

MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

National Social Assistance Programme(NSAP)

1. Introduction

The *National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)* is a welfare programme being administered by the Ministry of Rural Development. This programme is being implemented in rural areas as well as urban areas. NSAP represents a significant step towards the fulfilment of the Directive Principles of State Policy enshrined in the Constitution of India which enjoin upon the State to undertake within its means a number of welfare measures. These are intended to secure for the citizens adequate means of livelihood, raise the standard of living, improve public health, provide free and compulsory education for children etc. In particular, Article 41 of the Constitution of India directs the State to provide public assistance to its citizens in case of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and in other cases of undeserved want within the limit of its economic capacity and development. It is in accordance with these noble principles that the Government of India on 15th August 1995 included the National Social Assistance Programme in the Central Budget for 1995-96. The Prime Minister in his broadcast to the Nation on 28th July 1995 announced that the programme will come into effect from 15th August 1995. Accordingly the Govt. of India launched NSAP as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme w.e.f 15th August 1995 towards fulfilment of these principles.

The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) then comprised of National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). These programmes were meant for providing social assistance benefit to the aged, the BPL households in the case of death of the primary breadwinner and for maternity. These programmes were aimed to ensure minimum national standards in addition to the benefits that the States were then providing or would provide in future.

The scale of benefit and eligibility for various schemes of NSAP when first started were as follows:

- (i) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS): Rs 75 per month is provided per beneficiary for destitute above 65 years. The scheme covered destitute having little or no regular means of subsistence from his / her own sources of income or through financial support from family members or other sources. In order to determine destitution, the criteria, if any, currently in force in the State / UT Governments were adapted. The Government of India reserved the right to review these criteria and suggest appropriate revised criteria.
- (ii) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS): A grant of Rs 5000 in case of death due to natural causes and Rs 10,000 in case of accidental death of the “primary breadwinner” is provided to the bereaved household under this scheme. The primary breadwinner as specified in the scheme, whether male or female, had to be a member of the household whose earning contributed substantially to the total household income. The death of such a primary breadwinner occurring whilst he or she is in the age group of 18 to 64 years i.e., more than 18 years of age and less than 65 years of age, makes the family eligible to receive grants under the scheme.
- (iii) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS): Under the scheme, Rs 300 per pregnancy upto the first two live births is provided. The beneficiary should belong to a household Below the Poverty Line (BPL) according to the criteria prescribed by Government of India.

In 1998, the amount of benefit under NFBS was raised to Rs 10,000 in case of death due to natural causes as well as accidental causes. The assistance under the National Maternity Benefit Scheme which was at Rs 300/-, was increased to Rs 500/- per pregnancy.

2. Transfer of National Maternity Benefit Scheme to D/o Family Welfare

During the course of deliberations to consider National Population Policy in the second meeting held on 15th June, 1999, the Group of Ministers observed that National Maternity Benefit Scheme being implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development could be assigned to the Department of Family Welfare to become part

and parcel of the Population Stabilization Programme. On receipt of a communication in this regard from the Planning Commission, the Ministry of Rural Development agreed to transfer NMBS to the Department of Family Welfare from the Financial Year 2001-2002 and thus the Scheme was transferred to that Ministry w.e.f. 1st April,2001.

3. Annapurna Scheme

On 1st April, 2000 a new Scheme known as Annapurna Scheme was launched. This Scheme aimed at providing food security to meet the requirement of those senior citizens who, though eligible, have remained uncovered under the NOAPS. Under the Annapurna Scheme 10 kgs of food grains per month are provided free of cost to the beneficiary. The number of persons to be benefited from the Scheme are, in the first instance, 20% of the persons eligible to receive pension under NOAPS in States/UTs

4. Transfer of NSAP and Annapurna Scheme to State Plan

In the National Development Council Meeting held in January 1997 to discuss the Draft Approach to the Ninth Plan, several Chief Ministers of States suggested for transfer of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes to States. As per the Approach Paper to the Ninth Five Year Plan, it was emphasized that in principle Centrally Sponsored Schemes should be confined to schemes of an inter-state character, matters impinging on national security, selected national priorities where central supervision is essential for effective implementation. As a result of the review of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes by the Planning Commission in consultation with the Mo RD, it was decided to transfer NSAP and Annapurna to the State Plans from the year 2002-03.

