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Social Welfare Administration

COURSE CODE: M23PA06DE

Postgraduate Programme in Public Administration

Discipline Specific Elective Course

Self Learning Material

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Social Welfare Administration

Course Code: M23PA06DE

Semester - IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course
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Self Learning Material

(With Model Question Paper Sets)

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SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL WELFARE ADMINISTRATION

Course Code: M23PA06DE

Semester- IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course

Postgraduate Programme in Public Administration

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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The MA programme in Public Administration provides an in-depth understanding of modern governance challenges and solutions. It integrates cutting-edge theory with real-world applications, emphasizing innovative approaches to public service delivery. The curriculum spans strategic planning, policy analysis, public sector economics, and governance-related spheres. Through these, learners cultivate advanced problem-solving and decision-making skills. This programme also equips future leaders to drive positive change in public institutions, NGOs, and international bodies. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.

Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P. 01-03-2026

Contents

BLOCK 1
Introduction to Social Welfare Administration

UNIT 1 Concept and Evolution of Social Welfare

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the meaning and scope of social welfare and its key concepts
- trace the historical evolution of social welfare administration in India
- examine the nature of social welfare administration as both an art and a science
- explore the managerial and integral perspectives of social welfare administration
- analyse the philosophical foundations of social welfare in India

Background

Social welfare administration is the organised effort of society to promote the well-being of its members, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalised groups. From early times, human beings have shown compassion and a sense of duty toward others, often through informal acts of charity and service. Over the centuries, this sense of responsibility evolved from individual and community efforts into formal government initiatives under the welfare state model. In India, the ideals of social welfare have deep philosophical roots in compassion, equality, and selfless service—values reflected in ancient traditions as well as Gandhian thought. After independence, India institutionalised social welfare through state machinery, commissions, and ministries aimed at ensuring social justice and equity. As a discipline, social welfare administration blends managerial techniques with social values, emphasising planning, coordination, and evaluation while remaining grounded in empathy and ethical commitment. Thus, the study of social welfare administration offers both practical and moral insights into building an inclusive and humane society.

Keywords

Social Welfare, Welfare State, Social Work, POSDCORB, Sarvodaya

Discussion

1.1.1 Introduction to Social Welfare

▶ Individual acts

In earlier times, social welfare activities were carried out by individuals or small groups driven by compassion and a sense of duty towards the less fortunate. These efforts were often informal and rooted in human values such as empathy, kindness, and selfless service. However, in the modern era, this approach has undergone a significant transformation. Most nations have moved away from the idea of a police state and embraced the concept of a welfare state.

▶ Government's responsibility

According to the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, a welfare state is one where the government assumes responsibility for ensuring at least a minimum standard of living for all its citizens. As Prof. Kent observes, such a state offers a wide range of services aimed at improving people's lives. In this model, the role of administration extends far beyond law and order, encompassing economic, social, political, and educational dimensions. It seeks to support individuals across the entire span of life—providing care and protection for the elderly, the sick, orphans, widows, the differently abled, and those facing distress or oppression.

▶ Multiple actors

In order to realise the goals of social welfare, governments play a central role by designing social policies and programmes. These policies are translated into action through social legislation, the allocation of financial resources, and the establishment of administrative structures such as ministries, departments, and specialised agencies. At the same time, governments often seek the cooperation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based groups to ensure that welfare schemes and services reach the people effectively. The management and coordination of all these activities within the sphere of social services fall under the domain of social welfare administration.

▶ Improving the living conditions

Scholars have offered different perspectives on the meaning of social administration. Richard M. Titmuss (1948) described social administration as the study of social services aimed at improving the living conditions of individuals within the context of family and community life. D. V. Donnison (1961) viewed it as the study of the development, structure, and practices of social services as they evolve over time. Forder (1974) emphasised that social administration is primarily concerned with the welfare system, particularly government-sponsored social services. Taken together, these perspectives indicate that social administration focuses on understanding, organising, and improving social services to enhance individual and societal well-being.

1.1.2 Key Concepts

In the study of social welfare, a variety of terms are used that sometimes overlap in meaning but carry subtle distinctions. Understanding these concepts is important to grasp the scope and nature of social welfare administration.

Social Service

▶ Voluntary efforts

Social service refers to the act of helping the helpless through voluntary efforts motivated by a desire to serve others. It may be defined as assistance rendered by individuals or groups to support people in times of need or to promote the welfare of the community through personal or collective action. Social service does not require professional training in social work or the use of specialised techniques. Its primary purpose is to provide help in a manner that strengthens individuals rather than creating dependency.

▶ Form of aid or assistance

In conceptual terms, social service can be defined as any form of aid or assistance provided by society to enable individuals to realise their potential, perform socially expected roles, and overcome obstacles that hinder personality development or social functioning. It emphasises the reinforcement of human capacities and encourages self-reliance, dignity, and social responsibility. Social service, therefore, represents a value-based activity rooted in compassion, cooperation, and concern for fellow human beings.

▶ Basic needs of the population

In the Indian context, social services are generally defined as essential services provided on a large scale to meet the basic needs of the population. These include health care, education, housing, sanitation, and similar facilities. In addition to organised services, simple everyday acts such as providing drinking water during summer, helping a blind person cross the road, rescuing people during a fire, or donating blood are also considered forms of social service. Together, these reflect both institutional and voluntary dimensions of social service in society.

Social Welfare Services

> ▶ Weaker or disadvantaged sections

While social services are intended for the general population, social welfare services are directed specifically towards weaker or disadvantaged sections of society. These services are enabling in nature, designed to bring marginalised groups into the mainstream of social life. The goal is to ensure equality of opportunity and to improve the overall quality of life for those who are vulnerable. Importantly, social services and social welfare services are complementary and supplementary to each other. Social welfare is the well-being of the people promoted by society through a wide variety of means. Wilensky and Lebeaux define social welfare as those formally organised and socially sponsored institutions, agencies, and programmes that function to maintain or improve the economic conditions, health, or interpersonal competence of some parts or all of the population. According to Friedlander, "Social Welfare is the organised system of social services and institutions designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health, and personal and social relationships that permit them to develop their full capacities and to promote their well-being in harmony with the needs of their families and the community."

Social Security

> ▶ The protection society provides

Social security refers to the protection society provides to its members against risks and uncertainties that individuals cannot manage on their own. The International Labour Organization defines social security as "the security that society furnishes through appropriate organisation against certain risks to which its members are exposed." These risks include sickness, disability, unemployment, maternity, old age, and even the death of the earning member of a family. Social security ensures that individuals are supported during such periods of physical or economic distress. It may take the form of social assistance, social insurance, health services, or other welfare provisions. Thus, social security is a broader concept that encompasses several aspects of social welfare.

Social Work

J. P. Anderson (1945) states: "Social work is a professional service rendered to people for the purpose of assisting them as individuals or in groups to attain satisfying relationships and standards of life in accordance with their particular wishes or capacities and in harmony with those of the community."

▶ Helping the helpless

Social work is often described as helping the helpless to help themselves. Unlike voluntary social service, social work is a professional method based on scientific knowledge and practical skills. It focuses on assisting individuals, groups, and communities to enhance their social functioning and to grow in line with their potential and capacities. In this sense, social welfare is the ultimate goal, while social work acts as the means to achieve it.

Social Welfare

From ancient times, civilised societies across the world have aspired to ensure the well-being of all human beings. In India, this concern for collective welfare is reflected in the ideal "May all be happy," which inspired the creation of institutions and practices aimed at promoting social well-being. The term welfare refers to a condition of well-being that includes good fortune, health, happiness, prosperity, and security. In a broad sense, social welfare represents society's organised efforts to promote the quality of life of its members through social and economic measures.

▶ Deliberate social action.

Social welfare may be understood as the well-being of people promoted through deliberate social action. It includes a wide range of services and programmes that support income security, health, social protection, and human development. Wilensky and Lebeaux defined social welfare as the organised and socially sponsored institutions, agencies, and programmes that aim to maintain or improve the economic conditions, health, and social functioning of individuals or groups within society. Similarly, Friedlander described social welfare as an organised system of social services and institutions designed to help individuals and groups achieve satisfactory standards of life and health and to develop their capacities in harmony with family and community needs.

▶ Special focus on those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable

Social welfare is not limited to general services available to the entire population but has a special focus on those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. It becomes particularly relevant when primary institutions such as the family and the market fail to meet basic human needs. In this sense, social welfare acts as a supportive mechanism that complements other social institutions. It addresses physical, mental, emotional, social, and economic needs and plays a vital role in responding to social problems that affect large sections of society.

In the Indian context, social welfare has been clearly distinguished from general social services like education and health. It is viewed as specialised intervention aimed at assisting weaker and more vulnerable sections of the population, such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and socially disadvantaged groups. These sections often face disadvantages not because of personal failure but due to structural, physical, mental, or social constraints that limit their opportunities and access to resources.

▶ To realise the potential

Social welfare, therefore, may be defined as a deliberately organised system of services and institutions designed to protect and promote the interests of vulnerable groups. Its primary objective is to enable these sections to realise their potential, achieve a dignified standard of living, and participate meaningfully in social life. By focusing on equity, protection, and empowerment, social welfare seeks to ensure that all individuals can live with liberty, decency, and dignity within society.

1.1.3 Social Welfare Administration

Social welfare administration may be described as the process of converting social policies into practical services and programmes. It involves both government and non-governmental agencies and ensures that welfare measures, philanthropic efforts, and community initiatives are transformed into concrete benefits for people. In this sense, it is not simply about carrying out instructions but about planning, organising, directing, and evaluating services so that they are effective and reach those who need them most.

▶ Practical services and programmes

It can be understood as a two-way process. On the one hand, it translates policies into action by creating services and programmes. On the other, it uses the lessons and experiences gained from the field to improve and reshape policies for the future. Social welfare administration, therefore, supports and facilitates the activities of welfare agencies at different levels. These activities may range from high-level functions such as setting policies, designing structures, and providing leadership to routine tasks such as maintaining records, accounts, and day-to-day operations. At the heart of this process is the effort to mobilise human and material resources so that the needs of communities are met in an organised and effective manner.

Seen in this way, social welfare administration is both managerial and social in nature. It requires knowledge, principles, and skills that make services suitable, accessible, and responsive to the needs of society. It draws upon administrative tools such as policy formulation, programme planning, budgeting, financial management, personnel administration, coordination, and research. At the same time, it is guided by social values that emphasise service, equity, and inclusion. The goal is to ensure that welfare services are not only delivered but also continuously improved in line with changing social realities.

▶ In line with changing social realities

The scope of social welfare administration extends to several key activities. It includes translating broad social goals into operational policies, designing organisational structures and processes to achieve them, and mobilising the necessary resources such as funds, staff, and community support. It also involves selecting and applying appropriate methods and technologies for service delivery, improving organisational effectiveness and efficiency, and regularly evaluating performance. Such evaluation provides feedback, which enables problem-solving and ensures that welfare services remain relevant and effective over time.

1.1.4 Features of Social Welfare Administration

Focus on Social Agencies and Communities: Social welfare administration is directly concerned with social agencies and their role in serving the target community. It identifies social objectives and translates them into programmes for effective implementation.

1. **Functional Scope :** From a functional point of view, it addresses three major aspects of social problems:
    - Restoration of impaired social functioning,
    - Provision of individual and social resources for better functioning, and
    - Prevention of social dysfunction.
2. **Governance Structure :** Almost every social welfare agency, regardless of its size or scope, has a governing board as the highest decision-making authority. This board usually includes representatives from the community the agency serves.

3. **Resource Utilisation and Community Participation:** The success of social welfare administration depends on the optimum use of available resources, along with the active participation of the community. This ensures that programme goals are achieved effectively.
4. **Balance Between Survival and Service:** Agencies must reserve part of their resources for their own survival and sustainability. However, this should not compromise their ability to achieve both quantitative and qualitative results in service delivery.
5. **Cooperative Functioning :** Social welfare agencies generally operate on the principle of cooperation, ensuring that members participate actively in the administration and execution of their activities.
6. **Professionalisation of Services:** There is an increasing trend to employ professionally trained personnel in social welfare agencies. This has introduced greater professionalism and improved the quality of their functioning.

1.1.5 Evolution of Social Welfare Administration

▶ Moral obligation to help one another

The idea of mutual aid has existed in every society, and India is no exception. From ancient times, people have felt a moral obligation to help one another, although the forms and methods of assistance varied according to the prevailing social, economic, and political conditions. In traditional Indian thought, social welfare was closely linked with values such as daya (compassion), dana (charity), dakshina (offering), bhiksha (alms), samya-bhava (equality), swadharma (duty), and tyaga (sacrifice). These values reflected ideals of self-discipline, selflessness, and concern for others. Religious traditions also reinforced this spirit by encouraging individuals to set aside part of their earnings for charitable purposes, promising both worldly happiness and spiritual merit. Rulers of earlier times extended support during crises such as floods, droughts, fires, and earthquakes, showing that social responsibility was also a duty of the state.

From an administrative perspective, the reigns of rulers such as Ashoka, Harsha, Chandragupta Maurya, Akbar, Sher Shah Suri, and Feroze Tughlaq stand out as significant in providing for the social needs of their people. Later, under colonial rule, the British administration primarily focused on maintaining law and order but did introduce some social reforms. Notable among these were the abolition of sati in 1829 and the legalisation of widow remarriage in 1856, both landmark measures aimed at improving the social position of women.

After independence in 1947, India retained much of the existing administrative structure but introduced reforms to suit the new democratic and welfare-oriented framework. An important milestone in the evolution of social welfare administration in independent India was the launch of the Community Development Programme (CDP) in 1952. Initiated by the Government of India, the programme aimed for the holistic development of rural areas through people's participation and integrated planning. It sought to improve agriculture, irrigation, health, education, communication, and rural infrastructure while encouraging self-help and local initiative. The programme introduced a new administrative structure at the grassroots level through development blocks, each headed by a Block Development Officer (BDO) and supported by a team of extension workers. The Community Development Programme laid the foundation for decentralised planning and later influenced the growth of Panchayati Raj institutions, thereby strengthening democratic participation in rural development and shaping the framework of modern social welfare administration in India.

- New democratic and welfare-oriented framework

Another important step was taken during the First Five-Year Plan with the establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) in 1953. This autonomous body was tasked with providing financial and technical assistance to voluntary organisations working in the field of welfare. State Social Welfare Advisory Boards were also established to coordinate activities at the regional level.

Until the mid-1960s, social welfare programmes were scattered across different ministries such as education, home, industries, health, and labour. The Renuka Ray Committee, in its 1960 report, recommended the creation of a separate department to unify welfare-related work. Acting on this recommendation, the Department of Social Security was established in 1964, with responsibilities covering social welfare, social security, backward classes, and khadi and handicrafts. This department was later renamed the Department of Social Welfare in 1966, and in 1971, it was placed under the newly created Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. In 1979, the Department gained the status of a full-fledged ministry. In 1984, it became the Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare, and a year later, following the creation of a Department of Women and Child Development, it was renamed the Ministry of Welfare. Eventually, it assumed its present name, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Alongside the ministry, a number of institutions and commissions were established to address specific areas of social concern. These include the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the Minorities Commission, the National Institute of Social Defence, the National Institute for the Handicapped, the Department of Women and Child Development, the Central Social Welfare Board, and the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development. Together, these bodies formed the institutional framework for implementing welfare policies at the national level.

▶ Social welfare evolution and federalism

Social welfare, however, has never been the sole responsibility of the central government. State governments and union territory administrations also play a significant role, formulating and implementing welfare schemes suited to their own contexts. They primarily function through their Departments of Social Welfare, with the support of voluntary organisations. In most states, a full-time secretary is appointed to oversee welfare activities, although the schemes themselves are often spread across several departments and directorates. Programmes such as old-age pensions, widow pensions, and supplementary nutrition continue to vary in their patterns of implementation from state to state. While district-level social welfare officers are present in most states, there is still a gap at the block level, where no dedicated social welfare functionary exists.

1.1.6 Nature of Social Welfare Administration

▶ Social Welfare Administration as an Art

The debate over whether social welfare administration is a science or an art has persisted for a long time. Different perspectives exist, and both sides appear to have valid arguments. Social welfare administration can, in fact, be understood in two ways. First, it refers to the process of carrying out social welfare programmes, which is the practical side. Second, it is an area of academic study, focusing on theories and principles. While the practice of administration resembles an art, the study and systematic organisation of knowledge give it the characteristics of a science.

Supporters of the view that social welfare administration is an art argue that it shares features with other creative and skill-based practices:

- **It can be acquired :** Just like music, painting, or carpentry, social welfare administration requires talent, but talent alone is not enough. With proper training, individuals can develop the skills needed to become effective administrators. This art involves personal skills, practical know-how, creativity, result-orientation, and continuous practice to achieve excellence.

- **It is subjective in nature :** A painter uses colours and a sculptor uses tools to create their work. Similarly, a social welfare administrator combines available human and material resources with knowledge and skills to achieve welfare goals. The success of welfare programmes often depends on the administrator's ability to apply these resources effectively.

- **Practical application of knowledge :** Art is not only about theory but about applying knowledge in practice. In the same way, social welfare administration is concerned with applying principles to real situations. True expertise is developed through experience and practice rather than theory alone.

Social Welfare Administration as a Science

On the other hand, many scholars believe that social welfare administration has the qualities of a science. Science is systematic knowledge based on principles and evidence, and social welfare administration can also be viewed in this light:

- **Application of the scientific method :** Like other social sciences, social welfare administration applies systematic study and analysis. Its methods include observation, analysis, and rational problem-solving.

- **Critical examination :** Science involves careful examination of evidence before arriving at conclusions. In the same way, social welfare administration requires evaluating policies, programmes, and outcomes before implementing decisions.

- **Universal Guidelines :** Principles of social welfare administration, though flexible, serve as universal guidelines for administrators. This helps ensure consistency and rationality in implementing welfare programmes.

At the same time, the scientific nature of social welfare administration has its limitations. It lacks the precision of the natural sciences, as experimentation and complete objectivity are difficult in the social field. Thus, it cannot be considered an exact science, but it still qualifies as a science in a broad sense.

Social Welfare Administration as a Blend of Art and Science

Social welfare administration cannot be viewed exclusively as either an art or a science; rather, it represents a harmonious blend of both. As a science, it is grounded in systematic knowledge, established principles, and rational methods that guide the planning, organisation, implementation, and evaluation of welfare programmes. It draws upon theories of administration, social policy, management, and social work to ensure efficiency, consistency, and accountability in the delivery of services. The use of research, data analysis, budgeting techniques, and evaluation methods reflects its scientific character.

At the same time, social welfare administration is equally an art because it deals primarily with human beings and complex social situations. The successful administration of welfare programmes depends on personal skills such as leadership, judgement, creativity, empathy, and the ability to motivate people. Administrators must adapt general principles to diverse social contexts, balance competing interests, and respond sensitively to the needs of vulnerable groups. These tasks require intuition, experience, and practical wisdom, which cannot be fully captured by rules or formulas.

