industrial Training is imparting training to the eighth/matric pass candidates to develop industrial skills, become employable in industries and other organizations and enable them to become self-employed. The modalities of the scheme are sponsored by the Department



of Welfare under the Special Central Assistance (SCA) Scheme. The institute has to open a separate account to deposit this amount in the name of "Account for incurring expenditure on providing training in Driver-Cum-Mechanic Trade". The Principal/Head of Institute has the authority to incur the expenditure i.e. he is the DDO for this scheme. The Scheme proposes to run 23 units (one unit in each district and two units in big districts viz. Gurdaspur, Ludhiana and Patiala (17+6=23) and each unit has 20 courses.

According to the scheme, candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes living below the poverty line in rural and urban areas in the State of Punjab are eligible for the Grant and should be in the age group of 18 to 35 years. The norms and duration of courses are determined by the National Council for Vocational Training or the State Council for Vocational Training. The National Trade Certificate (NTC) of NCVT or the State Trade Certificate (STC) of SCVT is awarded after qualifying the All India Trade Test or the State Trade Test. The candidates are selected on merits by the selection committee. The scheme also provides that in addition to employment opportunities in the government/semi-government institutions, special measures may be taken by the government to provide self-employment to the trainees. For this purpose active engagements can be made with the KVIC, NABARD, major banks and leading loan agencies.

#### **11. SUPPLY OF FREE TEXT BOOKS TO SCHEDULED CASTES STUDENTS STUDYING IN 1<sup>ST</sup> TO 10<sup>TH</sup> CLASSES (NON PLAN SCHEME)**

The Scheme Free Text Books to Scheduled Castes Students studying in 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> classes was started in the year 1976-77 for Middle Classes and the scope of the scheme was enlarged to cover High and Primary Classes from the year 1981-82 and 1986-87 respectively. This scheme has been covered under Dedicated Social Security Fund from the year 2005-06. The funds under this scheme are provided on Non-Plan Side. The textbooks are provided to the Scheduled Caste students studying in 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> class in government as well as private recognized schools. This scheme is being implemented by the Department of Welfare and the textbooks are got printed by the Punjab School Education Board, Mohali. There is no income limit under this scheme. The strength of scheduled caste students studying in 1<sup>st</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> class (class-wise) in the District is obtained from District Education Officer (Primary and Secondary) by D.G.S.E thereafter demand is sent to the Secretary, Punjab School Education Board for supply of books. The Board starts supplying the books in the month of February. Currently, the books have been supplied by the Punjab School Education Board through its Book Depots located in each District directly to concerned schools as per the demand sent by D.G.S.E. The concerned District Welfare Officers with the assistance of the Tehsil Welfare Officers are responsible for fair and timely distribution of the books.

#### **12. SETTING UP OF INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING TO SCHEDULED CASTE CANDIDATES IN STENOGRAPHY (SPECIAL CENTRAL ASSISTANCE) AT MOHALI, PATIALA, FEROZEPUR AND AMRITSAR**

Keeping in view the deficient representation of Scheduled Caste in the cadre of Steno typists/Stenographers and non-availability of such qualified persons with Punjab Subordinate Service Selection Board and State Employment Exchange, the State Government has decided to start a scheme namely "Setting up of Institute for Training to Unemployed/ Below Poverty Line Graduate Scheduled Castes Candidates in Stenography", at Mohali out of SCA funds in the year

1987-88. The scope of this scheme has been extended by opening similar stenography centers at Patiala and Ferozepur from the year 1999-2000 and at Amritsar from the year 2002-03.

The scheme is implemented by the Directorate of Welfare of SCs/BCs. Under the Scheme, candidates should have a graduate degree with relevant language as an elective or optional subject or has an equivalent degree in any discipline from recognized University/Institution. The annual income of the candidate from all sources should not exceed Rs.1.00 lac. To select the candidate a selection committee under the chairmanship of Deputy Director, Department of Welfare of SC/BC with concerned District Language Officer and concerned Instructors as Members and District Welfare Officer as Member Secretary has been constituted so as to give fair selection on the basis of merit. The duration of the training period is one year. The number of seats in Mohali Institution is 80 having 40 seats each in Punjabi and English. The number of seats in Patiala, Ferozepur and Amritsar institutes are 50 each (25 each in Punjabi and English). During the training period, each trainee is provided a stipend of Rs. 750 per month and in addition to this the trainees are also provided stationery, library books and other material required for the training.

With the increasing use of information technology, the computer components have also been added in these institutes to make them result-oriented and to create new avenues for the candidates who pass from these institutes.

