

Impact of Government Schemes on Naiya Community: Benefits and Limitations

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we examines the impact of key government schemes Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), and Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM) on the Naiya, focusing on benefits and limitations. These schemes provide some economic support, housing, sanitation, healthcare, and educational opportunities, enhancing income, living conditions, and access to services. However, their impact is constrained by the Naiya's non-ST status, which excludes them from ST-specific protections like the Forest Rights Act, bureaucratic inefficiencies, cultural barriers such as house abandonment after a death, and gender disparities limiting women's participation.

Keywords : Economic support, Housing, Sanitation, Healthcare, and Educational etc

Introduction :

The Naiya community in Banka district, Bihar, is a marginalized group classified as an Extremely Backward Class (EBC) under Bihar's reservation framework, despite demands for their inclusion in the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list due to their socio-economic backwardness and forest-based livelihoods. Government schemes aimed at uplifting marginalized communities are critical for addressing their challenges, but their impact on the Naiya is limited by their EBC status, geographical isolation, and systemic implementation gaps.¹ This analysis explores the benefits and limitations of key government schemes on the Naiya community, focusing on their socio-economic context in Banka district.

Banka district, characterized by its hilly terrain and forested areas, is home to a diverse population, including recognized STs like the Santhal and EBC communities like the Naiya. The Naiya's livelihoods woodcutting, bamboo made Dagra, soil digging, and selling forest produce mirror those of STs, yet their lack of ST recognition denies them access to critical protections like the Forest Rights Act of 2006 and the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996. This analysis examines schemes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), and education-focused initiatives, evaluating their impact on the Naiya and highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address their unique challenges.

Socio-Economic Challenges

The Naiya face profound socio-economic challenges, including :

- **Poverty:** Widespread poverty limits access to basic needs like food, housing, and healthcare.
- **Illiteracy:** High illiteracy rates, particularly among women, restrict educational and employment opportunities.
- **Geographical Isolation:** Banka's hilly and forested terrain isolates the Naiya from schools, healthcare facilities, and markets.
- **Lack of Land Rights:** As EBCs, they lack access to land titles under the Forest Rights Act, critical for their forest-based livelihoods.
- **Health Issues:** Poor health outcomes due to inadequate healthcare access, malnutrition, and reliance on traditional practices influenced by superstitions.

These challenges, compounded by their non-ST status, limit their access to targeted schemes for tribal upliftment, making government interventions for EBCs their primary avenue for support. The 2014 Lok Sabha debate emphasized

their dwindling population and dire conditions, advocating for ST status to provide constitutional protections and development benefits.²

Policy Context: EBC vs. ST Status

As an EBC, the Naiya are eligible for state-level reservation benefits in Bihar, including quotas in education and employment. However, these benefits are less comprehensive than those for STs, who receive:

- **Reservations:** Quotas in education, government jobs, and political representation under Articles 15(4), 16(4), and 243D.
- **Land and Resource Rights:** Protections under the Forest Rights Act for land titles and forest resource access.
- **Local Governance:** Participation in local decision-making under the PESA Act.
- **Development Schemes:** Targeted programs like the Tribal Sub-Plan and Integrated Tribal Development Programme.

Their demand for ST status, raised in 2014, remains unaddressed, limiting their access to critical schemes that could address their socio-economic marginalization.³

Key Government Schemes and Their Impact on the Naiya Community

The following sections analyze the impact of major government schemes on the Naiya community, focusing on their benefits and limitations in Banka district. These schemes, implemented at the national or state level, target marginalized groups, including EBCs, and address key areas like employment, housing, sanitation, health, and education.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

MGNREGA, launched in 2005, guarantees 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households for unskilled manual work, aiming to enhance livelihoods and create rural infrastructure. In Bihar, it has generated millions of person-days of employment, contributing to poverty alleviation and skill development.

Benefits for the Naiya Community

- **Employment Opportunities:** MGNREGA provides a safety net for Naiya households, offering wage employment for tasks like road construction, water conservation, and afforestation, which align with their traditional skills in soil digging and manual labor. This is particularly beneficial for Naiya women, who often engage in low-skill tasks like bamboo made Dagra, as it offers an alternative income source.
- **Economic Stability:** The scheme's wages, though modest, help supplement the Naiya's meager earnings from forest produce, reducing their dependence on informal markets. In Banka, MGNREGA projects, such as building check dams or rural roads, have provided seasonal employment, improving household income.
- **Skill Development:** Participation in MGNREGA projects, such as constructing irrigation canals, offers basic skill training, enhancing employability for some Naiya members.