- Harmonious blend of both

Thus, social welfare administration operates at the intersection of scientific principles and artistic skill. While scientific knowledge provides the framework for rational decision-making and effective management, the artistic element enables administrators to apply this knowledge flexibly and humanely. The blend of art and science ensures that welfare services are not only efficient and well-organised but also responsive, ethical, and centred on human dignity.

1.1.7 Scope of Social Welfare Administration

The scope of social welfare administration has been explained from two main perspectives: the POSDCORB view and the Integral view. Each highlights different dimensions of administration, one focusing mainly on managerial techniques and the other on the broader subject matter and its implementation.

The POSDCORB View

The POSDCORB view represents a narrower, managerial perspective of social welfare administration. It concentrates largely on the execution of government-sponsored programmes and emphasises the techniques required for effective management. This approach is associated with thinkers who view administration in terms of functions like planning, organisation, and control.

The acronym POSDCORB, introduced by Luther Gulick, summarises the essential functions of administration: Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting. Planning involves outlining objectives and determining the methods to achieve them. Organising refers to establishing a structure of authority and coordinating activities to achieve defined goals. Staffing ensures that qualified personnel are recruited, trained, and retained. Directing involves decision-making and issuing instructions to guide organisational efforts. Coordinating integrates different parts of the organisation into a unified whole. Reporting keeps both superiors and subordinates informed about ongoing activities through records, research, and inspections. Finally, budgeting deals with financial planning, accounting, and control.

- narrower, managerial perspective

According to this view, these activities are common to all large-scale organisations, including social welfare agencies. Administration, like a pair of scissors, requires two blades: knowledge of the subject matter and mastery of techniques. Only when both are strong can administration be effective. Thus, the POSDCORB view highlights the functional scope of social welfare administration by focusing on managerial efficiency.

The Integral View

The integral view takes into account the broader scope of social welfare administration. With the emergence of new and complex social problems, the responsibilities of administration have expanded beyond the mere execution of programmes. This view includes not only the functional aspects identified in POSDCORB but also the subject matter of social welfare administration itself.

Modern welfare challenges cannot be handled by government machinery alone, which is often overburdened. Hence, voluntary organisations, non-governmental institutions, and community groups play a vital role in tackling social issues. The integral view recognises this shared responsibility and focuses on both the content of welfare policies and their implementation.

► Use of diverse resources

This broader scope requires the effective use of diverse resources, such as human, financial, institutional, and technological inputs. Social welfare administration, therefore, is not limited to routine management functions but extends to strategy formulation, problem-solving, and adapting to changing contexts. It is a dynamic process that seeks not only to execute existing programmes but also to evolve new approaches for addressing emerging social problems.

1.1.8 Philosophical Foundations of Social Welfare

Social welfare in India is deeply rooted in philosophical and moral traditions that emphasise compassion, equality, and collective well-being. Among the most influential philosophies shaping modern social welfare are Gandhian philosophy and the concept of Sarvodaya.

Gandhian philosophy stresses the principles of non-violence, truth, self-reliance, and service to humanity. Gandhi believed that the well-being of society depends on the welfare of every individual, especially the poor, marginalised, and oppressed. He advocated for community-based development, where individuals take responsibility for the upliftment of their communities through selfless service, local production, and sustainable living. The Gandhian approach to social welfare emphasises decentralisation, participatory decision-making, and the idea that social progress cannot be achieved without a moral and ethical commitment from individuals.

The concept of Sarvodaya, meaning "welfare of all," was popularised by Gandhi and later developed by thinkers like Vinoba Bhave. Sarvodaya envisions a society where development and social justice benefit every member, not just a privileged few. It stresses equality, social harmony, and the removal of poverty and exploitation. In practical terms, Sarvodaya supports initiatives like voluntary service, cooperative movements, land reform, education for the underprivileged, and the empowerment of marginalised groups. The philosophy underscores that true welfare involves both material well-being and moral upliftment.

▶ Rooted in philosophical and moral traditions

Together, Gandhian philosophy and Sarvodaya provide the ethical and moral foundation for social welfare in India. They highlight that social welfare is not just the responsibility of the state but a collective moral duty of individuals and communities, guided by values of justice, compassion, and service. These philosophies continue to influence contemporary welfare policies and programmes, emphasising holistic development, equity, and participatory approaches.

Summarized Overview

This unit provides a comprehensive understanding of the concept and evolution of social welfare administration. It begins by tracing the shift from individual acts of compassion to organised state-led welfare systems. The meaning and distinctions among key concepts—such as social service, social welfare, social security, and social work—are clearly outlined. The unit explains that social welfare administration involves translating policies into effective services, requiring planning, organising, directing, and evaluating welfare programmes. It discusses its dual nature as both an art and a science, combining creativity with systematic knowledge. The unit also explores two perspectives of its scope—the managerial (POSDCORB) and the integral view—highlighting the growing role of government, NGOs, and community participation. Finally, the philosophical foundations rooted in Gandhian thought and the Sarvodaya ideal emphasise moral responsibility, equality, and the holistic welfare of all, making social welfare administration both a technical process and a moral mission.

Self-Assessment

1. Describe the role and functions of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in India's welfare framework.
2. Analyse the contribution of Gandhian philosophy to the development of social welfare administration in India.
3. Explain the significance of Sarvodaya as a guiding principle for social welfare.
4. Discuss the role of government and non-governmental organisations in the implementation of social welfare programmes.
5. Assess how the principles of equity, justice, and participation shape the practice of social welfare administration.

Assignments

1. Explain the concept and meaning of social welfare and distinguish it from social service and social work.
2. Discuss the evolution of social welfare administration in India from ancient times to the post-independence period.
3. Describe the major features of social welfare administration and its importance in modern society.
4. Evaluate the nature of social welfare administration as both an art and a science.
5. Examine the scope of social welfare administration with reference to the POSDCORB and integral views.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2
Theories and Approaches in Social Welfare Administration

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the concept and significance of the Welfare State and Socialism
- analyse the evolution of the welfare state and its relevance in the Indian context
- examine major theories of social welfare—Residual, Institutional, and Developmental
- compare different models of social welfare administration—Social Democratic and Liberal Welfare Models
- evaluate the relationship between welfare, economic policy, and social justice

Background

The development of social welfare administration cannot be understood without examining the philosophical and theoretical foundations on which it stands. The idea of a welfare state emerged as a response to the inequalities and hardships created by unregulated capitalism. Thinkers and reformers began to advocate state responsibility for ensuring citizens' well-being through social security, education, and healthcare. At the same time, socialist ideas called for collective ownership and equitable distribution of wealth, laying moral and economic grounds for social justice. Together, these ideas shaped the modern welfare state—one that seeks to balance economic growth with human dignity.

In India, this vision found expression in the Constitution, particularly in the Directive Principles of State Policy, which emphasise social justice, equality, and welfare for all. Over time, different theories—Residual, Institutional, and Developmental—have explained the state's role in welfare, from minimal relief to comprehensive human development. The evolution of administrative models like the Social Democratic and Liberal approaches further illustrates how societies across the world interpret welfare through their political and economic philosophies. Understanding these theories and models helps students appreciate how social welfare administration operates as both an instrument of governance and a reflection of a nation's moral and economic priorities.

Keywords

Welfare State, Socialism, Residual Theory, Institutional Model, Developmental Approach

Discussion

1.2.1 Introduction

Imagine a society where every individual—irrespective of their birth, income, or background—has access to education, healthcare, food, and housing. Such a society reflects the idea of a Welfare State—a system where the government actively works to ensure social and economic well-being for all citizens.

At the same time, this idea draws inspiration from socialism, which advocates for social and economic equality and the reduction of disparities between the rich and the poor. Both concepts, though distinct, share the goal of creating a more just and humane society.

1.2.2 Meaning of Welfare State

The welfare state refers to a form of government in which the state assumes primary responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. It aims to provide basic social services such as education, healthcare, social security, and housing, as well as to protect individuals from poverty and unemployment.

In a welfare state, the government does not merely act as a law-and-order agency but becomes a provider, protector, and promoter of social welfare. The focus is not only on economic growth but also on the quality of life of citizens.

Key Features of a Welfare State:

- **Social Security :** Protection against risks like old age, sickness, and unemployment.

State assumes primary responsibility

- **Equality of Opportunity :** Ensuring that everyone has equal access to education and employment.
- **Redistribution of Income :** Through progressive taxation and social welfare schemes.
- **Public Services :** Provision of essential services such as health, education, housing, and sanitation.
- **State Intervention :** The state regulates the economy to prevent exploitation and inequality.

Example : India as a Welfare State

The Preamble and the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution express the ideal of a welfare state. Articles such as 38, 39, 41, 42, 43, and 47 direct the state to secure a social order based on justice, provide adequate means of livelihood, ensure equal pay, and improve public health.

1.2.3 Evolution of the Welfare State

Negative liberalism

The idea of the welfare state did not emerge suddenly; it evolved gradually as a response to the social and economic problems created by industrialisation and the limitations of classical liberalism. In its early phase, the state was largely influenced by negative liberalism, which believed that social welfare would automatically result if individuals were left free from state interference. The role of the state was confined mainly to maintaining law and order, protecting property, and ensuring national security. It was assumed that free markets and individual self-interest would promote general well-being. However, by the late nineteenth century, this belief began to lose credibility due to growing poverty, unemployment, exploitation of labour, and widening inequalities.

Positive liberalism

The failure of laissez-faire capitalism led to a rethinking of liberal ideology and gave rise to positive liberalism. Thinkers began to argue that freedom was not merely the absence of restraint but also required the presence of favourable social and economic conditions. Liberty, therefore, came to be understood as a positive capacity to live a meaningful life. This shift in thinking emphasised that the state had a responsibility to remove obstacles such as poverty, ignorance, ill health, and unemployment, which prevented individuals from realising their potential. The state was no longer viewed as a necessary evil but as a positive instrument for promoting social welfare.

The early twentieth century further strengthened the case for the welfare state, particularly during periods of economic crisis. The Great Depression of the 1930s exposed the instability of capitalist economies and the inability of markets to ensure full employment and social security. This period marked a decisive shift towards state intervention in economic and social life. Governments began to accept responsibility for ensuring minimum standards of living, employment opportunities, and protection against social risks such as sickness, old age, and unemployment. Economic thought also supported this transition by advocating active state policies to stabilise the economy and prevent mass unemployment.

- State intervention in economic and social life

After the Second World War, the welfare state emerged as a dominant model in many democratic societies. It sought to reconcile capitalism with social justice by retaining the market economy while correcting its excesses through state regulation and welfare measures. The welfare state recognised that every individual, simply by virtue of being a citizen, was entitled to a minimum standard of living. Social security, public health, education, housing, and employment policies became central responsibilities of the state. Welfare was no longer seen as charity but as a matter of right and citizenship.

Thus, the welfare state evolved as a result of the transformation of classical liberalism into positive liberalism. It represents a shift from a minimalist state to an active and democratic state committed to social justice, economic security, and human well-being. While the extent and form of welfare provisions continue to be debated, the welfare state remains an important response to the social risks and inequalities inherent in modern industrial societies.

1.2.4 Meaning of Socialism

Socialism is an economic and political philosophy that advocates collective ownership of the means of production and distribution of wealth to achieve social and economic equality. It opposes the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few.

In simple terms, socialism means that the economy should serve society as a whole, not just a privileged few. It emphasises cooperation over competition and public welfare over private profit.

Core Principles of Socialism

- Social Ownership: Land, industries, and resources should be owned and managed for the benefit of all.
- Economic Equality: Narrowing the gap between rich and poor.
- Planned Economy: State planning ensures balanced and equitable development.
- Social Justice: Protection of workers' rights and fair distribution of resources.
- Welfare Orientation: The economy exists to meet people's needs, not merely to generate profit.

▶ Collective ownership

1.2.5 Relationship between Welfare State and Socialism

Table 1.2.1 Comparison of welfare state and socialism

Aspect	Welfare State	Socialism
Nature	Democratic and reform-oriented	Can be democratic or revolutionary
Ownership	Private ownership continues, but with regulation	Public or collective ownership of means of production
Objective	Social security and equal opportunities	Economic equality and social justice
Approach	Reform within capitalism	Replacement or transformation of capitalism
Example	India, UK, Sweden	Former USSR, China (in earlier phase), Cuba

The welfare state borrows from socialism its moral concern for equality and social justice, but it operates within a democratic and mixed economy framework. In practice, most modern democracies, including India, follow a democratic socialist model, balancing state intervention with private enterprise.

1.2.6 Welfare State in the Indian Context

India adopted the concept of a Welfare State after Independence. The Constitution of India provides a framework for establishing a Socialist, Secular, and Democratic Republic. The Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV) serve as the moral foundation for social and economic welfare. For example:

1. **Article 38 :** Directs the state to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order based on justice.
2. **Article 39 :** Ensures adequate means of livelihood and prevents the concentration of wealth.
3. **Articles 41–43 :** Provide for the right to work, education, and public assistance.
4. **Article 47 :** Directs the state to raise the level of nutrition and public health.

These constitutional goals are realised through welfare programmes such as:

- MGNREGA (employment guarantee),
- National Health Mission,
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme,
- National Social Assistance Programme, and
- PM Awas Yojana (housing).

1.2.7 Theories of Social Welfare: Residual, Institutional, and Developmental

The concept of social welfare refers to the organised efforts of society to ensure that individuals and groups attain a decent standard of living and opportunities for personal and collective well-being. Throughout history, different societies have developed their own approaches to promoting welfare, depending on their political, economic, and cultural conditions.

▶ Decent standard of living and opportunities

In the modern era, scholars and social planners have classified the role of the state and society in promoting welfare into three major theoretical models — the Residual, Institutional, and Developmental perspectives of social welfare. Each of these theories reflects a distinct philosophy about the nature of social problems, the role of the government, and the means through which welfare should be delivered.

1.2.7.1 The Residual Theory of Social Welfare

The Residual Theory represents the earliest and most traditional approach to welfare. It views social welfare as a temporary and limited response to human need, meant only for those who fail to meet their needs through the normal structures of family and the market. In this perspective, welfare is residual that is, it comes into play only when the primary institutions of society, such as the family, community, and economy, fail to perform their functions.

According to this theory, social welfare is not a central or permanent responsibility of the state. Instead, it is an emergency function, activated during crises such as unemployment, illness, or disability. The state steps in as a last resort, and once the crisis is over, individuals are expected to return to self-reliance.

▶ Traditional approach

The residual model is closely associated with the laissez-faire philosophy of the nineteenth century, which emphasised individual responsibility, minimal government intervention, and a belief in the free market. The Poor Laws in England during the 19th century were a classic example of residual welfare. Assistance was provided only to the destitute, and even then, it was given reluctantly, often under stigmatizing conditions. Welfare, in this model, was considered a charity rather than a right.

Main Features of the Residual Theory –

1. **Welfare as a Last Resort :** The state intervenes only when family and market mechanisms fail.

2. **Temporary Relief :** Welfare is seen as short-term aid, not a permanent entitlement.

3. **Individual Responsibility :** People are primarily responsible for their own well-being.

4. **Means-Tested Assistance :** Benefits are given only to those who prove need, often through eligibility tests.

5. **Stigma Attached :** Welfare recipients are often viewed as failures in an otherwise self-reliant system.

▸ Promoting inequality and blaming individuals

This theory has been widely criticised for promoting inequality and blaming individuals for structural problems. It tends to ignore the social, economic, and environmental factors that cause poverty or disadvantage. Nevertheless, many capitalist societies still retain elements of the residual model, particularly in targeted welfare programmes or conditional cash transfers.

1.2.7.2 The Institutional Theory of Social Welfare

The Institutional Theory marks a major shift from the residual perspective. It regards welfare not as a privilege or a charity, but as a normal and legitimate function of modern industrial society. In this view, social welfare is an institutionalised function of the state, comparable to other public responsibilities such as education, defence, or infrastructure.

According to the institutional model, social problems are not merely the result of individual failure but are inherent in the structure of modern society. Issues like unemployment, poverty, and ill health are seen as inevitable by-products of social and economic systems and hence require systematic public intervention. Welfare is not a response to crisis but a regular, preventive, and developmental activity.

This approach gained prominence in the twentieth century, especially after the Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II. The massive economic collapse and widespread suffering during these periods revealed that market forces alone could not guarantee well-being. Governments across the world began to accept that social welfare was essential for maintaining social stability and economic progress. The institutional model was strongly supported by Keynesian economic theory and the rise of the welfare state.

▸ Legitimate function of modern industrial society

Under this approach, welfare services are considered universal rights of citizenship. Education, healthcare, social insurance, housing, and employment support are seen as necessary for all, not only for the poor. The model also emphasises professional social work, scientific planning, and public responsibility in addressing human needs.

Main Features of the Institutional Theory –

1. Welfare as a Social Right: All citizens have a right to social security and welfare services.

2. Universal Coverage: Welfare is not limited to the poor; it serves everyone.

3. Permanent State Responsibility: The government has a continuous role in ensuring welfare.

4. Preventive and Developmental Focus: Aims to prevent problems rather than merely respond to them.

5. Integration with Economic Policy: Welfare is seen as essential for productivity and national development.

The institutional theory found its strongest expression in post-war Western Europe, particularly in the Beveridgean welfare state of Britain and the Nordic social democratic models of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. These societies institutionalised welfare as a central pillar of democracy, ensuring social security "from cradle to grave."

1.2.7.3 The Developmental Theory of Social Welfare

The Developmental Theory of social welfare emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly in the context of developing countries. It represents a synthesis of earlier models but with a broader focus on integrating welfare with national development.

This perspective views welfare not merely as a means of relief or protection but as an investment in human development and a strategic instrument of social and economic progress. The developmental model sees social welfare as essential for both individual growth and national modernisation.

The theory gained prominence after World War II when many newly independent nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America began to pursue planned development. Scholars like Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958) and later Midgley (1995) emphasised that welfare policies must contribute to economic productivity, social integration, and empowerment. Social welfare, in this sense, is not just about the redistribution of resources but about building human capabilities that enhance participation in the economy and society.

▶ Integrating welfare with national development

The developmental approach is particularly relevant to countries like India, where social welfare is closely tied to national planning and social justice. Programmes related to education, skill development, health, and rural employment are viewed as integral to both social and economic development. The aim is to create a self-reliant population capable of contributing to national growth.

Main Features of the Developmental Theory

1. Integration of Welfare and Development : Social welfare and economic growth are mutually reinforcing.

2. Focus on Human Development : Emphasis on education, health, employment, and empowerment.

3. Participation and Empowerment : People are active participants, not passive recipients of welfare.

4. Preventive and Capacity-Building Approach : Focus on strengthening individuals and communities.

5. Partnership-Based Implementation : Government, NGOs, and the private sector collaborate in welfare delivery.

This model reflects a proactive and dynamic vision of welfare. It moves beyond the idea of state charity to one of human capital formation and social investment. Welfare, in this approach, is not a burden on the economy but a crucial input for sustainable development.