### **13. REMOVAL OF UNTOUCHABILITY UNDER PROGRAMME FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF PROTECTION OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACT-1955 AND THE SCHEDULED CASTES & SCHEDULED TRIBES (PREVENTION OF ATROCITIES) ACT, 1989 (CENTRALLY SPONSORED SCHEME)**

To remove untouchability from its grass-root level, a scheme namely "Removal of Untouchability under Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955" was introduced in the State of Punjab during the year 1986-87. Under this scheme, an encouragement award is given to the inter-caste married couples (wherein one of the spouses belongs to Scheduled Caste) and to the Panchayats, Voluntary Organizations who work for the all-around development of Scheduled Caste are given suitable financial assistance. Besides this, seminars, debates and Mass Lunch are also organized at the Block level. Wide publicity of the Welfare Schemes is also made through advertisements in various Newspapers and distribution of Pamphlets etc. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme and the budget is share by the State Government and Centre Government on 50:50 bases. An amount of Rs. 50,000 is provided to the inter-caste married couples and an amount of Rs. 25,000 is also provided to the Panchayats who are doing outstanding work for the development of the Scheduled Caste Community.

In order to reduce the atrocities at the grass-root level, a scheme has been drawn up "Setting up of SC Protection Cell and Providing Monetary relief to the victim of atrocities and their dependents". With the introduction of this scheme, the State Government has now been able to take effective steps to curb atrocities and to cope with any offence against the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes. The scheme provides various incentives/monetary relief to the victim of atrocities as per the norms laid down by the Government of India under POA Rules, 1995.

#### **14. ASSISTANCE TO REPUTED AND REGISTERED NGO'S/TRUST AND OTHER SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS SOLEMNIZING MASS MARRIAGES FOR SCHEDULED CASTES/INTER-CASTE (STATE PLAN SCHEME)**

The scheme provides financial assistance to the reputed and registered Institutions, Trusts, and NGOs and to the Scheduled Castes & inter-caste married couples to eradicate untouchability and to maintaining communal harmony in the State. To meet the objectives, the State Government has decided to involve the reputed and registered NGOs, Trust and other Social Institutions who solemnize the mass marriage of poor and needy Scheduled Castes, so that the parents of this poor stratum of society are relieved to some extent. The scheme covers only marriages between the Scheduled Castes (at least one of the members should belong to BPL category), non-Scheduled Caste bride and Scheduled Caste BPL bridegroom or vice-versa. Financial assistance in the form of cash is provided to individuals or institutes which solemnize more than ten mass marriages of SC couples. Rs.0.75 lac per marriage is given to Institution/Trust/NGO, out of which Rs. 60,000 is given to the couple for providing utensils, furniture and gold etc. while Rs. 15,000 is given to the organizer, individual/institute as an encouragement award.

#### **15. STRENGTHENING OF 108 COMMUNITY CENTRES FOR PROVIDING EQUIPMENTS AND RAW MATERIAL (SCA)**

The Community Centers Scheme was started in the year 1956-57 to provide equipments and raw materials. Under the scheme, a one-year training programme in cutting, tailoring and embroidery has been provided to the women and girls of Scheduled Castes living below the poverty line and the Women and Girls of the other sections of the society to become self-employed and self-reliant. During the training, the readymade items are prepared by the trainees in the centers and are sold by the trainees at 10% profit by putting up exhibitions on different occasions. The funds raised from the income are utilized as revolving funds for the purchase of raw material for the concerned trade to train the trainees.

As per the scheme, there is a provision to shift the centers to those villages, where the population of Scheduled Caste families is more than 40 and most of them belong to BPL families and a well rent-free building with proper arrangement of water and light has been arranged by the concerned village panchayat and the village community is ready to participate in the activities of the center.

#### **16. HOUSES TO HOUSELESS SCS IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS (DISTRICT PLAN)**

To provide houses to Scheduled Castes families who are either houseless or having Kacha houses in a dilapidated condition, grants are provided by the State Government for the purchase of plot and construction of houses. From the years 2008-09, the SC families having a maximum upper limit of annual income is 1.00 lac is covered under this scheme. Considering the present rate of land, a grant of Rs 50,000 has been given to each SC houseless family for the construction of a new house with one room and one kitchen. However, funds for the construction of toilets are provided under the "Rural Sanitation Programme." Besides this, a grant of Rs 20.00 thousand for each beneficiary is provided for the conversion of Kacha houses into Pucca houses.

