

Poverty and Inequality: Role of Social Protection Programmes in a Backward Region of West Bengal

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The present paper examines the impact of social protection programmes on poverty and inequality in the backward region of West Bengal. The benefits from social protection programmes (SPPs) have reduced the incidence of poverty to the extent of 3.7 percentage points. It seems that in the case of relatively less poor households, the decreasing rate of poverty gap (PG) and square poverty gap (SPG) are less than in relatively poorer households. That indicates that relatively less poor households are more deprived (especially, double deprived) than relatively more poor households. The benefits of social protection programmes have also reduced the income inequality in both absolute and relative senses. In addition, the income of relatively poorer households has increased to a greater extent than of relatively less poor households. Absolute inequality in the presence of social protection is larger than absolute inequality in its absence. The study suggests that social protection programmes can be used as important tools for reducing inequality in the backward region of West Bengal.

I Introduction

The achievement of Millennium Development Goals or its modern version Sustainable Development Goals in general and the reduction of poverty and inequality in particular cannot be possible by the investment in physical and human capital and the promotion of economic growth. Direct interventions are also necessary to address the needs of the poorest and to prevent members of vulnerable groups from falling into poverty as well as to reduce inequality.

Social protection has emerged as a policy framework employed to address poverty, inequality and vulnerability in the developing countries. A range of factors signal the rise to prominence of social protection. International development organizations, especially agencies within the United Nations, have

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