1.2.7.4 Comparison

Table 1.2.2 comparison of Residual Theory, Institutional Theory and Developmental Theory

Aspect	**Residual Theory**	**Institutional Theory**	**Developmental Theory**
View of Welfare	Temporary and emergency aid	Normal and essential public service	Integral part of the development process
Beneficiaries	Only needy and poor	All citizens	All citizens, with a focus on capacity building
State Role	Minimal, last resort	Central and continuous	Collaborative and participatory

Philosophy	Individual responsibility	Social rights and collective responsibility	Empowerment and human development
Approach	Reactive and relief-based	Preventive and protective	Proactive and developmental
Example	Poor relief, food assistance	Universal health and education	Skill development, livelihood programmes

1.2.8 Models of Social Welfare Administration: Social Democratic Model and Liberal Welfare Model

The concept of social welfare administration is profoundly influenced by the broader political and economic philosophy of the state. Each nation's approach to welfare reflects its social values, ideological commitments, and administrative traditions. Over time, scholars have identified different models of welfare administration, which represent the ways in which governments organise and deliver social services to their citizens.

- How countries balance economic freedom with social justice

Among the most significant are the Social Democratic Model and the Liberal Welfare Model. These two models stand at opposite ends of the spectrum — the former emphasising universalism, equality, and strong state intervention, while the latter stresses individual responsibility, market mechanisms, and limited state intervention. Understanding these models helps us see how countries balance economic freedom with social justice and how they design their welfare institutions accordingly.

1.2.8.1 The Social Democratic Model

The Social Democratic Model of welfare administration represents the most comprehensive and universal approach to social welfare. It is based on the principle that every citizen, as a member of society, has an equal right to social protection and public services. Welfare, in this model, is not seen as charity or as assistance for the poor, but as a universal social right — a fundamental aspect of citizenship in a modern democratic state.

This model emerged most strongly in the Nordic countries, particularly Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and Iceland, during the twentieth century. It was shaped by the political influence of social democratic parties and labour movements that emphasised equality, solidarity, and social justice as essential elements of democracy. These societies aimed to create not only political equality through voting rights but also social equality through universal welfare provision.

▶ Equal right to social protection

The Social Democratic Model assumes that the state has an active and positive role in ensuring the welfare of all citizens. It rejects the notion that welfare should be limited to the poor or provided only during crises. Instead, it seeks to decommodify welfare — that is, to reduce people's dependence on the market for basic needs such as education, healthcare, housing, and social security. Every individual, regardless of income or class, is entitled to these services as a matter of right.

Key Features of the Social Democratic Model

1. **Universalism :** Welfare benefits and services are available to all citizens, not restricted to the poor.

2. **Equality and Social Justice :** The state aims to reduce social and economic inequalities by redistributing income through taxation and public spending.

3. **Comprehensive Welfare System :** The state provides a wide range of services — including education, healthcare, childcare, unemployment insurance, and pensions.

4. **High Public Expenditure :** Welfare is financed through progressive taxation, where higher-income groups contribute more.

5. **State Responsibility :** The government plays a central role in planning, financing, and administering welfare programmes.

6. **Social Partnership:** Close collaboration exists between the state, trade unions, and employers to ensure fairness in policy design and implementation.

7. **Decommodification :** Citizens are guaranteed basic living standards independent of market forces.

In practice, the social democratic countries of Northern Europe have achieved high levels of social cohesion, gender equality, literacy, and public health, while also maintaining strong economies. Their welfare systems provide "from cradle to grave" support—beginning with maternity benefits and continuing through education, employment, healthcare, and old age.

The underlying philosophy is that social welfare strengthens democracy. When citizens enjoy economic security and equality of opportunity, they are more capable of exercising political freedom and contributing to society. Hence, social welfare is viewed as both a moral duty and a democratic necessity.

Criticisms of the Social Democratic Model

Despite its success, this model has faced criticism, particularly concerning:

1. High taxation levels, which can discourage investment or economic competitiveness;

2. Extensive bureaucracy, which may create inefficiencies in administration;

3. Financial sustainability, especially during economic recessions or global crises; and

4. Dependency risks, where citizens may rely heavily on state support.

Nevertheless, the social democratic model remains the ideal of a universal welfare system, demonstrating that equity and efficiency can coexist under a strong and responsive state.

1.2.8.2 The Liberal Welfare Model

In contrast to the social democratic approach, the Liberal Welfare Model emphasises individual responsibility, private enterprise, and limited government intervention in social welfare. It is grounded in the philosophy of classical liberalism, which values economic freedom, competition, and minimal state control over markets. Welfare, in this model, is provided primarily by the market and voluntary organisations, with the state intervening only to assist those who cannot help themselves.

The United States, Canada, Australia, and, to some extent, the United Kingdom represent examples of the liberal welfare model. This approach reflects the belief that economic growth and individual initiative are the best guarantees of social welfare. The government's role, therefore, is residual—to act as a safety net for the poor or those temporarily in distress, rather than as a universal provider.

▶ Limited government intervention

Under this model, social benefits are typically means-tested—available only to those who meet specific income or need criteria. This keeps welfare costs low but also creates a distinction between "deserving" and "undeserving" recipients. The liberal model relies heavily on private insurance, employer-based benefits, and market solutions for social services, such as healthcare and education.

Key Features of the Liberal Welfare Model

1. **Residual Approach :** Welfare is provided only when family and market mechanisms fail.
2. **Limited State Role :** The government intervenes minimally, focusing mainly on poverty relief.
3. **Means-Tested Benefits :** Assistance is targeted toward specific groups, based on need or income level.
4. **Emphasis on Market Mechanisms :** Individuals are encouraged to use private insurance, savings, or employment-based benefits.
5. **Promotion of Individual Responsibility :** Citizens are expected to take personal responsibility for their welfare.
6. **Low Public Expenditure :** Social spending is relatively low compared to social democratic countries.
7. **Selective Welfare System :** Welfare is not a universal right but a selective support system.

The liberal model is influenced by the belief that excessive welfare creates dependency and inefficiency. It assumes that markets are more efficient in allocating resources and that individuals should be motivated by self-reliance. The welfare role of the state is therefore supplementary and corrective, not comprehensive.

Examples of the Liberal Welfare Model in Practice

In the United States, healthcare is largely privatised, and public welfare programmes like Medicaid or Food Stamps are targeted at the poor. In the United Kingdom, the post-1980s period saw a shift from universal welfare to targeted benefits and the privatisation of certain public services. Australia and Canada have retained mixed systems, combining liberal principles with limited universal benefits.

Criticisms of the Liberal Welfare Model

1. Creating deep inequalities between rich and poor;
2. Leaving vulnerable groups without adequate protection;
3. Failing to provide universal access to essential services; and
4. Associating welfare with stigma or dependency.

Despite these criticisms, liberal welfare systems persist because they align with the values of individual freedom, market efficiency, and limited government — principles deeply rooted in liberal political traditions.

Summarized Overview

This unit explores the conceptual and theoretical foundations of social welfare administration by examining the ideas of the welfare state and socialism. It explains that while the welfare state operates within democratic and mixed economies, socialism seeks equality through collective ownership and planned development. The evolution of the welfare state is traced from its origins in industrial societies to its post-World War II expansion, influenced by the Beveridge Report and Keynesian economics. The unit also discusses the Indian constitutional framework that guides welfare policies.

Three key theories of social welfare—Residual, Institutional, and Developmental—are examined to show how the role of the state evolved from providing minimal relief to integrating welfare with national development. The residual model limits welfare to emergency aid, the institutional model regards welfare as a permanent state responsibility, and the developmental model links welfare with human empowerment and economic progress. The unit concludes by comparing two major models of welfare administration: the Social Democratic Model, which promotes universalism and equality through strong state intervention, and the Liberal Welfare Model, which emphasises individual responsibility and market-based welfare. Together, these theories and models provide a comprehensive understanding of how welfare systems are structured and managed across societies.

Self-Assessment

1. Analyse the Institutional Theory of social welfare and its role in shaping the modern welfare state.
2. Discuss the Developmental Theory of social welfare and its relevance to developing countries like India.
3. Compare and contrast the Social Democratic and Liberal Welfare Models of social welfare administration.
4. Evaluate how welfare policies contribute to social justice, equity, and human development.
5. Assess the role of government and community participation in implementing welfare programmes effectively.

Assignments

1. Explain the concept of the welfare state and discuss its main features.
2. Describe the relationship between socialism and the welfare state, highlighting their similarities and differences.
3. Trace the evolution of the welfare state in the context of industrialisation and post-war reconstruction.
4. Discuss the constitutional foundations of the welfare state in India with reference to the Directive Principles of State Policy.
5. Examine the key features and criticisms of the Residual Theory of social welfare.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 3 Structure and Functions of Social Welfare Administration in India

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the constitutional foundations of social welfare in India
- identify the structure and major functions of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- analyse the role of different commissions, departments, and agencies in welfare administration
- examine the relationship between social policy and social welfare administration
- evaluate how constitutional ideals are translated into administrative action for social justice

Background

Social welfare administration in India rests on a strong constitutional and institutional framework aimed at ensuring justice, equality, and human dignity. The Indian Constitution goes beyond being a legal document; it embodies the moral and social vision of the nation. Through the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy, it establishes the foundation of a welfare state that guarantees equal opportunities and a decent standard of living for all citizens. Over the years, this constitutional mandate has evolved into a comprehensive administrative structure led by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, which works for the welfare and empowerment of marginalised groups such as Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens.

The ministry coordinates numerous agencies and commissions that ensure the effective implementation of welfare schemes across the country. However, welfare administration is not merely about executing programmes—it is also about aligning administrative actions with social policies. Social policies provide the vision, while administration gives them form and effectiveness. The interaction between these two ensures that governance remains humane, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of society. Thus, the study of India's social welfare structure offers valuable insight into how constitutional ideals are transformed into the everyday realities of justice and equity.

Keywords

Preamble, Directive Principles, Social Justice, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Social Policy

Discussion

1.3.1 Constitutional Provisions for Social Welfare in India

The Constitution of India is not merely a legal document; it is a moral and social charter that reflects the vision of justice, equality, and human dignity for all citizens. The framers of the Constitution were deeply conscious of the vast social and economic inequalities that existed in Indian society due to centuries of colonial exploitation, caste discrimination, and poverty. They envisioned a new India built on the ideals of democracy, equality, and social justice—an India where the State would play an active role in ensuring the welfare of its people.

▶ Embedded in the Indian Constitution

The concept of social welfare is thus deeply embedded in the Indian Constitution. It provides both the philosophical foundation and the legal framework for achieving the goals of a Welfare State. The constitutional provisions related to social welfare are spread across several parts of the document—particularly the Preamble, the Fundamental Rights, and the Directive Principles of State Policy. Together, these sections create a comprehensive blueprint for social transformation and human development.

1.3.1.1 The Preamble and the Ideal of the Welfare State

The Preamble to the Constitution of India declares the country to be a "Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic" and pledges to secure to all its citizens justice—social, economic, and political—as well as equality of status and opportunity.

The inclusion of the word "socialist" (added by the 42nd Amendment in 1976) affirms the State's commitment to the equitable distribution of resources and the reduction of social and economic disparities. The term does not imply state ownership of all property but rather a system that combines democracy with social and economic justice—the essence of a democratic welfare state.

▶ Equitable distribution of resources

The Preamble therefore serves as the guiding spirit for all social welfare policies and programmes. It ensures that governance in India is not only about political freedom but also about ensuring a dignified standard of life for every individual.

1.3.1.2 Fundamental Rights and Social Welfare

The Fundamental Rights enshrined in Part III of the Constitution provide the basic guarantees that ensure every citizen's dignity, liberty, and equality. Although these rights primarily protect individual freedoms, they also have a profound social welfare dimension, as they aim to eliminate discrimination and create equal opportunities for all sections of society.

a. Right to Equality (Articles 14–18)

- Article 14 guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws, forming the foundation of social justice.
- Article 15 prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, and permits the State to make special provisions for women, children, and socially and educationally backward classes.
- Article 16 ensures equality of opportunity in matters of public employment and allows reservations for backward classes and the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- Article 17 abolishes untouchability, marking a major step towards social reform and human dignity.
- Article 18 abolishes titles (except military or academic distinctions) to promote equality and social respect.

These provisions are the backbone of social justice and inclusion, which are central to welfare administration.

b. Right to Freedom (Articles 19–22)

The right to freedom includes the freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association, and freedom to practise any occupation or trade. These rights are crucial for promoting social and economic participation. They empower individuals to pursue livelihoods and participate in civic life — both essential components of welfare in a democratic society.

c. Right Against Exploitation (Articles 23–24)

- Article 23 prohibits human trafficking, begar (forced labour), and other forms of exploitation.
- Article 24 prohibits the employment of children below 14 years in factories, mines, or other hazardous occupations.

These articles are vital for protecting the weaker sections of society and ensuring humane working conditions — a key aspect of welfare governance.

d. Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29–30)

These articles safeguard the rights of minorities to preserve their culture and establish educational institutions. They promote inclusivity, pluralism, and cultural welfare.

e. Right to Constitutional Remedies (Article 32)

This right empowers citizens to approach the Supreme Court for the enforcement of their Fundamental Rights. It ensures that the State remains accountable for upholding the principles of justice and welfare.

1.3.1.3 Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV, Articles 36–51)

The Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSPs), though not legally enforceable, are the heart and soul of social welfare in the Indian Constitution. They embody the ideals of the Preamble and lay down the guidelines for governance aimed at establishing a just and equitable society. The DPSPs transform the moral ideals of the freedom movement into positive obligations of the State.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar described the Directive Principles as "instruments of instruction" to the legislature and the executive for building a welfare state. They represent the constitutional vision of combining political democracy with social and economic democracy.

Key Social Welfare Provisions under the DPSPs

- **Article 38 :** Directs the State to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order based on justice — social, economic, and political — and to minimise inequalities in income, status, and opportunities.
- **Article 39 :** Lays down principles of policy such as adequate means of livelihood for all, equal pay for equal work, protection of workers and children, and prevention of wealth concentration.
- **Article 39A :** Added by the 42nd Amendment, it directs the State to ensure equal justice and free legal aid for the poor.
- **Article 41 :** Provides for the right to work, to education, and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement.
- **Article 42 :** Directs the State to ensure just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
- **Article 43 :** Ensures living wages and decent conditions of work for all workers and encourages cooperative enterprises.
- **Article 45 :** Originally provided for free and compulsory education for children; after the 86th Amendment (2002), this has been made a Fundamental Right under Article 21A.
- **Article 46 :** Directs the State to promote the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other weaker sections, and to protect them from exploitation.
- **Article 47 :** Emphasizes the duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and improve public health.
- **Article 48A :** Added by the 42nd Amendment, it directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.

Together, these provisions create the constitutional foundation of the Indian welfare state. They require the government to take proactive measures to eliminate poverty, improve living conditions, and promote equality.

1.3.1.4 Fundamental Duties (Article 51A)

While Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles define the duties of the State toward citizens, Article 51A of the Constitution enumerates the Fundamental Duties of citizens toward the nation and society. Some of these duties have direct relevance to social welfare, such as:

- Promoting harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood,
- Protecting public property and the environment,
- Striving for excellence in all spheres of life, and
- Developing a scientific temper and compassion for living creatures.

These duties encourage citizens to share responsibility for the collective welfare of society.

1.3.1.5 Constitutional Amendments and Judicial Interpretation

Over the years, both constitutional amendments and judicial interpretations have strengthened the welfare orientation of the Constitution.

- The 42nd Amendment (1976) added the terms Socialist and Secular to the Preamble and introduced new directives such as environmental protection and free legal aid.
- The 86th Amendment (2002) made the right to education a Fundamental Right (Article 21A) for children aged 6 to 14 years.
- The Supreme Court, through progressive judgments, has expanded the meaning of the Right to Life (Article 21) to include the right to livelihood, shelter, health, and a clean environment, effectively constitutionalising the concept of welfare.

Thus, through judicial creativity and constitutional evolution, the ideal of the welfare state has gained both moral and legal strength in India.

The Constitution of India provides a strong moral and legal foundation for building a welfare state dedicated to justice, equality, and human dignity. Through the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy, the Constitution integrates the principles of liberty and equality with the goal of social and economic transformation.

The vision of the framers was clear — political democracy must be accompanied by social and economic democracy, and the State must act as an instrument of social welfare. In essence, the Indian Constitution transforms the idea of welfare from a matter of charity into a constitutional obligation and a citizen's right. It ensures that governance in India remains not merely administrative, but deeply human and just.

1.3.2 Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment - Structure and Functions

► Nodal ministry

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) is the nodal ministry of the Government of India responsible for promoting social justice, inclusion, and the empowerment of marginalized and disadvantaged sections of society. It primarily focuses on the welfare of Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and victims of substance abuse. The ministry was previously known as the Ministry of Welfare. In 1998, it was renamed the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to better reflect its expanded responsibilities. Over time, related areas such as tribal and minority affairs have been moved to separate ministries.

1.3.2.1 Organizational Structure

The Ministry is headed by a Cabinet Minister, assisted by one or more Ministers of State. It operates through two main departments:

- **Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DSJE):** Responsible for the welfare of Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, senior citizens, victims of substance abuse, and the social defence sector.

- **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD):** Focuses on the rights, rehabilitation, and empowerment of persons with disabilities (Divyangjan).

Each department has its own secretariat divisions, bureaus, and attached offices. At the administrative level, the Ministry has several statutory bodies, corporations, and autonomous organisations for implementing its programmes.

1.3.2.2 Major Bodies and Agencies under the Ministry

Some of the important bodies functioning under the MSJE are:

- **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) :** Monitors constitutional safeguards for SCs and investigates complaints of violations.
- **National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) :** Advises the government on the inclusion of communities in the OBC list and safeguards their rights.
- **National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC) :** Works for the socio-economic upliftment of sanitation workers.
- **National Scheduled Castes Finance & Development Corporation (NSFDC) and National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) :** Provide concessional loans and financial assistance for income-generating activities.
- **Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) and National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Intellectual and Multiple Disabilities :** Address training, certification, and care for persons with disabilities.
- **Dr. Ambedkar Foundation :** Promotes research, publications, and memorial activities related to Dr. B.R. Ambedkar.

1.3.2.3 Functions of the Ministry

The Ministry performs a wide range of policy, administrative, and welfare functions, which include:

1. Policy Formulation and Legislation

   - Formulating national policies and laws for social justice and empowerment (e.g., The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016).
   - Advising state governments and coordinating social welfare initiatives across India.

2. Implementation of Welfare Programmes: Administering scholarships, economic empowerment schemes, and rehabilitation programmes. Key schemes include:

   - Post-Matric Scholarships for SCs and OBCs
   - Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)
   - National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction
   - Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSC)
   - NAMASTE Scheme (rehabilitation of sanitation workers).