As per the scheme, families living in Kacha or dilapidated houses are subject to the condition that they have not availed any relief grant for houses under any government scheme before. The

family must be a permanent resident of the state of Punjab and have their own plot. Families who have a plot of their own or have got plot under the Panchayati land or free or partial free from any other government institution is preferred.

#### **17. CONSTRUCTION OF DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR BHAWANS (STATE PLAN SCHEME)**

To commemorate the birth of Bharat Ratna Baba Sahib, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar the Punjab Government had decided to set up AmbedkarBhawan at each district headquarters. The construction of Bhawans has been completed in the district of Ropar, Ferozepur, Moga, Patiala, Gurdaspur, Bathinda, Faridkot, Sangrur, Fatehgarh Sahib, Kapurthala, Mukatsar, Mansa, Ludhiana and NawanShahr. The construction work is going on the district of Amritsar, Hoshiarpur and Jalandhar, whereas the matter for allotment of land for construction of AmbedkarBhawans at S.A.S. Nagar, Tarn Taran and Barnala is under consideration of the Government.

#### **18. CONSTRUCTION OF SC DHARAMSHALAS/CHAUPALS**

The scheme for construction of Dharamshalas/Chaupals for Scheduled Castes was started in the year 1969-70. Under this scheme, Dharamshalas are constructed in the Scheduled Caste Basties in the State so that these people can avail the community benefits and arrange their social functions at these places. A grant of Rs. 1.00 lac has been provided for the construction of a new Dharamshala and Rs. 50 thousand has been provided for the repair of incomplete Dharamshala. Land and the labour for the construction of Dharamshala are arranged by the Community/village Panchayat itself. Grant has been provided for the construction of new Dharamshala in the village/town having suitable site measuring 10 marlas to one Kanal in village and 4 marlas in town inhabited by 10 to 15 Scheduled Caste families.

Under this scheme, the Managing Committee consisting of the District Welfare Officer as Chairman, Tehsil Welfare Officer (Ex officio) as Member Secretary, one Panch/Counsellor/M.C. of Scheduled Caste as Member-cum-Cashier, the Sarpanch/Panch/Counsellor/M.C. other than Scheduled Caste as member and any Scheduled Caste member, preferably lady member of Gram Panchayat in village & lady counselor in Urban area acting as member. The scheme comes under the Punjab Nirman Programme from the year 2005-06. There are 12,729 villages in the state; Out of which 11,783 have been covered and 17,848 Dharamshalas have been constructed.

#### **19. SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT CELL**

The state government had set up a Special Employment Cell on April 28, 1970 in the Directorate of Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes to register the names of unemployed educated persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, across the State, who have certificates in respect of academic/technical qualifications. The scheme provides that those Scheduled Caste Candidates, who have already registered their names in the Employment Exchange, are also eligible to register their names with the Special Cell. Along with the Employment Exchange, the Employment Cell has also continued its usual efforts to find jobs against reserved as well as general posts for the candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes. The objective of the scheme is to safeguard the interest of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes in the matter of appointment both at the time of initial recruitment and also by promotion.

As per the provisions of the scheme, whenever a department advertises any permanent/temporary or short term vacancies to be filled by the department committees at the headquarter/district/tehsil level, such requirements are forward to the required Public Service Commission/Employment Exchange, a copy of such advertisement/requirement is also sent to the Special Employment Cell and the Cell in turn sends the names of suitable persons in its list on the basis of seniority to the department/recruitment authority concerned and recruitment authority consider such candidates as per their requirements.

There is provision in the scheme that the department shall have to obtain a non-availability certificate from the Employment Cell before the vacancies reserved for Scheduled Castes/Backward Classes are offered to other candidates. The Cell works both at the headquarter level in the office of the Director, Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes and at the district level in the offices of the District Welfare Officers.

## **20. AWARENESS PROGRAMME (NON-PLAN SCHEME)**

For effective implementation of Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, general awareness among poor Scheduled Castes is essential. This is possible only if the various welfare schemes implemented by the Welfare Department of Punjab as well as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 and the Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989 are widely publicized through press and electronic media i.e. Radio, T.V, printing and distribution of folders, pamphlets, booklets etc.<sup>46</sup>

## **21. AWARD TO VILLAGE PANCHAYATS FOR PROMOTING EDUCATION & SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES (NEW SCHEME)**

It has been observed that village Panchayats can play an important role in the overall development of the Scheduled Castes. There are a total of 12,238 villages in the State of Punjab out of which 3,788 villages are identified as SC dominated villages with 40% and above SC population. Under the scheme, there is a condition of the Welfare Department that an award of Rs. 50,000 is given to the Panchayats which shows outstanding performance in the eradication of untouchability under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and making efforts for providing monetary relief to the victim of atrocities under the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocity) Act, 1989, bringing down the drop-out rate of SC and ensure their 100% enrolment in government schools and providing basic amenities such as drinking water, electricity, repair of roads, drains etc. in the SC basties of the village. The main thrust of the scheme is to reduce the dropout rate of SC students and ensure 100% enrolment in the government schools.