Limitations

- **Implementation Gaps:** In Banka's remote areas, MGNREGA implementation is inconsistent due to bureaucratic delays, corruption, and lack of awareness. Naiya households, often isolated in forested regions, may not be registered or informed about job opportunities.
- **Limited Work Days:** The 100-day employment guarantee is insufficient for year-round economic stability, as the Naiya rely on forest-based activities that are seasonal and unpredictable.
- **Gender Disparities:** While women participate in MGNREGA, they often receive lower-paying tasks or face harassment at worksites, limiting their economic empowerment. Cultural norms restricting women's mobility further reduce their participation.
- **Lack of ST-Specific Benefits:** As EBCs, the Naiya community miss out on MGNREGA's targeted provisions for STs, such as priority in asset creation projects in tribal areas.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

PMAY, launched in 2015, aims to provide affordable housing to rural and urban poor by 2022. In Bihar, PMAY-Grameen targets rural households, providing financial assistance for constructing pucca houses with basic amenities.⁴

Benefits for the Naiya Community

- **Housing Security:** PMAY offers Naiya households the opportunity to replace kuccha (temporary) dwellings with pucca houses, improving living conditions and reducing vulnerability to natural disasters.
- **Financial Assistance:** The scheme provides subsidies (approximately ₹1.2 lakh per house in rural areas), enabling Naiya families to build homes despite their poverty.
- **Women's Empowerment:** PMAY encourages joint ownership of houses, potentially enhancing Naiya women's agency by granting them legal property rights.

Limitations

- **Cultural Barriers:** The Naiya's practice of abandoning houses after a family member's death, as noted in the 2014 Lok Sabha debate, undermines PMAY's effectiveness. Families may not utilize provided houses long-term, reverting to nomadic patterns.
- **Implementation Challenges:** In Banka, bureaucratic delays, corruption, and lack of awareness limit access to PMAY benefits. Remote Naiya settlements are often overlooked due to poor outreach.
- **Land Ownership Issues:** As EBCs, the Naiya community lack land titles, complicating their eligibility for PMAY, which requires proof of land ownership or allocation of government land.
- **Exclusion from ST Benefits:** ST households receive priority under PMAY-Grameen, including additional funding for tribal areas. The Naiya's EBC status excludes them from these benefits, reducing their access to housing support.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

SBM, launched in 2014, aims to achieve universal sanitation coverage by constructing household toilets and promoting open defecation-free (ODF) villages.⁵ In Banka, SBM has been supported by the Global Sanitation Fund through agencies like NEEDS, targeting high rates of open defecation (above 80% in rural Bihar).

Benefits for the Naiya Community

- **Improved Sanitation:** SBM has facilitated toilet construction in Banka's rural areas, potentially benefiting Naiya households by reducing open defecation and improving hygiene.
- **Health Outcomes:** Access to toilets reduces waterborne diseases, particularly for Naiya women and children, who are vulnerable to health issues due to poor sanitation.
- **Behavioral Change:** SBM's awareness campaigns promote hygiene practices, which could benefit the Naiya community, who face health challenges influenced by superstitions and isolation.

Limitations

- **Low Adoption Rates:** Cultural practices and lack of awareness lead to underutilization of toilets among the Naiya community. Some households may continue open defecation due to traditional beliefs or lack of water supply.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** In Banka's remote areas, toilet construction is hampered by logistical challenges, such as lack of water or building materials.
- **Maintenance Issues:** SBM focuses on construction but lacks sustained support for maintenance, leading to dysfunctional toilets in some Naiya community settlements.
- **Non-ST Status:** ST communities receive priority under SBM for tribal-specific sanitation projects. The Naiya's EBC status limits their access to such targeted interventions.

National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)

NRHM, launched in 2005, aims to improve healthcare access in rural areas through health centers, trained healthcare workers, and programs for maternal and child health.⁶ In Bihar, NRHM has established primary health centers (PHCs) and deployed Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) to enhance health outcomes.