3. Empowerment and Inclusion

   - Promoting equality of opportunity and access for marginalized groups.
   - Supporting NGOs and voluntary organisations in implementing welfare programmes.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

   - Supervising the functioning of commissions and corporations.
   - Conducting research, evaluation, and public awareness campaigns on social issues.

1.3.3 Relationship between Social Policy and Social Welfare Administration

The relationship between social policy and social welfare administration may be best understood as the relationship between thought and action, or between planning and execution. Social policy provides the broad framework, goals, and principles through which a society seeks to promote welfare, while social welfare administration gives practical shape to these ideas by translating them into programmes, services, and institutional arrangements. Both are inseparable and complementary aspects of the same process aimed at achieving social welfare. Without policy, administration lacks direction; without administration, policy remains only a statement of intent.

► Inseparable and complementary

Social welfare administration derives its purpose, scope, and direction from social policy. Social policies define the priorities of the state, identify target groups, and set goals to be achieved within a given time frame. These policies serve as the foundation upon which administrative structures and processes are built. For instance, a national policy may declare universal access to education or health as a social objective, but it is the administrative machinery that designs schemes, allocates funds, recruits personnel, and establishes institutions to realise these objectives. In this sense, social policy provides clarity, legitimacy, and consistency to administrative action, ensuring that welfare programmes are not arbitrary but aligned with broader social goals.

► Priorities of the state

At the same time, social welfare administration functions as the primary instrument for implementing social policy. Even the most well-conceived policy cannot achieve its objectives unless it is supported by efficient and responsive administration. Social welfare administration converts policy decisions into operational programmes through activities such as planning, budgeting, coordination, supervision, and evaluation. It ensures that welfare benefits actually reach the intended beneficiaries and that services are delivered in an effective and timely manner. Administrative agencies, departments, and field-level institutions play a crucial role in bridging the gap between policy formulation and service delivery. Thus, administration acts as the mechanism through which policy intentions are transformed into concrete social outcomes.

► Instrument for implementing social policy

The relationship between social policy and social welfare administration is not one-directional but dynamic and cyclical. Experiences gained during the implementation of welfare programmes often reveal practical difficulties, gaps, and unintended consequences of existing policies. Administrators, through monitoring and evaluation, generate valuable feedback about what works and what does not. This feedback becomes an important input for policy review, modification, and reform. In this way, social welfare administration contributes not only

► Feedback

to policy execution but also to policy development, ensuring that social policies remain relevant, realistic, and responsive to changing social needs.

▶ Coordination across different levels of government

In a federal system such as India, the relationship between social policy and social welfare administration also involves coordination across different levels of government. While social policies are often formulated at the national level, their implementation largely takes place at the state and local levels. Effective welfare delivery, therefore, depends on coordination between central, state, and local authorities. Administrative flexibility at the lower levels allows policies to be adapted to local conditions, while adherence to national policy frameworks ensures uniformity of objectives and standards across the country.

▶ guided by shared values

Both social policy and social welfare administration are guided by shared values such as social justice, equality, human dignity, inclusiveness, and respect for rights. Social policy articulates these values in normative and conceptual terms, while social welfare administration operationalises them through concrete actions and service delivery. Their interdependence ensures the effective translation of social goals into reality, promotes rational and accountable use of resources, enhances transparency in welfare delivery, and supports continuous improvement of programmes through monitoring and evaluation.

In essence, the relationship between social policy and social welfare administration may be compared to that of the brain and the body. Social policy provides vision, direction, and purpose, while social welfare administration performs the actions required to realise that vision. For a country like India, committed to building an inclusive and welfare-oriented democracy, this relationship is of fundamental importance. Only when policies are efficiently administered and administrative experience informs better policy-making can the constitutional objectives of social justice, equality, and human welfare be truly achieved.

Summarized Overview

This unit explains the constitutional, institutional, and administrative framework that supports social welfare in India. The Constitution serves as both the moral and legal foundation of the welfare state, incorporating justice, equality, and human dignity through its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy. These provisions collectively guide the government's efforts to eliminate inequality, protect vulnerable groups, and ensure citizens' well-being.

The unit details the structure and functions of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment—the nodal agency for implementing welfare programmes in India. Its two key departments, the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, oversee a network of commissions, boards, and corporations that implement policies and schemes for marginalised communities.

It also explains the relationship between social policy and social welfare administration, describing how policy provides direction and administration translates it into practice through planning, coordination, and feedback. The success of welfare programmes thus depends on this dynamic relationship, which ensures that constitutional ideals of social justice are effectively realised in governance.

Self-Assessment

1. Discuss the roles of key agencies under the Ministry, such as NCSC, NCBC, and the Rehabilitation Council of India.
2. Explain how social policy and social welfare administration are interrelated and interdependent.
3. Evaluate the impact of constitutional amendments and judicial interpretations in strengthening India's welfare state.
4. Discuss the importance of coordination between central, state, and local levels in welfare administration.
5. Assess how India's social welfare administration contributes to achieving the goals of equality, inclusion, and human dignity.

Assignments

1. Explain how the Indian Constitution provides a foundation for social welfare administration.
2. Discuss the significance of the Preamble and Directive Principles of State Policy in promoting social justice.
3. Examine the role of Fundamental Rights in advancing social and economic equality in India.
4. Describe the organisational structure of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
5. Analyse the major functions and programmes of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

BLOCK 2
Social Welfare Policies and Programmes

UNIT 1
Social Welfare Policies in India

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the concept and scope of social welfare in India
- identify key target groups under India's social welfare system
- examine major national social welfare policies and their objectives
- analyse various models and approaches to social welfare policy-making
- evaluate the importance and methods of policy evaluation in social welfare

Background

Social welfare policies form the foundation of India's commitment to inclusive development and social justice. Despite economic growth and modernisation, India continues to grapple with persistent poverty, inequality, and exclusion. The Constitution envisions India as a welfare state, where the government bears responsibility for ensuring the well-being of all citizens, particularly the disadvantaged. Over the decades, India has introduced a range of policies addressing the needs of vulnerable groups—Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, children, persons with disabilities, minorities, and the elderly.

These policies are not merely acts of charity; they are instruments for ensuring social equity, empowerment, and human development. National frameworks like the National Health Policy, National Education Policy, and National Policy for Persons with Disabilities reflect the state's vision of transforming growth into social justice. At the same time, welfare policy-making involves a complex process—balancing rational planning with practical constraints and human values. Theories such as the Rationalistic, Incrementalist, Mixed-Scanning, and Generic approaches help us understand how social policies evolve in real-world governance. Evaluation, an integral part of this process, ensures that these welfare policies are effective, transparent, and responsive to people's needs.

Keywords

Social Welfare , Policy-making , Rationalistic Model, Incrementalism, Evaluation

Discussion

2.1.1 Social Welfare in India

India's evolution as a democratic nation has been characterised by remarkable progress as well as deep-seated socio-economic challenges. While the country has made significant advancements in various sectors, large segments of its population continue to struggle with poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, and inadequate access to health and education. These enduring inequalities underline the critical importance of comprehensive social welfare policies to ensure that the benefits of growth reach all sections of society.

► Deep-seated socio-economic challenges

Despite steady economic expansion, India continues to face high levels of poverty and inequality. According to recent estimates, India still accounts for one of the largest populations of poor and malnourished individuals globally. The NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (2023) reported a national headcount ratio of 25.01%, with poverty far more pronounced in rural areas (32.75%) than in urban regions (8.81%). Issues such as the spread of non-communicable diseases, rising health costs, unemployment, and poor learning outcomes in education further highlight the need for strong welfare measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and deepened existing vulnerabilities. Social protection schemes—covering food security, healthcare, income support, and old-age pensions—became crucial for survival. These welfare measures not only mitigate poverty but also serve as instruments for redistributing resources, promoting equity, and fostering human development.

► Redistributing resources

India's commitment to social welfare is firmly grounded in its Constitution, which envisions the State as a welfare state responsible for promoting the well-being of all citizens, particularly the weaker sections.

Concept and Scope of Social Welfare in India

Social welfare in India refers to the system of laws, institutions, and services designed to promote economic and social well-being. It includes programmes that address issues such as poverty, healthcare, education, nutrition, housing, employment, disability, and old-age support.

- Uplift disadvantaged groups

The idea of social welfare is not new to India; ancient religious texts and community traditions emphasised compassion, charity, and collective responsibility for the needy. However, in the post-independence period, the State became the primary agent of welfare, institutionalising programmes to uplift disadvantaged groups and integrate them into the mainstream of development.

Target Groups under Social Welfare Policies

- Reduce inequalities

India's social welfare framework gives special attention to groups that are historically disadvantaged, socially excluded, or economically vulnerable. The objective is not charity but corrective justice — to reduce inequalities and create conditions in which all citizens can participate in social, economic, and political life with dignity. These target groups often suffer from structural barriers such as poverty, discrimination, lack of access to education and healthcare, weak asset ownership, geographical isolation, or social stigma. Social welfare policies, therefore, prioritise them for protective, developmental, and empowering interventions.

- Historical injustice

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs & STs) constitute one of the most important categories of beneficiaries. These communities have faced centuries of social exclusion, untouchability, land alienation, displacement, and denial of opportunities. Many tribal populations also live in remote areas with poor infrastructure, limited access to markets, and inadequate public services. Because of this historical injustice, the Constitution provides safeguards and affirmative measures to promote their educational, economic, and political advancement. Welfare initiatives include reservations in education, employment, and legislatures, scholarships, hostels, land and housing support, livelihood schemes, and financial assistance through development corporations. The underlying principle is protective discrimination aimed at achieving substantive equality.

Other Backward Classes (OBCs) represent socially and educationally disadvantaged communities that lag behind dominant groups in access to education, employment, and social mobility. Their backwardness is often linked to traditional occupational hierarchies, low-income levels, and limited representation in public institutions. Social welfare policies for OBCs aim to enhance opportunities through reservations in public employment and educational institutions, scholarships, coaching facilities, skill development, and credit support for self-employment. By strengthening human capital and economic capacity, the State seeks to enable these communities to overcome inherited disadvantages.

► Limited representation

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) form another crucial target group. Disability often leads to multiple forms of exclusion, including barriers in education, employment, mobility, communication, and social participation. Beyond physical challenges, they frequently encounter stigma, neglect, and discrimination. Welfare policies, therefore, focus on inclusion, accessibility, rehabilitation, and equal opportunity. Measures include early detection and intervention, assistive devices, inclusive education, skills training, employment incentives, and social security support. The legal framework promotes rights-based inclusion so that persons with disabilities can live independently and participate fully in community life rather than remain passive recipients of aid.

► Multiple forms of exclusion

Minority communities are recognised as vulnerable when they experience socio-economic deprivation, underrepresentation, and obstacles in accessing development opportunities. Welfare interventions for minorities aim to ensure equality of citizenship while respecting cultural identity. Policies commonly focus on improving educational attainment, enhancing employability, expanding access to credit, and developing infrastructure in areas where minorities are concentrated. The intention is to prevent marginalisation, reduce disparities, and promote integration without assimilation.

► Ensuring equality of citizenship

Women and children occupy a central place in social welfare planning because they often face compounded vulnerabilities arising from gender inequality, poverty, malnutrition, lack of education, violence, and limited control over resources. Women may experience discrimination within households, labour markets, and community institutions, while children are dependent on adults for survival, development, and protection. Welfare measures, therefore, cover maternal health, nutrition, childcare, education, protection from abuse and exploitation, and the economic empowerment of women through self-help

► Compounded vulnerabilities

groups and livelihood initiatives. Investments in women and children are also seen as investments in the future of society, as they contribute to intergenerational improvement in health, education, and productivity.

In essence, identifying target groups allows social welfare policy to direct resources toward those who need them most. It recognises that equal treatment alone cannot eliminate deep-rooted inequalities; instead, special measures are necessary to ensure fairness and inclusion. By focusing on vulnerable populations, social welfare administration works towards building a more just and equitable society in which every individual has the opportunity to develop their potential and live with dignity.

2.1.1.2 Overview of Major Social Welfare Policies in India

Over the years, the Government of India has formulated and revised several national policies to guide welfare initiatives. Some of the major ones are outlined below:

- ▶ Financial and social security

a. **National Policy on Older Persons (1999) :** Recognising the increasing number of elderly people and their vulnerabilities, the National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP) was adopted in 1999. Its objectives are to ensure financial and social security, healthcare, and opportunities for productive ageing. The policy promotes pension schemes for poor and destitute elders, encourages self-employment, and supports the establishment of old-age homes and geriatric care services. The policy envisions an enabling environment where the elderly can live with dignity, independence, and respect.

- ▶ Valuable human resources

b. **National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006) :** The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities recognises persons with disabilities as valuable human resources and aims to create an inclusive society. It focuses on prevention, early detection, education, vocational training, and economic rehabilitation. The policy also promotes accessibility, awareness generation, and the use of assistive technologies to improve quality of life.

c. **National Education Policy (2020) :** The National Policy on Education (1986) served as a comprehensive framework for the development of education in India, emphasising access, equity, and improvement in qual-

- Valuable human resources

ity, and was later modified in 1992. However, in response to changing socio-economic needs and global developments, it has now been replaced by the National Education Policy.

The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to overhaul the education system to make it more inclusive, flexible, and future-oriented. It envisions an education structure that provides equitable access to high-quality learning for all, regardless of social or economic background. The NEP emphasises foundational literacy, early childhood care, vocational education, and multidisciplinary learning, aligning with the global Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG-4) on quality education.

- High-quality learning for all

d. **National Health Policy (2017) :** The National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 aims to achieve universal access to quality healthcare services that are affordable and equitable. It emphasises preventive and promotive healthcare, reduction in out-of-pocket expenditure, and integration of alternative systems of medicine. Key objectives include strengthening primary health centres, developing human resources, encouraging public-private partnerships, and providing financial protection to vulnerable populations.

- Universal access to quality healthcare

e. **National Policy for Children (2013) :** Adopted in 2013, this policy recognises every person below 18 years as a child and ensures their rights to survival, health, education, and protection. It identifies four priority areas — survival, development, protection, and participation — and stresses the importance of convergence among ministries to address children's multi-dimensional needs. The policy promotes a child-friendly environment and inclusive growth for all children, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

- Inclusive growth for all children

f. **National Youth Policy (2014) :** The National Youth Policy (NYP-2014) defines "youth" as individuals between 15 and 29 years of age and focuses on their holistic development. It aims to empower youth to realise their potential and contribute meaningfully to nation-building. The policy emphasises education, employment, entrepreneurship, health, community engagement, and social inclusion as key priority areas. It

- Holistic development

also calls for the creation of platforms for youth participation in governance and decision-making.

2.1.2 Policy-making process in social welfare

▶ Holistic development

Policy-making in the field of social welfare is a complex process that involves identifying social problems, setting goals, choosing appropriate strategies, and implementing solutions to promote the well-being of citizens. Since social welfare deals with human needs and societal values, policy-making in this area must balance rational analysis, political feasibility, and ethical considerations.

Unlike purely economic or administrative decisions, social welfare policies require attention to issues such as poverty, inequality, gender justice, and the empowerment of marginalised groups. Therefore, different models have been developed to understand how social policies are made, who participates in them, and how decisions are shaped.

The most influential models in this regard are the Rationalistic, Incrementalist, Mixed-Scanning, and Generic approaches. Each model offers a distinct perspective on how welfare decisions are conceptualised and executed.

2.1.2.1 The Rationalistic Approach

The rationalistic model of policy-making assumes that decisions are taken through logical reasoning and systematic analysis. It visualises the policymaker as a rational actor who proceeds in a scientific, step-by-step manner. The process begins with the identification of a social problem, followed by the formulation of clear objectives. Different possible alternatives are then generated and carefully examined in terms of their likely consequences. After comparing costs and benefits, the option that promises the greatest effectiveness and efficiency is selected.

Within this framework, policy-making relies heavily on data, research findings, and expert knowledge. The emphasis is on objectivity, calculation, and prediction. In the field of social welfare, the rationalistic approach supports evidence-based policy, where programmes are designed on the basis of statistics, surveys, and measurable outcomes. For example, before introducing a poverty alleviation initiative, the government may study income distribution, compare different strategies such as direct cash transfers or employment schemes, and adopt the model that is expected to produce maximum benefit with available resources.

Despite its appeal, the rationalistic approach faces serious limitations in practice. Decision-makers rarely possess complete information, unlimited time, or perfect analytical capacity. Political pressures, administrative constraints, and conflicting values influence choices. Moreover, many social issues involve moral considerations and human emotions that cannot be easily quantified. As a result, fully rational decision-making often remains more of an ideal than a reality.

2.1.2.2 The Incrementalist Approach

► Gradual modifications to existing policies.

The incrementalist approach offers a more realistic description of how policies are actually made. Associated with Charles E. Lindblom, this model argues that policymakers seldom undertake comprehensive analysis of all possible alternatives. Instead, they prefer small, gradual modifications to existing policies. Rather than attempting radical transformation, decision-makers focus on limited changes that are politically feasible and administratively manageable.

In this model, only a few alternatives are examined, usually those that differ marginally from current practice. Goals and solutions are adjusted as new information becomes available, and decision-making is seen as a continuous, evolving process rather than a final choice. In social welfare administration, incrementalism is extremely common. Many welfare schemes expand in stages, budgets are increased gradually, and eligibility criteria are modified step by step based on experience and negotiation.

The strength of incrementalism lies in its practicality. It recognises human and institutional limitations and helps maintain political consensus and stability. However, critics argue that by avoiding bold reforms, incrementalism may preserve existing inequalities. When problems require structural change, minor adjustments may prove insufficient, allowing difficulties to accumulate over time.

2.1.2.3 The Mixed-Scanning Approach

The mixed-scanning model seeks to combine the strengths of rationalism and incrementalism while avoiding their weaknesses. Proposed by Amitai Etzioni, this approach suggests that decision-makers should operate at two levels simultaneously. At the broader level, they undertake a general review of the social system to determine fundamental goals and long-term directions. At a more detailed level, they make specific decisions through limited analysis and incremental adjustments.

This model recognises that it is neither possible nor necessary to examine every alternative in depth. Instead, policymakers should reserve comprehensive analysis for major issues while handling routine matters through gradual change. In social welfare, such a strategy allows governments to pursue large reforms when needed while still managing everyday administrative realities. A country may, for instance, adopt a major reform agenda in education or health at the national level, yet continue to modify funding patterns or service rules incrementally each year.

- Balance between idealism and pragmatism

The mixed-scanning approach offers a balance between idealism and pragmatism. It provides flexibility in resource use and acknowledges real-world constraints while ensuring that long-term vision is not lost. Nevertheless, maintaining the balance between broad planning and limited adjustments requires capable leadership and effective coordination, which may not always be available.

2.1.2.4 The Generic Model

The generic model draws inspiration from the generalist approach in social work and emphasises participation, interaction, and continuous learning in policy-making. It views social workers as important actors who connect communities with policymakers. Rather than treating policy-making as a one-time decision, this model understands it as a cyclical process in which research, practice, and administration constantly influence one another.

- Field experience, surveys, and close engagement with communities.