With this change, the funds for the operation of these schemes are now being released as Additional Central Assistance (ACA) to the States by the Ministry of Finance. The ACA to be provided to the States/UTs for the NSAP and Annapurna Scheme is decided by the Planning Commission, while the State-wise allocation of ACA is made by the Ministry of Rural Development and Planning Commission. The

ACA provided to the States / UTs under NSAP and Annapurna are to be utilized by the States/ UTs as Welfare Schemes of NOAPS, NFBS or free food grains to the aged by taking one or two or all of the three schemes or in any another combination in accordance with their own priorities and needs. The Additional Central Assistance to the States constitute a general additionality over and above the normal allocation of the States for such welfare schemes as reflected in the States Budget, both under Plan and Non-Plan. The States have to therefore, provide the Mandatory Minimum Provision (MMP) for these schemes under their own budget. The MoRD has a role in monitoring the expenditure against the ACA and the MMP.

5. Features of the Schemes

Some of the other important features of the schemes are as follows:

a) Selection

The Gram Panchayat / Municipalities are expected to play an active role in the identification of the beneficiaries under the three schemes.

b) Disbursement

Apart from the disbursal of benefits through the accounts of the beneficiaries in Banks or in Post Office Savings Banks or through Postal Money Order the assistance under NOAPS, may also be disbursed in public meetings such as Gram Sabha meetings in rural areas and by neighbourhood / mohalla committees in urban areas.

c) Monitoring

The States / UTs have the flexibility to implement the schemes through any State Govt. Department. They have to however, designate a Nodal Secretary at the State level to report the progress of implementation by coordinating with different departments concerned with the implementation of the schemes. The progress of implementation of the schemes is to be reported through quarterly reports in a given monitoring format by the 15th of month of the following quarter. Non reporting of the physical and financial progress reports is construed as lack of progress and therefore, may result in the non-release of additional central

assistance for the last quarter of the financial year. Since the ACA allocations for the schemes lapse at the end of the financial year, the instalments cannot be released during the next financial year, even if a State Govt. reports progress subsequent to the cut-off dates fixed as above.

The NSAP is included in the schemes to be reviewed by the Vigilance & Monitoring Committee (V&MC) constituted at the District Level, along with other Rural Development Schemes. MPs are represented in the V&MC in the District.

d) Guidelines of the Programme

Guidelines were issued by the MoRD to all the States and UTs when NSAP was a Centrally Sponsored Programme. The State Governments may now issue their own guidelines for more effective implementation of the schemes. The State Governments have been given the requisite flexibility in the choice and implementation of the schemes. It is expected that State Governments will streamline disbursements so that the payments are made timely, will also have a mechanism for a more transparent system of sanction especially in the event of death of beneficiaries under NOAPS, adopt a system of annual verification and will also actively involve the Gram Panchayats.

e) State-run Schemes

Several States supplement the old age scheme with their own budgets. Most States are giving more than the amount made available under NOAPS while some States cover additional beneficiaries and others have reduced the age for eligibility. Presently the work on a state-wise compilation of all the pension schemes run by each state, including the pension schemes under NSAP, is underway.

6. Enhancement of Pension amount under NOAPS during 2006-07

Finance Minister in his Budget Speech for the year 2006-07 had announced as follows:-

National Social Assistance Programme

29. “ Old age pensions are granted under the National Social Assistance Programme(NSAP) to destitute persons above the age of 65 years at Rs.75 per month. I propose to increase the pension to Rs.200 per month. I would urge State Governments to make an equal contribution from their resources so that a destitute pensioner would get at least Rs.400 per month.”

Accordingly the rate of pension under NOAPS was revised to Rs.200/- per month per beneficiary.

7. Revision of the eligibility criteria under NOAPS in 2007

Government of India on 13.9.2007 modified the eligibility criteria for grant of old age pension to persons aged 65 years or higher and belonging to a household below the poverty line according to the criteria prescribed by the Government of India, from the erstwhile criteria of the beneficiary being a destitute of 65 years of age or above. Thus the pension was universalized.

8. Introduction of two new Pension Schemes in 2009

(i) Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)

In February 2009, GOI has approved pension to BPL widows in the age group of 40-64 years @ Rs. 200 p.m. per beneficiary.

(ii) Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)

In February 2009, GOI has also approved pension under Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) for BPL persons with severe or multiple disabilities between the age group of 18-64 years @ Rs. 200 p.m. per beneficiary.

9. Enhancement of Pension amount under IGNOAPS in 2011

The Hon'ble Finance Minister while presenting the Union Budget 2011-12 in the Parliament on 28th February 2011 announced that 'under the on-going Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme for BPL beneficiaries, the eligibility for pension is proposed to be reduced from 65 years at present to 60 years. Further, for those who are 80 years and above, the pension amount is being raised from Rs.200 at present to Rs.500 per month.'