The award amount to be given to Panchayats is only subject to the condition that 25% of the total award amount will be spent on the overall development and empowerment of Scheduled Caste women. It is the duty of the Panchayat to involve the SC women in Panchayat development works and assist/train them to get a loan from Financial Institutions/Banks on easy installments to make them self-reliant. The Panchayat should take steps to eradicate social evils such as female feticide, dowry, drug addiction etc. and aware SCs about their rights & duties for the development of society.

Under the scheme, the selection of village Panchayats is made by the District Level Committee consisting of the Deputy Commissioner as Chairman, the Sub-Divisional Magistrate and the



District Development & Panchayat Officer as members, the District Welfare Officer as member secretary.

As per the provisions of the scheme, the District Welfare Officer forward the recommendations of eligible village Panchayats duly recommended by the District Level Committee to the Director, Welfare of Scheduled Castes & Backward Classes, Punjab, who issue the approvals in the name of eligible Panchayats and send the award money to the concerned District Welfare Officer in the shape of RTRs. The District Welfare Officer is overall responsible for the proper utilization of funds. Eligible Panchayats are honoured by the concerned Deputy Commissioner by distributing RTRs on National Days/relevant occasions such as on the Republic Day or on the Independence Day.

To conclude, apart from the general development programmes, the government of Punjab during the last five decades, numbers of special schemes has been launched for welfare of the Scheduled Castes. The scholarship schemes for the Scheduled Castes students have been the most regular in terms of their implementation. Some schemes such as Legal Aid Clinic in all districts, Residential Schools for Scheduled Caste boys and girls etc. were never started and remained only on paper. Grants for some of the other schemes were sanctioned irregularly. Important among these are, schemes relating to opening of hostels for Scheduled Castes boys and girls. Post-Matric Scholarship to Scheduled Castes students, Pre-Matric Scholarship etc. The Rural Landless Employment Guarantee scheme introduced in Sixth Five Year Plan was changed into JawaharRojgarYojana in the year 1981 and then into Prime Minister RojgarYojana in 1991, and presently named SwarnJyantiSwaiRojgarYojana in April 2000. A prominent scheme known as Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWACRA) was changed into Self-Help Groups Scheme. The basic contents of these schemes remained almost similar. It was like the old wine in new bottles. Welfare bureaucracy expanded as new agencies and offices with new designation were created.

Thus if we compare the decadal economic condition of the Scheduled Castes, we have found that this decade of 2001-2011 has shown a considerable change in their conditions, especially their economic conditions. Their literacy rate in India and Punjab in 2001 was 34.76 and 56.2 percent respectively. It has improved to 66.07 and 64.81 percent respectively in India and in Punjab in 2011. More and more parents are now sending their children to schools. The infant mortality rate has decreased. Their clothing has improved. Reservation in jobs and admission in professional courses have benefited them a lot.

However, despite many schemes and programmes for the development of Scheduled Castes, more than 3.21 lac families of Scheduled Castes are still living below the poverty line. If we look at the number of schemes for the welfare of Scheduled Castes people, it is very encouraging. But if we look at their implementation, the sole purpose of the concerned government agencies seems to be to fill the official records and achieve the targets, whether in reality or on papers only. No one seems to care whether the Scheduled Castes have actually benefited from the schemes or not or what kind of schemes the Scheduled Castes need.

Numerous studies have revealed that government agencies do not have any feedback mechanism to determine the success or failure of the schemes. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a proper check mechanism to implement the schemes. In addition, Panchayati Raj institutions and intellectuals in the same fields should have appropriate participation and role in the formulation

and implementation of the schemes. For successful policymaking and implementation of welfare and development programmes, it is very essential to develop a sound social management system. Existing administrative establishments at district, block and village levels should be strengthened.

A strong administrative structure is needed to support the public service delivery system for the weaker sections and backward classes of the society. In view of structural shortcomings, the bureaucratic system must be organized on functional lines to facilitate proper command and coordination. The biggest structural problem at the moment is the lack of people's participation. As such, leaders or wards members of the oppressed sections of the society should be invited to various forums for planning, programming and execution of various welfare and development programmes and schemes. So, the schemes can be more relevant and change the lives of the downtrodden.

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