In this framework, problems are identified through field experience, surveys, and close engagement with communities. Social workers help prioritise the felt needs of people and present realistic, evidence-based suggestions to authorities. They participate in policy discussions to ensure that welfare initiatives remain ethical, inclusive, and sensitive to ground realities. During implementation, they act as intermediaries between administrative systems and beneficiaries, helping translate policy provisions into accessible services. The experiences gained from the field are then fed back into research and education, improving future policy formulation.

The generic model thus creates a strong linkage between social policy, social welfare administration, and professional practice. It ensures that policies are not only technically sound but also socially relevant and responsive to the people they are meant to serve.

2.1.3 Evaluation of Social Welfare Policies

Evaluation is an essential part of the policy process, especially in the field of social welfare, where policies aim to improve human lives and address complex social problems. After a welfare policy has been formulated and implemented, it becomes crucial to examine whether it has achieved its objectives and how effectively it has served the target population.

In simple terms, evaluation means the systematic assessment of a policy's design, implementation, and outcomes to determine its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and impact.

For a welfare state like India, evaluating social welfare policies helps ensure that government resources are used wisely and that programmes truly improve the conditions of marginalised and vulnerable groups.

2.1.3.1 Meaning and Definition

Evaluation refers to the process of measuring the results of a policy or programme against its stated goals. It involves collecting and analysing data to judge the success, failure, or limitations of welfare interventions.

According to David Nachmias (1979), "Policy evaluation is the objective, systematic, and empirical examination of the effects of public policies on their intended and unintended targets."

▶ Measuring the results

In the context of social welfare, evaluation is not merely a technical exercise - it is also a moral and social responsibility. Welfare policies often affect the poorest and most vulnerable citizens, and evaluation ensures accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement.

2.1.3.2 Objectives of Evaluation in Social Welfare

Evaluation serves multiple purposes in the policy cycle. Its main objectives are:

1. **Assessing Achievement of Goals :** To determine

whether the policy has achieved its stated objectives (e.g., reduction in poverty, improved access to education or health services).

2. **Measuring Efficiency and Effectiveness :** To find out if resources have been used economically and whether the benefits justify the costs.

3. **Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses :** To highlight what worked well and what needs improvement in the design or implementation of the policy.

4. **Ensuring Accountability :** To make government agencies and administrators answerable to citizens and funding bodies.

5. **Informing Future Policy Decisions :** To provide evidence-based insights for modifying or formulating new welfare programmes.

6. **Promoting Transparency and Participation :** To involve stakeholders and beneficiaries in reviewing the success of welfare initiatives.

2.1.3.3 Types of Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential component of the policy and programme cycle. It helps administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders understand whether a welfare intervention is relevant, efficiently implemented, and capable of achieving its intended objectives. Because policies evolve over time, evaluation is not a one-time exercise; it can occur before, during, or after implementation. Depending on the purpose and timing, different types of evaluation are undertaken.

▶ Before the programme

Ex-ante evaluation is carried out before a programme or policy is implemented. Its primary aim is to assess the feasibility, relevance, and likely consequences of the proposed intervention. At this stage, planners examine whether the policy design is appropriate, whether sufficient resources are available, and whether the expected outcomes justify the investment. Alternatives may also be compared so that decision-makers can select the most suitable strategy. Ex-ante evaluation is therefore preventive in nature; it seeks to avoid mistakes, reduce risks, and ensure that only viable programmes are launched.

▶ During the implementation phase

Process evaluation, also known as formative evaluation, takes place during the implementation phase. It focuses on how the programme is functioning rather than what final results it produces. Attention is given to administrative arrangements, staff performance, coordination among agencies, adequacy of infrastructure, and accessibility of services to beneficiaries. If shortcomings or bottlenecks are identified, corrective measures can be introduced without waiting for the programme to end. In this sense, process evaluation supports continuous improvement and helps maintain accountability in day-to-day functioning. For example, administrators may examine whether pension payments are reaching beneficiaries on time, whether application procedures are simple, or whether grievance mechanisms are effective.

▶ After the programme has operated

Summative or impact evaluation is conducted after the programme has operated for a sufficient period. Its purpose is to determine the extent to which the policy has achieved its stated objectives and produced meaningful change in the lives of the target population. This type of evaluation looks at outcomes and long-term effects, including both intended and unintended consequences. It may assess improvements in income, health, literacy, employment, or social inclusion. Impact evaluation is crucial for deciding whether a programme should be continued, expanded, modified, or discontinued.

▶ Relationship between the resources invested and the benefits generated

Cost–benefit or efficiency evaluation examines the relationship between the resources invested and the benefits generated. Since welfare systems often operate under financial constraints, governments must ensure that public funds are used prudently. This approach compares the monetary and social gains of a programme with its expenditure to determine whether the intervention represents good value for money. It may also involve comparing alternative programmes that aim to achieve similar objectives. Such analysis supports rational decision-making and prioritisation in budgeting.

▶ Broader assessment

Finally, policy review or meta-evaluation involves a broader assessment of multiple programmes or an entire policy domain. Instead of examining a single scheme, it evaluates how various interventions collectively contribute to national goals such as poverty reduction, gender equality, or social justice. This approach helps identify duplication, gaps, or inconsistencies and encourages better coordination across departments and levels of government. It is particularly useful in complex welfare environments where numerous agencies operate simultaneously.

Taken together, these forms of evaluation ensure that social welfare administration remains responsive, transparent, and evidence-based. They transform welfare governance from a routine activity into a learning process, where experiences guide future improvements and innovations.

2.1.3.4 Methods and Techniques of Evaluation

Evaluating social welfare policies requires both quantitative and qualitative approaches:

1. **Surveys and questionnaires :** Collect data on beneficiaries' experiences and satisfaction levels.

2. **Interviews and focus groups :** Provide qualitative insights into the social impact and implementation challenges.

3. **Case studies :** Offer detailed analysis of specific projects or communities.

4. **Statistical analysis :** Helps compare indicators such as literacy rates, health outcomes, or poverty reduction before and after policy implementation.

5. **Field observation :** Allows direct examination of service delivery and local-level management.

6. **Monitoring and administrative reports:** Provide ongoing records of inputs, outputs, and expenditures.

Evaluation should ideally combine these methods to ensure both objectivity and sensitivity to human and contextual factors.

2.1.3.5 Importance of Evaluation in Social Welfare

Evaluation plays a critical role in strengthening the effectiveness and legitimacy of social welfare policies. Its significance can be understood through the following points:

1. **Improves Policy Effectiveness :** Identifies which programmes produce meaningful results and which need reform.

2. **Enhances Administrative Efficiency :** Provides insights for better planning, coordination, and use of public funds.

3. **Strengthens Accountability :** Ensures transparency and trust in government actions.

4. **Encourages Citizen Participation :** Engages the community and beneficiaries in assessing the success of policies.

5. **Promotes Learning and Innovation :** Provides a feedback mechanism for improving future welfare programmes.

6. **Supports Evidence-Based Governance:** Helps policymakers base their decisions on data rather than assumptions.

2.1.3.6 Challenges in the Evaluation of Welfare Policies

While evaluation is vital, it faces several practical and institutional challenges in India and other developing countries:

1. **Lack of Reliable Data :** Inadequate or outdated data make it difficult to measure policy outcomes accurately.

2. **Ambiguous Objectives :** Many welfare programmes have broad or vague goals, complicating performance measurement.

3. **Resource Constraints:** Limited funding, personnel, and technical expertise hinder systematic evaluation.

4. **Political and Bureaucratic Resistance:** Agencies may resist evaluation due to fear of criticism or budget cuts.

5. **Overlapping Programmes:** Multiple schemes with similar objectives make it hard to isolate impacts.

6. **Neglect of Qualitative Aspects:** Evaluations often focus on numbers and ignore the social or psychological dimensions of welfare.

Overcoming these challenges requires professional training, independent evaluation bodies, and participatory approaches involving beneficiaries and civil society organisations

2.1.3.7 Evaluation Agencies and Mechanisms in India

In India, the evaluation of social welfare policies is carried out by multiple agencies:

1. **NITI Aayog :** Conducts periodic evaluations of centrally sponsored schemes.

2. **Ministries and Departments :** Each ministry (e.g., Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Women and Child Development) undertakes internal reviews.

3. **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) and National Statistical Office (NSO):** Provide data for impact assessment.

4. **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG):** Examines efficiency and accountability in public spending.

5. **Independent Research Institutions and NGOs:** Often assist in field studies and third-party evaluations.

Evaluation is a vital link between policy formulation and policy improvement. In social welfare, where programmes directly affect vulnerable populations, evaluation ensures that policies are not just well-intentioned but also effective, equitable, and sustainable.

A well-designed evaluation system promotes learning, accountability, and innovation in social welfare administration. It allows governments to identify successful interventions, eliminate inefficiencies, and strengthen the overall impact of welfare programmes.

In the Indian context, institutionalising continuous, participatory, and evidence-based evaluation is essential for realising the constitutional goal of a just and inclusive welfare state.

Summarized Overview

This unit provides a comprehensive understanding of India's social welfare policy framework, tracing its constitutional roots and institutional evolution. It begins with an overview of the concept and scope of social welfare, emphasising the state's responsibility to protect vulnerable groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, children, minorities, and persons with disabilities. It discusses major national welfare policies, including the National Policy on Older Persons (1999), National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006), National Health Policy (2017), National Education Policy (2020), National Policy for Children (2013), and National Youth Policy (2014)—each designed to promote equality, participation, and empowerment.

The unit then explores the process of policy-making through various theoretical models. The Rationalistic Model emphasises logical analysis and evidence-based decisions; the Incrementalist Model focuses on gradual change; the Mixed-Scanning Model blends rational planning with practical flexibility; and the Generic Model highlights community participation and the role of social workers.

Finally, the unit discusses the evaluation of social welfare policies—its meaning, objectives, types, and methods. Evaluation ensures accountability, efficiency, and continuous improvement in welfare delivery. It is supported in India by agencies such as NITI Aayog, NSSO, NSO, and the Comptroller and Auditor General. Together, these mechanisms sustain India's welfare vision by ensuring that social policies are inclusive, equitable, and evidence-based.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the Rationalistic, Incrementalist, and Mixed-Scanning models of social welfare policy-making.
2. Examine the Generic Model and its relevance to participatory welfare policy formulation.
3. Define evaluation and discuss its objectives in the context of social welfare policies.
4. Describe the various types and methods of policy evaluation used in India.
5. Assess the role of agencies such as NITI Aayog, NSSO, and the Comptroller and Auditor General in evaluating social welfare programmes.

Assignments

1. Define social welfare and explain its scope and importance in the Indian context.
2. Discuss the major target groups covered under India's social welfare policies.
3. Explain the objectives and significance of the National Policy on Older Persons (1999).
4. Analyse the key features and outcomes of the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006).
5. Describe the main objectives of the National Health Policy (2017) and its approach to universal healthcare.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 2
Programmes for Disadvantaged Sections

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the concept and characteristics of disadvantaged sections in India
- identify the major welfare programmes for women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities
- examine the objectives and implementation mechanisms of flagship social welfare schemes
- analyse how welfare programmes promote inclusion, empowerment, and social justice
- evaluate the challenges and opportunities in the effective delivery of welfare programmes for disadvantaged groups

Background

India's social welfare system is founded on the vision of justice, equality, and human dignity enshrined in the Constitution. Despite substantial progress in economic growth and modernisation, large sections of the population remain excluded from the benefits of development due to poverty, discrimination, and social barriers. The concept of "disadvantaged sections" encompasses individuals and groups who face structural obstacles to accessing resources and opportunities—such as women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and historically marginalised communities like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes.

To address these inequalities, India has adopted a targeted welfare approach, combining economic support, legal protection, and empowerment initiatives. Over the decades, numerous programmes have been launched by the central government to improve health, education, employment, safety, and participation for disadvantaged groups. These programmes reflect a transition from mere relief-based welfare to a rights-based and developmental approach. Understanding these initiatives helps in appreciating how public administration functions as an instrument of social change and inclusive governance.

Keywords

Disadvantaged Sections, Empowerment, Inclusion, Social Justice, Targeted Programmes

Discussion

2.2.1 Disadvantaged sections

One of the key responsibilities of a welfare state is to ensure that no citizen is left behind in the process of national development. India, as a democratic and welfare-oriented nation, has committed itself to the ideals of social justice, equality of opportunity, and inclusive growth. Despite notable economic progress, large sections of the population continue to face social and economic disadvantages due to poverty, illiteracy, caste and gender discrimination, disability, and other structural inequalities.

To address these concerns, the Government of India has developed a wide range of social welfare programmes targeted at specific groups that require special assistance and protection. These groups include women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and socially and economically backward communities such as the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

▶ Ideal of social justice

The Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution emphasise the duty of the State to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order based on justice—social, economic, and political. Guided by this constitutional vision, the government has designed numerous welfare schemes and policies that aim to empower disadvantaged groups, reduce inequalities, and improve living standards.

Concept of Disadvantaged Sections

The term "disadvantaged sections" refers to individuals or groups in society who experience social, economic, or physical barriers that limit their access to resources, opportunities, and participation in mainstream development processes. These disadvantages may arise from poverty, gender inequality, disability, caste-based exclusion, age-related dependency, or minority status.

In a diverse country like India, disadvantage is often multi-dimensional—it may involve limited education, poor health, inadequate income, social stigma, or discrimination. Such disadvantages reinforce each other and create cycles of exclusion that require special policy attention and intervention.

Key Characteristics of Disadvantaged Groups

1. **Economic Vulnerability :** Low income, lack of assets, or unemployment make these groups economically insecure.

2. **Limited Access to Education and Health :** Many face barriers to quality education, healthcare, and nutrition.

3. **Social Exclusion and Discrimination :** Gender, caste, disability, or ethnicity often lead to social marginalisation.

4. **Political Under-representation :** Disadvantaged groups may lack voice or representation in decision-making bodies.

5. **Dependence and Insecurity :** The elderly, children, and persons with disabilities often depend on others for support and protection.

Categories of Disadvantaged Sections in India

1. **Women :** Though forming nearly half of India's population, women have historically faced discrimination in education, employment, and property rights. Empowerment programmes aim to ensure gender equality and protection.

2. **Children :** Children are one of the most vulnerable groups, requiring care, protection, and opportunities for growth. Welfare programmes focus on nutrition, education, health, and child protection.

3. **The Elderly :** With rising life expectancy, the number of senior citizens in India is increasing. Many face loneliness, poor health, and financial insecurity, requiring special social support.

4. **Persons with Disabilities :** People with physical or mental impairments often encounter barriers to accessibility, education, and employment. Inclusive policies are essential to ensure their participation and dignity.

5. **Socially and Economically Backward Communities (SCs, STs, OBCs):** Historically disadvantaged due to caste and social exclusion, these groups continue to face economic and educational inequalities. Affirmative action and targeted programmes seek to bridge these gaps.

Need for Targeted Programmes

While general development policies benefit society as a whole, they may not adequately reach marginalised sections. Hence, targeted social welfare programmes are necessary to:

- Correct historical injustices and remove structural inequalities.
- Ensure equitable access to education, health, employment, and housing.
- Promote empowerment through skill development, financial inclusion, and participation.
- Provide social security to vulnerable groups such as the elderly and disabled.
- Uphold the constitutional promise of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity.

2.2.1.2 Programmes for Women

The empowerment of women is a central concern of India's social welfare policy framework. Although the Constitution guarantees equality, women continue to face multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion in social, economic, and political spheres. Recognising this, the Government of India, through the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), has implemented several schemes aimed at improving women's safety, education, health, and participation in development. Some of the most important programmes are discussed below.

2.2.1.2.1 Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme (2015)

Launched in 2015, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child

Development, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the Ministry of Education. It seeks to address the declining child sex ratio and promote the value of the girl child in Indian society. The scheme focuses on three key objectives: preventing gender-biased sex-selective elimination, ensuring the survival and protection of the girl child, and promoting her education and participation in public life. Through multi-sectoral interventions, the programme combines advocacy, awareness campaigns, and community participation with improvements in health and education systems. District-level task forces monitor birth registration and sex ratios, while awareness drives encourage families to celebrate and invest in their daughters. The scheme has played an important role in drawing attention to gender discrimination and promoting girls' education as a national priority.

▶ Address the declining child sex ratio

2.2.1.2.2 One Stop Centre (OSC) Scheme (2015)

The One Stop Centre (OSC) Scheme, also known as Sakhi, was introduced in 2015 to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence in private or public spaces. Each OSC acts as a single-window facility where women can access immediate help such as police assistance, legal counselling, medical aid, and temporary shelter. The centres assist in filing First Information Reports (FIRs) and provide psycho-social support through trained counsellors. They also coordinate with hospitals, legal service authorities, and the police to ensure timely intervention and protection. Linked to the 24-hour Women Helpline (181), these centres guarantee confidentiality and safety for survivors of violence. The OSC scheme has become a vital part of India's gender justice framework, ensuring that women in distress receive compassionate and coordinated support under one roof.

▶ Single-window facility

2.2.1.2.3 UJJAWALA Scheme (Revised 2016)

The UJJAWALA Scheme, implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, addresses one of the most serious human rights concerns: the trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation. Revised in 2016, the scheme follows a comprehensive approach with five components: Prevention, Rescue, Rehabilitation, Reintegration, and Repatriation. It seeks to prevent trafficking through community vigilance and awareness campaigns, facilitate the rescue of victims from exploitation, and provide immediate and long-term rehabilitation. Victims are offered safe shelter,

▶ Prevent trafficking through community vigilance food, clothing, medical treatment, legal aid, counselling, and vocational training to rebuild their lives with dignity. The scheme operates in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based institutions. UJJAWALA has been instrumental in restoring hope and confidence among victims and symbolises the government's commitment to combating gender-based violence and exploitation.

2.2.1.2.4 Working Women Hostel Scheme (1972–73)

► Safe and affordable accommodation

The Working Women Hostel Scheme, one of the earliest initiatives for women's welfare, was launched in 1972–73 to provide safe and affordable accommodation to working women who live away from their families. The objective of the scheme is to promote women's employment by removing barriers related to safety and housing. Hostels are established in urban, semi-urban, and even rural areas where women are engaged in organised or self-employment. The scheme also provides childcare facilities for the children of working women—up to 18 years of age for girls and 5 years for boys. Financial assistance is extended to institutions for constructing or expanding hostel buildings, as well as for maintenance. By ensuring a secure living environment, the scheme encourages women's mobility and participation in the workforce, thereby contributing to gender equality and economic empowerment.

2.2.1.2.5 Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) Scheme (2017)

► Access to essential services

The Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK) scheme was launched in 2017 to empower rural women through community participation and awareness-building. It aims to ensure that women have access to essential services such as healthcare, education, skill development, employment, and legal aid. The scheme functions through district and block-level centres that act as one-stop convergence points for all government initiatives related to women's welfare. Local resource persons, student volunteers, and community leaders collaborate to mobilise women and link them to existing schemes. The MSK model emphasises capacity building and collective action through Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and community-based organisations. By fostering an enabling environment at the grassroots level, Mahila Shakti Kendras help women become self-reliant and aware of their rights, promoting inclusive and participatory development.