Accordingly the eligibility age for pension under IGNOAPS has been reduced to 60 years w.e.f. 1st April, 2011. The rate of pension under IGNOAPS was increased to Rs. 500/- per month per beneficiary for those beneficiaries of age 80 years and above w.e.f. 1st April, 2011. Accordingly the upper age limit for receipt of pension under Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) was reduced to 59 years beyond which they stand migrated to IGNOAPS

10. Present status of NSAP

Thus, presently NSAP now comprises of the following five schemes:-

- i) Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS):** Under the scheme, BPL persons aged 60 years or above are entitled to a monthly pension of Rs. 200/- up to 79 years of age and Rs.500/- thereafter.
- ii) Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS):** BPL widows aged 40-59 years are entitled to a monthly pension of Rs. 200/-.
- iii) Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS):** BPL persons aged 18-59 years with severe and multiple disabilities are entitled to a monthly pension of Rs. 200/-.
- iv) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS):** Under the scheme a BPL household is entitled to lump sum amount of money on the death of primary breadwinner aged between 18 and 64 years. The amount of assistance is Rs. 10.000/-.
- v) Annapurna:** Under the scheme, 10 kg of food grains per month are provided free of cost to those senior citizens who, though eligible, have remained uncovered under NOAPS.

11. Implementation of NSAP Schemes

The NSAP is implemented in the States/UTs in accordance with the general conditions applicable to all components of the NSAP as well as specific condition applicable to each component. The NSAP Schemes are mainly implemented by the Social Welfare Departments in the States. But NSAP is implemented by Rural Development Department in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Meghalaya and West Bengal; by the Department of Women & Child Development in Orissa and

Puducherry; by the Revenue Department in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and by the Department of Labour Employment & Training in Jharkhand. The NSAP extends to both the rural as well as urban areas. Though the implementation of various schemes under NSAP is not uniform across the country, the issues of implementation are regularly being discussed with the State Government officials in the Nodal Officers' meetings and quarterly PRC meetings.

12. Computerisation of database & Operationalisation of NSAP-MIS

On the occasion of the launching of the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), Hon'ble Finance Minister in his speech indicated that all out efforts should be made to include details of every beneficiary in a computerized data base. A system should be devised so as to credit the amount of pension payable to each beneficiary directly into his account either in a Post Office or in a scheduled commercial bank. In compliance of the said directions and also in order to increase the transparency and accountability in the implementation, it had been decided to computerize the data base of the beneficiaries under various schemes of NSAP. NIC has been accordingly entrusted with the project and the software development. The software captures all the essential processes from identification till termination of the pension. The legacy date of more than 1 crore beneficiaries has been placed on the NSAP website. States have been asked to start operationalising the software for the districts for which data has been uploaded.

13. Monitoring of the scheme.

Annual verification and Social Audit has been introduced under NSAP. All the States are to complete the Annual verification by 30th June and the Social Audit by 30th September, each year.

A checklist for the schemes under NSAP is provided to the National Level Monitors (NLMs) during their field visits. Each NLM is advised to visit the district, block and village level offices and meet the government functionaries, public representatives and the beneficiaries to get feedback on the implementation of the schemes under NSAP.

Monthly meeting of the Divisional Head with the Nodal Officers of each State/UT is held in Delhi. Also a quarterly Performance Review Committee meeting is also held.

14. Financial and Physical Achievements

Summary of the combined allocations, total releases under the three Schemes and the coverage of beneficiaries in respect of each of the Schemes after these were transferred to the State Plan are as in Annexure I and Annexure II respectively.

FINANCIAL PROGRESS

(Rs. in lakhs)

Year	Combined Allocation	Total Releases
2002-03	68000.00	65709.86
2003-04	67987.00	60226.79
2004-05	118987.00	103201.74
2005-06	119000.00	118971.00
2006-07	248097.00	248961.44
2007- 08	289148.20	288973.21
2008-09	450000.00	450000.00
2009-10	520000.00	515549.72
2010-11	516200.00	516200.00
2011-12	615757.00	* 210059.98

***Releases up to July, 2011.**

Annexure II

PHYSICAL PROGRESS REPORTED BY THE STATES/UNION TERRITORIES

Year	Coverage of Beneficiaries				
	IGNOAPS	IGNWPS	IGNDPS	NFBS	Annapurna
2002-03	7471509	**	**	85209	796682
2003-04	6534000	**	**	209456	958669
2004-05	8079386	**	**	261981	850768
2005-06	8002561	**	**	272828	857079
2006-07	8645371	**	**	171232	750319
2007-08	11514026	**	**	334168	1076210
2008-09	15483836	**	**	395460	883232
2009-10	16333578	3213467	699680	343726	1015655
2010-11	17059756	3425390	1328310	334924	963689
2011-12 #	9116385	2134256	471205	77052	466286

** IGNWPS and IGNDPS were introduced in February 2009 # Figures as on 24.08.2011

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