

Weekly Livelihoods Update

23 May 2018

- + **Minimum Support Prices vs Price Deficiency Payments:** There is an ongoing debate on whether MSP for various agricultural commodities can be replaced by a system of price deficiency payments to farmers.
 - The main objective of the intended policy shift is the improvement in farmers' incomes as well as a reduction in farm subsidies.
 - The case for price deficiency payments to farmers is made out on the ground that the existing MSP policy, which is being followed in India since 1965 for various agricultural commodities, is highly inadequate and ineffective from a farmer's perspective and also inefficient from an economic point of view.
 - The MSP in India covering as many as 23 crops, it should be limited to a few specific commodities.
 - An analysis of this system suggests that price deficiency payments might be a better option for both farmers and the government. However, it should be properly designed so that it can improve farm incomes, national food security, fiscal prudence and sustainability of agriculture. Moreover, necessary safeguards and corrective measures have to be initiated, as and when required, to minimise the risks involved.
 - Besides, updating and digitisation of Aadhaar-linked land records and bank accounts along with legalisation of land leasing would be essential for any price deficiency payment programme to be adequately effective. (Visit <http://www.epw.in/journal/2018/20/special-articles/price-deficiency-payments-and-minimum-support-prices.html> for further reading)
- + **Cauvery Management Scheme:** SC Gives approval to Draft Cauvery Management Scheme. The scheme would deal with release of water to four states in different circumstances like normal and deficient water years in the Cauvery river basin. (Visit <https://www.thewire.in/law/sc-gives-approval-to-draft-cauvery-management-scheme> for further reading)
- + **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups(PVTGs):** The country's PVTGs have been slowly reduced to virtual serfdom. The government framed policies in 2012-13 based on recommendations of the NAC. As many as 75 tribal groups with a total population of about 2.7 million were classified as PVTG. This small number of people is scattered over a large number of locations in over a dozen states of the country. The people of the PVTG still live in forests and practice primitive forms of agriculture. However, in the main, the pressure of population growth of other communities has reduced area under dense forests and rendered the mode of living of the PVTG increasingly unviable. India's Bureaucracy needs to do more for these Forest Dwellers but only time will tell whether governments are interested to and can employ appropriate administrative implements to further the interest of the people of the PVTG. (Visit <https://www.thewire.in/rights/indias-bureaucracy-needs-to-do-more-for-forest-dwellers> for further reading).

✚ **Ujjwala Yojana:** The Central Government's Flagship programme PMUY to provide LPG connections has been in operation for two years. The announcement of PMUY and the recent increase of its target, marks a significant shift in the government's approach to providing access to clean cooking fuels. However, little is known about the progress of the scheme. Has it led to sustained use of clean fuels among poor households? Analysis of this is also important because the programme involves a public investment of over ₹12,000 crore and it is necessary to ensure that this investment realises its social objectives.

- The aim is to distribute five crore connections to poor women "free of cost" by March 2019. As of early April 2018 more than 3.5 crore connections were provided under the scheme.
- Encouraged by the rapid release of connections, the central government revised the target and scope of the scheme to eight crore connections by March 2020.
- Experts suggest that a connection focused approach without adequate provisions to ensure affordability, availability, and accountability will not result in a corresponding increase in consistent use of LPG among poor households. PMUY should achieve the desired objective of not only disbursing connections but making the LPG sector a real contributor to overcoming this deep-rooted challenge affecting energy access, health, and gender disparity.
- Regular monitoring of PMUY and publishing of information has also been recommended by the corresponding Parliamentary Standing Committee (SCPNG 2018). (Visit <http://www.epw.in/journal/2018/20/notes/what-has-pradhan-mantri-ujjwala-yojana-achieved-so-far.html> for further reading)

✚ **How Haryana saved its girls:** Three-and-a-half years since the BBBP campaign was first launched, Haryana's sex ratio at birth (SRB), which was down to a miserable 834 (that is 834 girls for every 1,000 boys) and was the lowest among all states in 2011, jumped to an impressive 914 in 2017. Seventeen districts reported SRBs above 900. Only four, Jind, Rewari, Rohtak and Narnaul, had SRBs around 890. The BBBP has saved the lives of an estimated 11,600 girl children in Haryana. (Visit <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/society/story/20180528-haryana-girls-female-foeticide-khattar-government-1236234-2018-05-17> for further reading)

✚ **Education:** Young minds in India are being destroyed by a faulty pattern of education, parental ambitions, the aggression of hyper-competitiveness and a flawed idea of 'success'. The idea of success in India strips the joy of learning only to replace with the neurotic urge to be a topper. (Visit <https://thewire.in/education/the-true-face-of-indias-education-system> for further reading)