2.2.1.2.6 NIRBHAYA Fund and Related Initiatives (2012)

Established in 2012 following the tragic Nirbhaya case in Delhi, the NIRBHAYA Fund represents the government's commitment to ensuring the safety and security of women across the country. The fund supports a range of projects implemented by various ministries and state governments aimed at preventing and responding to violence against women. It finances initiatives such as the installation of CCTV cameras, emergency call systems, women's safety apps, and panic buttons in public transport. It also supports the One Stop Centre Scheme, the Women Helpline (181), and the Mahila Police Volunteers Programme, creating an integrated safety network. All projects under the fund ensure strict confidentiality of victims' identities and promote real-time emergency responses. The NIRBHAYA initiatives have significantly strengthened India's institutional framework for women's safety while fostering greater public awareness about gender-based violence.

- Real-time emergency responses

The various programmes for women discussed above reflect the government's multi-pronged approach towards women's empowerment—addressing education, employment, safety, health, and social status. Together, these schemes seek not only to protect women from exploitation and violence but also to enable them to realise their full potential as equal participants in the development process. By integrating legal, economic, and social measures, India continues to move towards the constitutional goal of ensuring justice and equality for all women.

2.2.1.3 Programmes for Children

Children represent the most valuable human resource of any nation. Their health, education, and protection are crucial for sustainable development and social progress. In India, however, a large number of children continue to face serious challenges such as malnutrition, ill health, child labour, school dropout, and various forms of exploitation. Recognising children as a priority group, the Government of India has launched several welfare programmes to ensure their survival, growth, protection, and participation in development.

The Constitution of India guarantees fundamental rights to children, including the right to equality, education, and protection from exploitation (Articles 14, 21A, 23, and 24). Further, the Directive Principles of State Policy and the National Policy for Children (2013) direct the State to promote the well-being of children through comprehensive social welfare measures. In keeping with these commitments, a range of programmes has been implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Education, focusing on nutrition, early childhood care, education, and protection.

Some of the most significant child welfare schemes are discussed below.

2.2.1.3.1 Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

▶ Comprehensive programmes for early childhood development

Launched in 1975, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme is one of the world's largest and most comprehensive programmes for early childhood development. It provides a package of six essential services—supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, immunisation, referral services, pre-school non-formal education, and nutrition and health education—through a vast network of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). The scheme targets children under six years of age, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. By integrating health, nutrition, and early learning, ICDS aims to lay the foundation for a child's holistic development and reduce infant and maternal mortality rates. In recent years, ICDS has been restructured under Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 to strengthen service delivery, digital monitoring, and inter-departmental convergence.

2.2.1.3.2 POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission)

▶ Real-time monitoring

The POSHAN Abhiyaan, launched on 8 March 2018, is a flagship programme of the Government of India aimed at improving nutritional outcomes for children (0–6 years), adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. The mission adopts a multi-sectoral convergence approach, linking departments of health, women and child development, sanitation, and education. Its primary objective is to reduce stunting, underweight, low birth weight, and anaemia among children and women. The Abhiyaan uses real-time monitoring through digital tools such as the POSHAN Tracker and promotes community mobilisation through the Jan Andolan movement. By focusing on behavioural change, capacity building, and local innovation, POSHAN Abhiyaan represents a coordinated national effort to combat malnutrition and promote nutritional awareness among families.

2.2.1.3.3 Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN)

Formerly known as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, the PM POSHAN programme was restructured in 2021 to expand its coverage from pre-primary to upper primary classes in government and government-aided schools. Implemented by the Ministry of Education, it provides nutritious, cooked meals to children with the objectives of improving their nutritional status, increasing school enrolment and attendance, and reducing classroom hunger. Over 11 crore children benefit from the programme across more than 11 lakh schools nationwide. The scheme also incorporates initiatives such as the involvement of local women's self-help groups in meal preparation and the inclusion of millets and locally available ingredients to enhance nutritional diversity. By linking nutrition with education, PM POSHAN plays a crucial role in promoting child health and learning outcomes, especially among disadvantaged communities.

▶ Improving the nutritional status

2.2.1.3.4 Child Protection Services (CPS) under ICPS

The Child Protection Services (CPS) scheme, implemented under the broader Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), seeks to protect children from abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence. The scheme aims to create a safe and protective environment for all children, particularly those in difficult circumstances such as orphans, street children, victims of trafficking, and children in conflict with the law. CPS provides financial and institutional support for childcare institutions, foster care, adoption, counselling, and rehabilitation services. It also facilitates coordination among various stakeholders, including child welfare committees, juvenile justice boards, and non-governmental organisations. The scheme plays an indispensable role in ensuring that every child enjoys the right to survival, development, and protection, as guaranteed under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

▶ Safe and protective environment for all children

2.2.1.3.5 Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 (2021)

In 2021, the government launched Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0, an integrated nutrition and child development programme that merges the Supplementary Nutrition Programme and POSHAN Abhiyaan. The scheme aims to strengthen and modernise Anganwadi Centres by providing better infrastructure, smart learning tools, and upgraded services for children and women. Its focus is on delivering an integrated package of early childhood care, health, and nutrition using technology-based monitoring and outcome-based evaluation. The programme also aims to reduce anaemia and promote dietary diversity through the inclusion of locally available nutritious foods. This initiative marks a transition towards digitally enabled and outcome-focused welfare delivery, improving efficiency and accountability at all levels.

▶ Integrated package of early childhood care

The various child welfare programmes discussed above demonstrate India's comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to promoting child survival, development, protection, and participation. Together, schemes such as ICDS, POSHAN Abhiyaan, and PM POSHAN address critical issues of malnutrition, education, and health, while CPS ensures safety and supportive care. The introduction of Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0 further integrates modern technology with service delivery, improving outreach and accountability.

These initiatives reflect the government's commitment to creating a child-friendly and inclusive welfare system, in line with the National Policy for Children (2013) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Continued focus on effective implementation, community participation, and convergence among ministries will be key to ensuring that every child in India grows up healthy, educated, and protected.

2.2.1.4 Programmes for the Elderly

With improvements in healthcare and living conditions, India's elderly population is steadily increasing. According to Census and NITI Aayog projections, India's population aged 60 years and above is expected to rise from about 10% in 2021 to nearly 19% by 2050. This demographic shift presents significant challenges in terms of healthcare, income security, social inclusion, and emotional well-being. Many older persons, particularly those in rural areas or without family support, face neglect, poverty, and health-related problems.

Recognising these issues, the Government of India has introduced a series of policies and welfare programmes to promote the dignity, independence, and security of senior citizens. These initiatives aim to provide social protection, healthcare, and community support to help older persons lead productive and dignified lives. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) serves as the nodal agency for elderly welfare in India, working through schemes that ensure financial assistance, healthcare services, and institutional support.

Some of the most significant programmes for the elderly are discussed below.

2.2.1.4.1 National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) – 2010

The National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE) was launched in 2010 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to address the special healthcare needs of India's ageing population. The programme provides accessible, affordable, and specialised healthcare services for the elderly at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Its main objectives are to prevent and manage chronic diseases, offer rehabilitative care, and promote healthy ageing.

▶ Special healthcare needs of India's ageing population

Under this scheme, Geriatric Units have been established at district hospitals, community health centres, and primary health centres to provide dedicated outpatient and inpatient services. The programme also includes Regional Geriatric Centres (RGCs) in select medical colleges to provide training, research, and advanced care. Through initiatives like physiotherapy units, home-based care, and awareness campaigns, NPHCE ensures that older persons receive integrated health services close to their communities. The scheme represents an important step toward institutionalising geriatric healthcare in India's public health system.

2.2.1.4.2 Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) – 2007

The Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), launched in 2007 as part of the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), provides social security to elderly citizens belonging to below poverty line (BPL) households. The scheme offers a monthly pension to individuals aged 60 years and above, with a higher amount for those over 80 years. The central government contributes the base amount, while states may add additional funds from their own resources.

▶ Disbursed directly

The pension is disbursed directly into beneficiaries' bank or post office accounts, ensuring transparency and timely payments. For many elderly persons with no regular source of income, the pension serves as a critical lifeline that helps meet daily needs such as food, medicine, and shelter. The scheme's reach has expanded significantly over time, covering millions of beneficiaries across the country. IGNOAPS reflects the government's commitment to ensuring income security and dignity for senior citizens in their later years.

2.2.1.4.3 National Policy for Older Persons (NPOP) – 1999

The National Policy for Older Persons (NPOP) was adopted in 1999 to reaffirm the government's commitment to ensuring the well-being of older persons through a holistic approach. The policy recognises senior citizens as valuable members of society who deserve opportunities for active participation and self-fulfilment. It outlines strategies for ensuring financial and food security, healthcare, shelter, and protection against abuse and exploitation.

- Ensuring the well-being of older persons through a holistic approach

The NPOP also encourages the creation of older persons' associations, community care centres, and research on ageing. It emphasises partnerships among government, voluntary organisations, and families to support the elderly. Following this policy, several institutional mechanisms were established, including the National Council for Older Persons (NCOP), which advises the government on ageing-related issues. The policy has since been supplemented by the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, which makes it a legal obligation for children to provide for their ageing parents. Together, these frameworks ensure a rights-based and participatory approach to elderly welfare.

2.2.1.4.4 Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC)

The Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC), implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, provides financial assistance to non-governmental organisations for running old-age homes, day-care centres, and mobile medical units. These institutions offer shelter, food, recreation, and healthcare to destitute or neglected senior citizens. The programme also supports awareness generation, training for caregivers, and outreach services in rural areas.

- Financial assistance to non-governmental organisations

By fostering partnerships between the government and civil society, IPSrC ensures that elderly persons receive community-based care in a dignified environment. The scheme plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of those who lack family support, especially widows, the poor, and the disabled elderly. In recent years, the programme has been revised to enhance transparency through digital monitoring and outcome evaluation, ensuring better delivery of benefits at the grassroots level.

2.2.1.4.5 Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) – 2021

Launched in 2021, the Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) is an umbrella scheme that consolidates various existing programmes for senior citizens under a single framework. It aims to ensure the social, physical, and financial well-being of the elderly through multiple sub-schemes. The components include Elderline (Toll-Free Helpline 14567) for senior citizens in distress, the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana providing assistive devices to elderly persons from BPL families, and SILVER ID for digital identification and access to services.

▶ Umbrella scheme

AVYAY adopts a comprehensive approach that combines healthcare, social inclusion, and technological empowerment. The Elderline service, operational in all states and union territories, provides emotional support, legal guidance, and immediate assistance. By integrating traditional welfare measures with modern technology, AVYAY represents a forward-looking model of elderly care aligned with India's goal of inclusive development and digital governance.

The programmes and policies for the elderly discussed above reflect India's commitment to building a society that values and supports its senior citizens. Through initiatives like NPHCE and AVYAY, the government addresses health and technological needs, while IGNOAPS ensures income security and IPSrC provides community-based care. The National Policy for Older Persons (NPOP) continues to guide these efforts within a rights-based framework emphasising dignity, self-reliance, and active ageing.

As India's elderly population grows rapidly, the importance of effective policy implementation, inter-sectoral coordination, and public awareness becomes increasingly critical. A sustained focus on healthcare, financial security, and social participation will ensure that older persons not only live longer but also lead healthy, meaningful, and respected lives—fulfilling the vision of a compassionate and inclusive welfare state.

2.2.1.5 Programmes for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)

Persons with disabilities constitute one of the most marginalised groups in society. They often face multiple barriers in accessing education, employment, healthcare, and social participation. According to the 2011 Census, over 2.68 crore persons in India live with some form of disability, accounting for around 2.2% of the population. Although the number is expected to be higher today, these figures highlight the continuing need for focused policies and interventions to ensure inclusion, accessibility, and equality of opportunity for all.

In India, the welfare of persons with disabilities (PwDs) is guided by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, which replaced the earlier Persons with Disabilities Act of 1995. The RPwD Act expanded the recognised categories of disability from seven to twenty-one and emphasised empowerment through education, skill development, and social security. The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) is the nodal agency responsible for implementing disability-related policies and programmes.

▶ Multiple barriers

The following are some of the major schemes and initiatives launched by the government to promote the welfare of persons with disabilities in India.

2.2.1.5.1 Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) – 2015

Launched in December 2015, the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) is a flagship initiative of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD). The campaign seeks to create a barrier-free environment that enables persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life. It focuses on three major areas of accessibility: the built environment, transportation, and information & communication technology (ICT).

▶ Create a barrier-free environment

Under this initiative, public buildings, government offices, and transportation systems are being retrofitted with ramps, lifts, tactile pathways, accessible toilets, and signage in Braille and audio formats. The campaign also promotes accessibility standards in digital spaces, including government websites and mobile applications. Training and awareness programmes are conducted for architects, engineers, and public officials to ensure universal design principles are followed in new constructions.

The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan has become a symbol of India's commitment to building an inclusive society by making public infrastructure, transport, and information systems accessible to all citizens, including those with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities.

2.2.1.5.2 Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)

The Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS) is a long-standing initiative of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, designed to promote voluntary action and NGO participation in the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. The scheme provides financial assistance to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for running various programmes, such as special schools, vocational training centres, pre-school and early intervention units, community-based rehabilitation projects, and production units for persons with disabilities.

▶ Financial assistance to non-governmental organisations

The aim of DDRS is to enable persons with disabilities to become self-reliant and integrate into mainstream society through education, employment, and social participation. It also supports awareness generation activities, capacity-building workshops, and advocacy efforts for disability rights. By partnering with NGOs that work closely with communities, DDRS ensures that services reach even the most remote areas of the country. The scheme reflects a participatory model of welfare administration, where the government and civil society collaborate to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

2.2.1.5.3 National Fellowship for Persons with Disabilities (NFPwD)

The National Fellowship for Persons with Disabilities (NFPwD) aims to promote higher education and research opportunities among students with disabilities. Implemented by the University Grants Commission (UGC) on behalf of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, this fellowship provides financial assistance to disabled students pursuing MPhil and PhD programmes in universities and academic institutions across India.

▶ Education and research opportunities

Each year, a fixed number of fellowships are awarded on a merit-cum-reservation basis. The fellowship covers monthly stipends, contingency grants, and allowances for readers or escorts. It encourages academic excellence among persons with disabilities and helps create a pool of trained professionals who can contribute to policymaking, advocacy, and social transformation. Through NFPwD, the government reaffirms its belief that education is a powerful tool for empowerment and inclusion.

2.2.1.5.4 Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (Assistive Devices Scheme) – 2017

Although originally launched under the umbrella of senior citizens' welfare, the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) also extends its benefits to poor elderly and disabled persons. Under this scheme, assistive devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, walking sticks, spectacles, and artificial limbs are distributed free of cost to eligible beneficiaries from Below Poverty Line (BPL) families.

▶ Benefits to poor elderly and disabled persons

The Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), a public sector enterprise under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, serves as the implementing agency. Camps are organised across the country to identify beneficiaries, conduct medical assessments, and distribute aids. By providing physical assistance tools, the scheme enhances mobility, independence, and self-confidence among persons with disabilities, helping them lead dignified and active lives.

2.2.1.5.5 Scholarship Schemes for Students with Disabilities

To promote inclusive education and prevent dropouts, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities also implements several scholarship programmes at different levels of schooling and higher education. These include:

- Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Students with Disabilities
- Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for Students with Disabilities
- Top Class Education Scheme for Students with Disabilities

These scholarships provide financial assistance for tuition fees, books, assistive devices, hostel charges, and other educational expenses. They ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to quality education and the opportunity to pursue higher studies alongside their peers.

The programmes discussed above illustrate India's transition from a welfare-based to a rights-based approach in addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. Through initiatives like the Accessible India Campaign, DDRS, and NFPwD, the government seeks to empower persons with disabilities (PwDs) by enhancing accessibility, education, and economic independence. Complementary schemes such as the Rashtriya

Vayoshri Yojana and various scholarship programmes further strengthen their social inclusion.

▶ Welfare-based to a rights-based approach

Collectively, these efforts reflect India's alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its commitment to ensuring equal participation for all citizens. Continued emphasis on accessibility standards, technology use, and attitudinal change will be vital to building a truly inclusive and barrier-free society for persons with disabilities.

2.2.1.6 Programmes for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes

Caste- and tribe-based inequalities have been among the deepest forms of social exclusion in India. Although the Constitution abolished untouchability and guaranteed equality before the law, historical discrimination and unequal access to education, employment, and property have left many members of the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) socially and economically disadvantaged.

To correct these historical injustices, the framers of the Constitution incorporated several protective and developmental provisions under Articles 15, 16, 17, 46, and 335, ensuring affirmative action and special attention to weaker sections. Over the years, the Government of India has launched numerous targeted schemes aimed at improving their educational, economic, and social conditions. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs serve as the nodal ministries for implementing these programmes.

▶ Targeted schemes

The following are some of the most significant schemes designed to promote equality and inclusion among SC, ST, and OBC communities.

2.2.1.6.1 Stand-Up India Scheme – 2016

Launched in April 2016, the Stand-Up India Scheme seeks to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment among women, SCs, and STs. The scheme enables each bank branch in the country to provide loans between ₹10 lakh and ₹1 crore to at least one Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe borrower and one woman entrepreneur for setting up a new enterprise. The loans are provided for greenfield projects in the manufacturing, services, or trading sectors.

In addition to financial support, the scheme facilitates hand-holding services such as pre-loan counselling, project planning, and skill training through Stand-Up Connect Centres. By linking credit with entrepreneurship development, Stand-Up India encourages economic self-reliance and helps diversify livelihoods beyond traditional occupations. It reflects a shift in social welfare policy—from welfare dependence to productive empowerment.

▶ Entrepreneurship and self-employment

2.2.1.6.2 Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY) – 2014

The Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY) was launched in 2014 by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs as a holistic development programme for tribal populations. Its main objective is to ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach tribal communities in a coordinated and integrated manner. The scheme adopts a "convergence approach", pooling resources from multiple ministries for education, health, livelihood, housing, irrigation, and skill development in tribal areas.

VKY focuses on improving infrastructure in Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) and aims to bridge the gap between tribal and non-tribal regions in human development indicators. The programme also supports sustainable livelihood initiatives such as Minor Forest Produce (MFP) value addition, women's self-help groups, and community-based enterprises. By addressing both the economic and cultural dimensions of tribal development, VKY promotes inclusive growth while preserving the unique heritage and identity of India's tribal communities.

▶ Holistic development programme for tribal populations

2.2.1.6.3 Post-Matric Scholarship Schemes for SC, ST, and OBC Students

Education has been recognised as the most effective instrument for social mobility. The Post-Matric Scholarship Schemes, implemented separately for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, aim to remove financial barriers to higher education. These schemes provide financial assistance to students studying beyond Class 10 in recognised institutions, covering tuition fees, maintenance allowances, and study materials.

