

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PLANNING
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:6577

ANSWERED ON:05.05.2010

DEBATE ON FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL WELFARE SCHEME

Basavaraj Shri Gangasandra Siddappa

Will the Minister of PLANNING be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government's new focus on food security and other social welfare schemes have revived the debate about actual poverty levels in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether at least four different poverty level estimates have been brought out by both Government and Quasi-Government agencies;
- (d) if so, whether the confusion about varying poverty level estimates needs to be settled for optimum disbursement of scarce funds set apart for social welfare schemes to bonafide beneficiaries; and
- (e) if so, the Government's stance in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY)

(a) to (e) ; Though the various agencies are estimating poverty levels based on different parameters and with different objectives, the Planning Commission is the nodal agency in the country to estimate the incidence of poverty. The Planning Commission has been estimating poverty in the country since the year 1997 on the basis of the methodology contained in the 'Report of the Expert Group on Estimation of Number and Proportion of Poor' (Lakdawala Committee). The latest available poverty estimates are for the year 2004-05. As per these estimates, 28.3 % of rural population and 25.7% of urban population were below the poverty line against the all India figure of 27.5%.

The methodology for estimation of Poverty is reviewed from time to time. Accordingly, the Planning Commission constituted an Expert Group in December 2005 under the Chairmanship of Prof. Suresh D. Tendulkar to review the methodology for estimation of poverty. The Expert Group submitted its report in December 2009. On the basis of methodology suggested in Tendulkar Committee Report, the all-India rural poverty headcount ratio for 2004-05 is estimated at 41.8%, urban poverty headcount ratio at 25.7% and for All India at 37.2%. The Planning Commission is seized of the recommendations of the Tendulkar Committee.

The Ministry of Rural Development conducts Below Poverty Line Census (BPL Census) to identify the individual households below the poverty line in the rural areas while ensuring that the total number of such household corresponds to the poverty estimates of the Planning Commission. The Expert Group constituted by that Ministry in 2008 for recommending a suitable methodology for identification of the BPL households in the rural areas has since submitted its report in August 2009 to the Ministry of Rural Development. The Government is conscious of the need for providing food security and other social welfare schemes to the target beneficiaries.