Benefits for the Naiya Community

- **Healthcare Access:** NRHM's PHCs and ASHA workers have improved healthcare delivery in Banka, potentially benefiting Naiya households with access to vaccinations, maternal care, and basic treatment.
- **Maternal and Child Health:** Programs like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) under NRHM provide financial incentives for institutional deliveries, reducing maternal and infant mortality among Naiya women.
- **Health Awareness:** ASHA workers promote health education, addressing superstitions that contribute to poor health outcomes in the Naiya community.

Limitations

- **Geographical Barriers:** Banka's hilly terrain restricts Naiya access to PHCs, as many settlements are far from health facilities.
- **Cultural Resistance:** Superstitions and reliance on traditional healing practices, as noted in studies, limit the Naiya's engagement with modern healthcare.
- **Staffing and Infrastructure Shortages:** PHCs in Banka often lack adequate staff, medicines, or equipment, reducing their effectiveness for remote communities like the Naiya.
- **Exclusion from ST Programs:** NRHM prioritizes STs for tribal-specific health initiatives, such as mobile medical units in tribal areas. The Naiya's EBC status excludes them from these benefits.

Education-Focused Schemes

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), launched in 2001, aims to achieve universal elementary education, while the Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana, a Bihar-specific scheme, provides bicycles to girls to attend secondary school, addressing dropout rates. In Banka, SSA supports primary and middle schools, and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) target disadvantaged girls.

Benefits for the Naiya Community

- **Increased School Access:** SSA's expansion of primary and middle schools in Banka has improved educational access for Naiya children, particularly in rural areas.
- **Girls' Education:** The Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana enables Naiya girls to attend secondary schools by overcoming mobility barriers, reducing dropout rates.
- **Infrastructure Development:** KGBVs provide residential schooling for disadvantaged girls, offering Naiya girls a safe learning environment and access to scholarships.

Limitations

- **Geographical Isolation:** Many Naiya settlements are far from schools, and poor road connectivity limits access, particularly for girls facing safety concerns.
- **Cultural Barriers:** Early marriage and domestic responsibilities lead to high dropout rates among Naiya girls, undermining the impact of schemes like Balika Cycle Yojana.
- **Limited Awareness:** Lack of awareness about educational schemes, compounded by illiteracy, prevents Naiya families from enrolling children or accessing scholarships.
- **Non-ST Status:** ST students receive priority for scholarships, hostels, and book grants under SSA and other schemes. The Naiya's EBC status limits their access to these benefits.

Benefits of Government Schemes:

Government schemes have provided some benefits to the Naiya community, including :

- **Economic Support:** MGNREGA and DAY-NRLM offer income and skill-building opportunities, reducing poverty and enhancing livelihoods.
- **Housing and Sanitation:** PMAY and SBM improve living conditions through pucca houses and toilets, addressing basic needs.
- **Healthcare Access:** NRHM's PHCs and ASHA workers enhance health outcomes, particularly for maternal and child health.
- **Educational Opportunities:** SSA and Balika Cycle Yojana increase school access, particularly for girls, fostering long-term empowerment.

These benefits have improved the Naiya's quality of life to some extent, particularly in rural Banka, where infrastructure projects under PMGSY and SBM have enhanced connectivity and sanitation.

Conclusion

Government schemes like MGNREGA, PMAY, SBM, NRHM, SSA, and DAY-NRLM have provided some benefits to the Naiya community in Banka district, including employment, housing, sanitation, healthcare, and educational opportunities. These interventions have improved their quality of life to an extent, particularly through income support and infrastructure development. However, their impact is constrained by the Naiya's non-ST status, implementation gaps, geographical isolation, cultural practices, and gender disparities. The lack of ST recognition denies them access to critical protections like land rights and tribal-specific programs, while bureaucratic inefficiencies and low awareness further limit scheme effectiveness.

To enhance the impact of government schemes, policymakers must address these barriers through targeted outreach, cultural sensitivity, and advocacy for ST status. Empowering Naiya women through SHGs, education, and safe employment opportunities is critical for inclusive development. By building on existing achievements and addressing systemic challenges, the Bihar government can ensure that the Naiya community benefits fully from India's development framework, fostering their socio-economic upliftment and cultural preservation in Banka district.

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