The central government shares the cost of these scholarships with state governments. For many poor students, especially those from rural and remote areas, these scholarships make the difference between continuing or dropping out of higher education. Over time, the schemes have significantly improved the enrolment of SC/ST/OBC students in universities and

▶ To remove financial barriers to higher education technical institutions, contributing to the larger goal of educational equity and empowerment.

2.2.1.6.4 Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY) – 2009

The Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY) was launched in 2009 to achieve integrated development of villages with high Scheduled Caste populations. The objective of the scheme is to ensure that these villages have adequate physical and social infrastructure and access to all basic services such as education, health, sanitation, drinking water, and roads. Each selected village is developed into an "Adarsh Gram" or model village through the convergence of central and state government schemes.

▶ Integrated development of villages

The programme promotes community participation and decentralised planning through local panchayats. It focuses not only on infrastructure but also on social empowerment, reduction of discrimination, and improvement of living standards. PMAGY demonstrates how the idea of inclusive rural development can be operationalised by prioritising the needs of historically marginalised communities.

2.2.1.6.5 National Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporations

To promote economic empowerment through self-employment and income-generation activities, the government has established several financial institutions such as the National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC), the National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC), and the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC).

▶ Self-employment and income generation

These corporations provide concessional loans, skill development training, and entrepreneurship support to eligible beneficiaries. They also collaborate with state-level corporations and banks to reach individuals who otherwise lack access to credit. By combining microfinance with training and mentoring, these corporations enable members of SC, ST, and OBC communities to participate more fully in India's growing economy.

2.2.1.6.6 Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) – 1997 (Ongoing Expansion)

▶ Fully residential schools

Although primarily an education initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) have become a cornerstone of tribal welfare policy. These fully residential schools provide quality education to tribal children from Classes VI to XII, with a focus on academic excellence, culture, and sports. The government is now expanding EMRS across all blocks with significant ST populations, ensuring that tribal students have access to facilities comparable to the best schools in the country. EMRS represents the vision of educational empowerment and equal opportunity for tribal youth.

The programmes discussed above demonstrate the government's sustained efforts to promote social justice and inclusive development among historically disadvantaged communities. Schemes like Stand-Up India and the Finance and Development Corporations promote entrepreneurship and self-reliance; Post-Matric Scholarships and EMRS strengthen educational opportunities; and Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana and PMAGY focus on area-based and integrated development.

Together, these initiatives aim to break the cycle of poverty, discrimination, and exclusion faced by SC, ST, and OBC communities. By combining affirmative action, targeted investment, and community participation, India continues to move toward the constitutional goal of building an equitable and inclusive welfare state that ensures dignity, opportunity, and empowerment for all citizens.

Summarized Overview

This unit provides an in-depth understanding of welfare programmes designed for India's disadvantaged sections. It begins by defining the concept of disadvantaged groups and identifying key categories such as women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities like SCs, STs, and OBCs. Each group faces unique challenges—ranging from economic vulnerability and limited access to education and health, to social exclusion and political under-representation.

The unit outlines major programmes addressing these issues. For women, initiatives such as Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, One Stop Centre Scheme, UJJAWALA, Mahila Shakti Kendra, and the NIRBHAYA Fund promote protection, education, and empowerment. Child welfare is strengthened through ICDS, POSHAN Abhiyaan, PM POSHAN, Child Protection Services, and Saksham Anganwadi programmes, ensuring nutrition, safety, and education. For the elderly, policies like NPHCE, IGNOAPS, NPOP, IPSrC, and AVYAY provide health, social security, and dignity. Persons with disabilities benefit from the Accessible India Campaign, DDRS, NFPwD, and scholarship schemes promoting inclusion and accessibility.

The unit also discusses initiatives for SCs, STs, and OBCs such as Stand-Up India, Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana, Post-Matric Scholarships, PM Adarsh Gram Yojana, and Eklavya Model Residential Schools, aimed at correcting historical injustices and promoting social equity. Collectively, these programmes demonstrate India's comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach to inclusive development and welfare governance.

Self-Assessment

1. Define the term "disadvantaged sections" and explain their main characteristics in the Indian context.
2. Discuss the constitutional basis for welfare programmes aimed at disadvantaged groups in India.
3. Explain the objectives and key features of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and One Stop Centre schemes.
4. Describe the components and impact of the UJJAWALA and Mahila Shakti Kendra schemes.
5. Analyse the role of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and POSHAN Abhiyaan in child welfare.

Assignments

1. Examine the significance of the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS) and Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY) in elderly welfare.
2. Evaluate the contribution of the Accessible India Campaign and DDRS in empowering persons with disabilities.

3. Discuss the objectives and outcomes of the Stand-Up India and Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana schemes.
4. Assess the importance of educational and financial schemes such as Post-Matric Scholarships and Eklavya Model Residential Schools for SC, ST, and OBC students.
5. Critically examine the challenges in implementing welfare programmes for disadvantaged sections and suggest measures for improvement.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 3

Implementation and Management of Social Welfare Programmes

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the major steps involved in implementing social welfare programmes
- analyse the importance of monitoring and evaluation in welfare administration
- examine key institutional and managerial mechanisms for programme delivery
- evaluate successful welfare initiatives through case studies such as PM POSHAN and MGNREGA
- assess challenges and best practices in ensuring accountability and effectiveness in welfare implementation

Background

Implementation is the bridge between policy intention and social transformation. A well-designed social welfare policy achieves its purpose only when it is effectively implemented and managed. In India, with its vast population and socio-economic diversity, ensuring that benefits reach the intended groups—women, children, the elderly, the poor, and marginalised communities—requires meticulous planning, coordination, and accountability.

Social welfare implementation involves a sequence of steps: setting clear goals, mobilising resources, designing organisational structures, training personnel, identifying beneficiaries, and delivering services efficiently. Monitoring and evaluation form the backbone of this process, ensuring that programmes remain transparent, cost-effective, and responsive to people's needs.

Case studies such as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (PM POSHAN) and MGNREGA illustrate how large-scale welfare programmes can bring transformative change when supported by robust institutions and community participation. These examples demonstrate that effective implementation and management, grounded in transparency and inclusion, are vital to realising India's vision of a just and equitable welfare state.

Keywords

Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Social Audits

Discussion

2.3.1 Steps in programme implementation

Formulating a social welfare policy is only the first step toward achieving social justice — the real challenge lies in implementation. Implementation refers to the process of translating policies and plans into action through organised efforts, administrative structures, and community participation.

In the context of social welfare, effective implementation ensures that schemes and benefits actually reach the intended beneficiaries, such as women, children, the elderly, and marginalised communities. It involves coordinated action among multiple stakeholders — government ministries, local bodies, voluntary organisations, and citizens.

The success of a social welfare programme depends not only on good planning but also on efficient management, monitoring, and feedback throughout its life cycle. The following are the major steps involved in implementing a social welfare programme.

Step 1: Policy Formulation and Goal Setting

Every social welfare programme begins with a policy decision at the governmental level. This stage involves identifying a social problem or need (for example, malnutrition, gender inequality, or unemployment) and setting clear and measurable objectives for addressing it.

▶ Policy decision

Policy formulation is guided by constitutional mandates, political priorities, and resource availability. Once a policy is approved, it provides the legal and administrative framework for designing a specific welfare programme. Goals at this stage should be realistic, time-bound, and people-oriented, ensuring that the programme contributes to inclusive development.

Step 2: Programme Design and Planning

After policy approval, a programme blueprint is developed. This involves translating policy objectives into specific strategies, activities, and operational plans.

Programme design includes:

- Identifying target groups (such as women, children, or persons with disabilities);
- Defining eligibility criteria and benefits;
- Selecting implementing agencies (ministries, departments, NGOs, or local governments);
- Allocating resources (financial, human, and material); and
- Establishing timelines and performance indicators.

Good planning ensures that the programme is feasible, cost-effective, and responsive to local needs. At this stage, inputs from experts, administrators, and community representatives are often incorporated to improve relevance and sustainability

Step 3: Resource Mobilisation

No programme can succeed without adequate resources — financial, human, and technical. Resource mobilisation involves securing funds through central and state budgets, external aid, or public-private partnerships.

Human resources such as social workers, administrators, health personnel, and educators are recruited or trained for specific tasks. Technical resources include infrastructure, technology platforms, and communication tools.

▶ Securing funds

Transparent budgeting, efficient fund flow mechanisms, and timely disbursement of grants are crucial at this stage to prevent delays and leakages. Resource mobilisation must also focus on capacity building, so that implementing agencies are equipped to deliver services effectively.

Step 4: Institutional and Organisational Arrangements

Implementation requires a well-defined institutional structure. Depending on the scale of the programme, multiple agencies may be involved at national, state, district, and local levels.

For example, a centrally sponsored scheme like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) operates through a three-tier structure: the central government provides policy direction and funding, the state government oversees administration, and Anganwadi Centres deliver services at the community level.

▶ Well-defined institutional structure

A clear distribution of roles and responsibilities, proper coordination mechanisms, and inter-departmental cooperation are vital for smooth functioning. The success of implementation largely depends on how effectively different institutions communicate and collaborate.

Step 5: Capacity Building and Training

Even the best-designed programmes can fail if personnel are untrained or unaware of their roles. Hence, training and capacity building form an integral part of implementation.

Frontline workers, social workers, and administrators must be oriented on programme guidelines, beneficiary engagement, gender sensitivity, and community mobilisation techniques. Training programmes also help develop the managerial, technical, and communication skills needed to deliver quality services.

▶ Continuous improvement

Periodic refresher training ensures continuous improvement and adaptation to new challenges, especially in technology-driven schemes such as Digital India or POSHAN Tracker.

Step 6: Beneficiary Identification and Targeting

An essential step in social welfare programme implementation is identifying the right beneficiaries. Targeting ensures that benefits reach those for whom the programme is intended—such as the poor, elderly, women, or marginalised communities.

This step often involves household surveys, socio-economic caste data, or community-based selection methods. Technology platforms like Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and Aadhaar have improved accuracy and reduced duplication in beneficiary lists.

▶ Right beneficiaries.

However, fair targeting requires transparency and community participation to prevent exclusion errors (leaving out eligible persons) and inclusion errors (benefits going to ineligible persons).

Step 7: Service Delivery and Coordination

This stage marks the actual implementation of programme activities—such as delivering services, providing benefits, constructing facilities, or conducting awareness campaigns.

Effective service delivery depends on coordination among government departments, local bodies, NGOs, and private partners. Many social welfare programmes follow a convergent approach, integrating education, health, nutrition, and livelihood services.

▶ Actual implementation

For instance, the POSHAN Abhiyaan combines the efforts of multiple ministries to combat malnutrition. Efficient communication, supervision, and timely reporting are essential to maintain the pace and quality of delivery.

Step 8: Monitoring and Supervision

Monitoring ensures that the programme remains on track and achieves its objectives. It involves regular collection and analysis of information on progress, fund utilisation, and outcomes.

Supervisory officials conduct field visits, inspections, and performance reviews to identify gaps and challenges. The use of digital dashboards, Management Information Systems (MIS), and mobile-based tracking tools (like the Mission Shakti Portal or Poshan Tracker) has strengthened real-time monitoring.

▶ Regular collection and analysis of information

Continuous supervision not only ensures accountability but also promotes adaptive management—allowing timely corrective measures to improve implementation.

Step 9: Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation is the systematic assessment of a programme's effectiveness, efficiency, and impact. It helps policymakers understand whether the programme has achieved its goals and how it can be improved.

Evaluation can be internal (conducted by implementing agencies) or external (by independent bodies such as NITI Aayog, research institutions, or NGOs). Feedback from beneficiaries is equally important, as it brings community perspectives into decision-making and helps redesign future interventions.

- Systematic assessment

Based on evaluation findings, successful practices can be scaled up, while ineffective ones can be modified or discontinued. This ensures that welfare administration remains dynamic and responsive to changing social realities.

Step 10: Reporting and Accountability

The final stage of implementation involves documentation and reporting. Periodic reports on achievements, financial performance, and challenges are submitted to higher authorities for review.

- Documentation and reporting

Accountability mechanisms such as social audits, Right to Information (RTI) disclosures, and citizen feedback platforms are used to maintain transparency. In modern welfare governance, accountability also includes the ethical responsibility of administrators and social workers to act in the best interests of beneficiaries.

2.3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Social Welfare Programmes

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential components of social welfare administration. While implementation ensures that a policy is put into action, monitoring and evaluation determine whether the action is effective, efficient, and aligned with the intended objectives. Together, they provide the feedback mechanism necessary for improving programme performance and accountability.

- Feedback mechanism

In social welfare, where programmes directly affect vulnerable sections of society, M&E plays a critical role in ensuring that resources are used wisely and that the benefits actually reach the targeted groups. Monitoring tracks progress during the course of implementation, while evaluation assesses the outcomes and long-term impact after the programme has been executed. Both are indispensable for achieving the ultimate goal of inclusive and equitable social development.

2.3.2.1 Concept of Monitoring

Monitoring refers to the continuous process of collecting, analysing, and using information to track the progress of a programme toward achieving its goals. It involves regular observation and reporting of activities, outputs, and financial expenditures. Monitoring is an internal management function; it helps programme managers and administrators know whether the implementation is proceeding as planned, identify bottlenecks, and take timely corrective actions. In the context of social welfare programmes, monitoring seeks to answer questions such as:

- Are beneficiaries receiving the intended services and benefits?
- Are funds being utilised properly and on schedule?
- Are field-level functionaries performing their duties effectively?
- What obstacles or delays are affecting implementation?

Effective monitoring ensures transparency, reduces misuse of funds, and builds trust among stakeholders.

2.3.2.2 Objectives of Monitoring

The key objectives of monitoring are:

- Tracking progress against planned targets and timelines.
- Ensuring efficient use of resources — human, financial, and material.
- Detecting implementation problems early to allow for timely corrective measures.
- Maintaining accountability among implementing agencies and officials.
- Providing real-time data for decision-making and course correction.
- Facilitating coordination between central, state, and local authorities.

Monitoring provides the day-to-day operational feedback needed to keep a welfare programme on the right track.

2.3.2.3 Tools and Methods of Monitoring

Monitoring methods vary according to the nature of the programme but typically include the following tools:

1. **Progress Reports:** Regular monthly or quarterly reports from field offices on activities and expenditures.

2. **Management Information Systems (MIS)**: Digital platforms that collect and analyse real-time data on beneficiaries, fund flow, and service delivery (e.g., POSHAN Tracker or Mission Shakti Portal).

3. **Field Visits and Inspections:** On-site verification of facilities, records, and beneficiary satisfaction by officials or independent monitors.

4. **Social Audits:** Community-based reviews where citizens evaluate programme performance, ensuring public transparency.

5. **Dashboards and Data Analytics:** Online dashboards that help track indicators and visualise progress for policymakers.

Monitoring today increasingly employs technology-driven approaches — GPS tagging, mobile-based reporting, and biometric attendance — to enhance accuracy and timeliness.

2.3.2.4 Concept of Evaluation

While monitoring focuses on what is being done, evaluation examines what has been achieved and how effectively it was done. Evaluation is a systematic, objective assessment of a programme's design, implementation, and results. It determines the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of the intervention in relation to its goals. Evaluation is generally periodic or ex-post (after implementation) and is often conducted by independent agencies to ensure objectivity.

2.3.2.5 Objectives of Evaluation

The main purposes of evaluating social welfare programmes are:

1. Assessing achievement of goals and outcomes.

2. Measuring efficiency in resource utilisation.

3. Determining programme impact - both intended and unintended.

4. Identifying strengths and weaknesses in programme design and execution.

5. Ensuring accountability of implementing agencies.

6. Providing insights for future policy formulation and re-design of welfare schemes.

Evaluation is not only a technical exercise but also a tool for democratic governance, ensuring that public spending leads to measurable social improvement.

Monitoring and evaluation are at the heart of effective social welfare administration. They transform welfare programmes from mere policy statements into measurable instruments of social change. Monitoring ensures that programmes stay on course during implementation, while evaluation measures their results and provides lessons for the future. Together, they strengthen transparency, accountability, and learning within the public administration system. For a welfare state like India, institutionalising a strong culture of monitoring and evaluation is essential for ensuring that every rupee spent on welfare leads to real, equitable, and sustainable improvement in the lives of citizens — especially those who need it most.

2.3.3 Case Studies: Mid-Day Meal Scheme and MGNREGA

2.3.3.1 Case Study 1: Mid-Day Meal Scheme (PM POSHAN)

Malnutrition and school dropouts have long been pressing challenges in India. Large numbers of children from economically weaker families attend school without adequate nutrition, which affects their learning ability and attendance. To address these issues, the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, popularly known as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS), was launched in 1995 by the Ministry of Education.

In 2021, the scheme was restructured and renamed the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) programme, expanding its coverage to include pre-primary students in Bal Vatikas and incorporating measures for local food diversity and nutritional monitoring.

Objectives

The scheme aims to:

- Improve the nutritional status of school children.
- Increase enrolment, retention, and attendance in schools.
- Promote social equity by encouraging children from all castes and backgrounds to eat together.
- Provide nutrition-based education and awareness.

Implementation Mechanism

PM POSHAN is a centrally sponsored scheme implemented jointly by the central and state governments. The central government provides financial assistance for food grains, transportation, and management, while states and union territories handle cooking, infrastructure, and staff management.

Food is prepared either by school management committees, self-help groups, or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under hygienic conditions. The programme is monitored by District and State Level Committees, and nutritional quality is periodically tested by accredited laboratories.

In recent years, digital innovations such as the PM POSHAN–MIS Portal and automated monitoring systems using mobile apps have been introduced for real-time data collection on meal distribution and attendance.

Achievements

- Covers over 11 crore children in about 11 lakh schools across India, making it one of the largest school feeding programmes in the world.
- Contributed significantly to improved school attendance, especially among girls and children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Helped reduce classroom hunger and improved nutritional indicators such as body mass index (BMI) and anaemia levels.

- Created local employment opportunities for women through cooking and management activities.
- Strengthened community participation and promoted awareness of hygiene and nutrition.

Challenges

Despite its success, the scheme faces several challenges:

1. Occasional food quality and hygiene issues in some states.
2. Irregular supply chains affecting the timely delivery of food grains.
3. Infrastructure gaps, such as inadequate kitchens and storage facilities.
4. Delayed payments to cooks and helpers.

Monitoring inconsistencies, particularly in remote areas. Addressing these issues requires continuous capacity building, digital monitoring, and local accountability through School Management Committees and social audits.

2.3.3.2 Case Study 2: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), enacted in 2005, represents one of India's most ambitious rights-based welfare initiatives. Rooted in the principle of social justice, it provides every rural household with the legal right to 100 days of wage employment per year for unskilled manual work.

MGNREGA was designed to combat rural poverty and unemployment while creating durable assets such as roads, ponds, and irrigation canals. It is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Development, with active participation from Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the grassroots level.

Objectives

1. Provide livelihood security to rural households through guaranteed wage employment.
2. Strengthen rural infrastructure and natural resource management.

3. Empower women and marginalised groups through equal wage participation.

4. Promote decentralised planning and local governance through PRIs.

5. Reduce seasonal migration from rural to urban areas by creating local employment.

Implementation Mechanism

▶ Demand-driven scheme

MGNREGA operates as a demand-driven scheme — any adult member of a rural household willing to do unskilled manual work can register under the programme. Job cards are issued, and work must be provided within 15 days of application; failing which, an unemployment allowance is paid.

The Gram Panchayat is the principal authority responsible for planning and implementing projects under the scheme. The works typically include water conservation, land development, afforestation, and rural connectivity. The central government funds wages and materials, while states share part of the cost for administration.

Transparency is ensured through social audits, online Management Information Systems (MIS), and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of wages into bank accounts. The use of geo-tagging and Aadhaar-based attendance has further strengthened monitoring and accountability.

Achievements

1. Provides employment to over five crore households annually across rural India.

2. Significantly contributes to poverty reduction and income security in rural areas.

3. Over 50% of total workdays are generated for women, marking a major step towards gender empowerment.

4. Enhanced rural infrastructure, irrigation facilities, and water conservation assets.

5. Strengthened grassroots democracy through Panchayat-level planning and community involvement.

6. Provided a safety net during crises, including droughts and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Challenges

1. Delays in wage payments and fund transfers continue to affect workers.

2. Limited awareness among workers about their legal entitlements.

3. Issues of ghost beneficiaries or improper work measurement in some regions.

4. Inadequate convergence with other development programmes.

5. Administrative burden and uneven performance across states.

Continuous digital innovation, stronger social audits, and improved grievance redress mechanisms are necessary to overcome these challenges and strengthen MGNREGA's impact.

The Mid-Day Meal Scheme and MGNREGA stand out as two of India's most successful and transformative welfare programmes. Both embody the principles of equity, inclusiveness, and participatory governance. While the Mid-Day Meal Scheme focuses on child nutrition and education, MGNREGA ensures livelihood security and rural development.

Together, they illustrate how government initiatives, when supported by strong administrative mechanisms, community participation, and continuous monitoring, can achieve large-scale social transformation. These case studies offer valuable lessons for policymakers, administrators, and students of public administration — demonstrating that effective implementation and management are the true determinants of success in social welfare programmes.

Summarized Overview

This unit focuses on the process of implementing and managing social welfare programmes in India. It explains the ten essential steps of implementation — policy formulation, programme design, resource mobilisation, institutional arrangements, capacity building, beneficiary identification, service delivery, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability. Each step plays a crucial role in ensuring that welfare schemes meet their objectives and reach the intended beneficiaries efficiently.

The unit also elaborates on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as indispensable components of welfare administration. Monitoring provides real-time information for decision-making, while evaluation measures effectiveness and impact. Tools such as Management Information Systems (MIS), field inspections, social audits, and digital dashboards are used to ensure transparency and evidence-based governance.

Two major case studies—PM POSHAN (Mid-Day Meal Scheme) and MGNREGA—illustrate the real-world application of these administrative principles. PM POSHAN addresses child nutrition and education, while MGNREGA guarantees rural employment and infrastructure development. Both highlight the power of decentralised governance, community participation, and technological innovation in welfare delivery.

The unit concludes that successful welfare management depends not just on funding or design but on ethical leadership, effective monitoring, and citizen engagement. These elements ensure that social welfare programmes genuinely uplift the lives of the most vulnerable and advance India's vision for a welfare state.

Self-Assessment

1. Describe the major steps involved in implementing a social welfare programme.
2. Explain the importance of institutional and organisational arrangements in welfare programme management.
3. Discuss the role of capacity building and training in effective welfare administration.
4. Examine the methods and tools used for monitoring social welfare programmes in India.
5. Define evaluation and explain its significance in assessing social welfare programmes.

Assignments

1. Differentiate between ex-ante, concurrent, and ex-post evaluations with examples.
2. Evaluate the objectives and implementation mechanism of the PM POSHAN (Mid-Day Meal Scheme).
3. Analyse the structure, functioning, and impact of MGNREGA as a rights-based welfare programme.
4. Discuss the common challenges faced in the implementation of social welfare schemes in India.
5. Suggest measures to strengthen monitoring, accountability, and community participation in welfare administration.

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BLOCK 3
Issues and Challenges in Social Welfare Administration

UNIT 1 Administrative and Financial Challenges

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the concept and importance of budgeting in social welfare administration
- analyse the principles and mechanisms of financial management in welfare programmes
- examine human resource management practices in social welfare agencies
- identify legal and ethical challenges in social welfare administration
- evaluate strategies for promoting transparency, accountability, and ethical governance

Background

The effectiveness of social welfare administration depends not only on sound policies but also on the strength of its administrative and financial systems. Welfare programmes require adequate financial planning, trained personnel, and adherence to ethical and legal standards to ensure that public funds and services reach the most vulnerable populations. In India, where welfare initiatives operate on a vast scale, administrators must balance limited resources with rising demands, manage complex fund flows, and coordinate among multiple levels of government.

Financial management and human resource management form the twin pillars of administrative efficiency. Budgeting ensures the rational allocation of funds, while HRM ensures that skilled and motivated personnel deliver welfare services with empathy and professionalism. Simultaneously, legal and ethical compliance provides the moral and regulatory foundation of welfare work, safeguarding the rights and dignity of beneficiaries. Understanding these dimensions equips students and practitioners of social welfare administration to face real-world challenges and promote transparent, people-centred governance.

Keywords

Budgeting, Financial Management, Human Resource Management, Accountability , Ethics

Discussion

3.1.1 Budgeting

Effective budgeting and financial management form the backbone of all social welfare programmes. Welfare schemes, no matter how well designed, cannot achieve their objectives without adequate financial planning, efficient fund flow, and proper utilisation of resources.

▶ Financial planning

In the public sector, financial management ensures that limited public funds are used economically, efficiently, and equitably. For social welfare programmes, it also ensures transparency, accountability, and sustainability—qualities that enhance public trust in government institutions.

3.1.1.1 Meaning of Budgeting

▶ Estimated income and expenditure

A budget is a detailed financial statement showing estimated income and expenditure for a particular period, usually one financial year. In simple terms, it is a plan expressed in monetary terms. In the context of social welfare, budgeting refers to the process of allocating financial resources to various welfare schemes and administrative units in accordance with the goals and priorities of government policy. Budgeting not only determines how much money is available for programmes but also guides how that money will be spent, monitored, and accounted for.

Objectives of Budgeting in Social Welfare

1. **Planning :** To estimate the financial requirements of different welfare programmes and plan for the efficient allocation of resources.
2. **Control :** To ensure that expenditure remains within sanctioned limits and is used only for approved purposes.
3. **Accountability :** To maintain transparency in the use of public funds and to hold officials responsible for financial performance.

4. **Coordination :** To align financial resources with policy goals, ensuring that departments and agencies work toward common objectives.
5. **Performance Evaluation :** To measure outcomes against expenditures and assess the cost-effectiveness of programmes.
6. **Prioritisation :** To allocate limited resources to the most critical and impactful social needs.

Thus, budgeting in social welfare is both a financial and managerial process, linking money with policy performance.

3.1.1.2 Types of Budgets in Welfare Administration

Different budget types are used for managing welfare programmes depending on their purpose and scope:

1. **Line-Item Budget :** Lists expenditures under specific heads such as salaries, grants, supplies, and maintenance. It emphasises control but not results.
2. **Performance Budget :** Links financial inputs to physical outputs (e.g., number of houses built, meals served). It focuses on results and accountability.
3. **Programme Budget :** Organises funds by objectives and functions rather than departments — useful for large, multi-sectoral schemes like MGNREGA or ICDS.
4. **Zero-Based Budget (ZBB) :** Requires every department to justify all expenditures from scratch each year, helping eliminate wasteful spending.
5. **Outcome Budget :** Measures the impact of government spending on beneficiaries, reflecting the results achieved rather than money spent.

In recent years, India has shifted from input-based to outcome-oriented budgeting, especially for centrally sponsored welfare schemes.

3.1.1.3 Process of Budgeting in Social Welfare

The budgeting process in social welfare programmes typically involves several steps:

1. **Preparation of Estimates :** Departments and implementing agencies assess financial needs based on planned activities for the coming year.
2. **Scrutiny and Approval :** Estimates are reviewed by the Finance Ministry or State Finance Department for consistency with policy priorities.
3. **Legislative Sanction :** The budget is presented in Parliament or State Assembly for approval and legal authorisation of expenditure.
4. **Implementation :** Once passed, funds are released to ministries, departments, and implementing agencies for programme execution.
5. **Monitoring and Control :** Expenditures are tracked through periodic reports, audits, and financial management systems.
6. **Review and Feedback:** After implementation, performance and spending efficiency are evaluated for the next cycle.

This cyclical process ensures continuous improvement in financial planning and management.

3.1.2 Financial Management in Social Welfare

Financial management refers to the systematic planning, organising, directing, and controlling of financial resources to achieve programme goals. In social welfare administration, it involves:

1. Budget allocation and utilisation at central, state, and local levels.
2. Timely fund release to implementing agencies.
3. Bookkeeping and record maintenance of receipts and expenditures.
4. Internal and external auditing to ensure accountability.
5. Monitoring fund flow and outcomes using technology (e.g., PFMS, DBT portals).
6. Ensuring compliance with government financial rules and regulations.

Efficient financial management ensures that every rupee spent contributes to social impact, not administrative waste.

3.1.2.1 Principles of Financial Management

1. **Transparency :** All financial transactions should be open, documented, and subject to public scrutiny.
2. **Accountability :** Officials must be responsible for the proper use of funds and outcomes achieved.
3. **Efficiency :** Maximum social benefit must be derived from available resources.
4. **Equity :** Funds should be distributed fairly among regions and target groups.
5. **Regularity:** Expenditures must conform to rules, regulations, and approved budget provisions.
6. **Sustainability:** Financial planning should ensure the long-term viability of programmes.

These principles reinforce the ethical dimension of public financial administration.

3.1.2.2 Financial Control Mechanisms

- Promoting accountability and transparency

Financial control in social welfare administration is essential to ensure that public funds are spent lawfully, economically, and strictly for the purposes for which they were allocated. It serves to prevent misuse, corruption, and waste while promoting accountability and transparency in governance. Various institutional and procedural mechanisms are in place to maintain financial discipline at different stages of expenditure.

One important mechanism is pre-audit and post-audit, which involves the verification of financial transactions before and after expenditure. Pre-audit ensures that proposed spending conforms to rules, budget provisions, and financial norms, while post-audit reviews completed transactions to assess legality, accuracy, and propriety. Within ministries and departments, Internal Financial Advisors (IFAs) play a crucial role by scrutinising budget proposals, sanctioning expenditures, and ensuring compliance with financial regulations. They act as an internal check within the executive system.

At the national level, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) functions as the supreme audit authority, conducting independent external audits of government accounts and reporting findings to the legislature. These audit reports are examined by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), a parliamentary body that evaluates whether public money has been spent efficiently and in accordance with legislative intent. In addition to these formal mechanisms, social audits provide community-based oversight, particularly in welfare programmes. Through public participation and verification of records at the grassroots level, social audits enhance transparency and give beneficiaries a voice in monitoring expenditure.

Collectively, these financial control mechanisms strengthen accountability, safeguard public resources, and build public confidence in social welfare administration.

3.1.2.3 Technological Tools in Financial Management

Modern social welfare administration increasingly relies on digital platforms and technology-driven systems to strengthen financial control, improve efficiency, and enhance transparency. These tools allow real-time monitoring of expenditure, reduce delays, minimise leakages, and ensure that funds reach intended beneficiaries. Some of the key technological initiatives in financial management are as follows:

1. **Public Financial Management System (PFMS) :** PFMS is an online platform designed to track the flow of funds under various government schemes from the central level to implementing agencies and beneficiaries. It enables real-time monitoring of disbursements, reconciliation of accounts, and generation of financial reports. By integrating banking systems with government accounts, PFMS enhances transparency and reduces the risk of diversion or misutilisation of funds.
2. **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) :** DBT facilitates the direct transfer of subsidies, pensions, scholarships, and other welfare benefits into the bank accounts of beneficiaries. By eliminating intermediaries, it significantly reduces corruption, duplication, and delays in payment. It also empowers beneficiaries by ensuring timely and secure access to their entitlements.

3. **e-GramSwaraj and Management Information Systems (MIS):** Platforms such as e-GramSwaraj and scheme-specific MIS are widely used in rural development programmes like MGNREGA to record financial transactions, monitor expenditure, and ensure compliance with audit requirements. These systems generate detailed reports on fund utilisation and work progress, thereby supporting transparency and evidence-based decision-making at the local level.
4. **Aadhaar-based Verification:** Aadhaar-based authentication links beneficiaries to unique identification numbers, ensuring accurate targeting of welfare schemes. This system reduces duplication, prevents the creation of fake beneficiaries, and strengthens the integrity of financial transfers. It also facilitates the portability of benefits across regions, especially for migrant populations.

3.1.2.4 Challenges in Financial Management

Despite progress, several challenges persist in managing social welfare finances:

1. Delays in fund release leading to slow implementation.
2. Underutilisation of allocations due to bureaucratic hurdles.
3. Leakages and corruption in multi-tier fund transfers.
4. Lack of financial literacy among local-level administrators.
5. Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of expenditure outcomes.
6. Dependency on external grants in resource-poor states.

Strengthening institutional capacity, simplifying procedures, and promoting financial accountability at all levels are essential to overcoming these barriers.

3.1.3 Human Resource Management in Social Welfare Agencies

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the backbone of social welfare administration. While policies, budgets, and programmes provide the framework for welfare delivery, it is ultimately people—social workers, administrators, field officers, counsellors, volunteers, and support staff—who implement welfare activities and interact directly with beneficiaries. Social welfare agencies deal with sensitive issues such as poverty, disability, child protection, and gender-based violence, which require trained and empathetic personnel. Therefore, HRM in such agencies goes beyond routine staffing; it involves building a motivated, skilled, and ethically committed workforce capable of addressing complex human problems with professionalism and compassion.

▶ People and their management

Human Resource Management in social welfare agencies refers to the systematic process of recruiting, developing, motivating, and retaining personnel who deliver welfare services. It includes all administrative and professional practices that ensure the right people with the right skills are placed in the right roles. Unlike corporate HRM, which focuses primarily on productivity and profit, HRM in welfare agencies emphasises service delivery, social justice, ethical standards, and community engagement.

▶ Right people with the right skills

3.1.3.1 Objectives of HRM in Social Welfare Agencies

1. **Recruitment of Qualified Staff :** Ensuring that trained professionals—social workers, counsellors, educators, and administrative staff—are appointed for welfare tasks.
2. **Capacity Building :** Providing continuous training to improve technical, managerial, and communication skills.
3. **Motivation and Job Satisfaction:** Creating an environment where employees feel valued, supported, and committed to service.
4. **Performance Management :** Monitoring work quality and outcomes to ensure effective delivery of welfare programmes.
5. **Ethical Practice:** Ensuring that professionals adhere to codes of ethics, confidentiality norms, and principles of dignity and respect.
6. **Retention of Skilled Workers:** Minimising turnover by providing career development, recognition, and fair working conditions.

7. **Efficient Utilisation of Human Resources:** Ensuring staff are optimally deployed to achieve programme goals.

3.1.3.2 Functions of Human Resource Management

Human Resource Planning: HRM begins with assessing the current and future manpower needs of the agency. Planners identify staffing gaps, required competencies, and deployment needs based on programme expansion, community demand, and policy changes.

Recruitment and Selection: Social welfare agencies require staff with not only educational qualifications but also emotional intelligence, empathy, and a commitment to social service. Recruitment processes typically include written tests, interviews, field experience assessments, and background checks, especially for child protection and sensitive welfare roles.

Training and Capacity Building: Regular training ensures that staff remain updated on new laws, welfare schemes, counselling techniques, gender sensitivity, digital reporting systems, and community mobilisation methods. Capacity-building programmes include orientation training, refresher courses, workshops on communication, leadership, and conflict management, as well as field training and exposure visits. This is crucial in schemes like ICDS, MGNREGA, POSHAN, and child protection services, where frontline workers interact daily with beneficiaries.

Supervision and Performance Appraisal: Supervision helps maintain standards of service. Supervisors guide workers, monitor field activities, and resolve implementation issues. Performance appraisal evaluates employees based on the quality of service delivery, timeliness and accuracy of reporting, community feedback, adherence to ethical guidelines, and overall contribution to programme outcomes. This promotes accountability and continuous improvement.

Motivation and Employee Welfare: Welfare agency staff often work under stressful conditions with vulnerable populations. HRM must ensure supportive leadership, reasonable workloads, recognition and rewards for good performance, safe working conditions, and the mental health and well-being of staff. Motivated staff are more empathetic, committed, and effective in welfare delivery.

Team Building and Coordination: Social welfare work is highly collaborative. HRM promotes teamwork among government departments, NGOs, community workers, volunteers, and Panchayati Raj Institutions. Effective teamwork increases efficiency, avoids duplication of efforts, and improves service delivery.

Ethical Standards and Professional Conduct: HRM ensures that all workers follow ethical norms such as confidentiality, non-discrimination, respect for beneficiaries, integrity and transparency, and cultural sensitivity. Ethical breaches can seriously harm vulnerable groups, making this function essential.

Challenges in Human Resource Management in Social Welfare

1. Despite its importance, HRM in welfare agencies faces several challenges:
2. Shortage of trained personnel, especially in rural and remote areas
3. High workloads and burnout, particularly among frontline workers
4. Low salaries and limited career growth in many NGOs and government-supported posts
5. Inadequate training facilities and lack of continuous professional development
6. Bureaucratic delays in hiring and promotions
7. High turnover, especially in temporary or contract-based roles
8. Limited use of modern HR technologies such as HRIS (Human Resource Information Systems).

Addressing these challenges requires both administrative reforms and a supportive organisational culture.

Human Resource Management is a crucial pillar of social welfare administration. Social welfare programmes succeed not only because of policy design but also due to the dedication, skills, and professionalism of the people implementing them. HRM ensures that welfare agencies recruit competent staff, provide them with appropriate training, motivate them, and monitor their performance in a fair and transparent manner.

An efficient HRM system not only improves service delivery but also strengthens public trust in welfare institutions, contributing to the larger goal of building a compassionate, professional, and responsive welfare state.

3.1.4 Legal and Ethical Issues in Social Welfare Administration

▶ Operate in sensitive environments

Social welfare agencies operate in sensitive environments where they deal directly with vulnerable populations such as children, women, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities. Because of this, their work is guided not only by administrative procedures but also by legal obligations and ethical principles. Welfare personnel must comply with relevant laws, protect the rights of beneficiaries, maintain confidentiality, and uphold the highest standards of professional conduct.

Legal and ethical issues ensure that welfare services are delivered in a manner that is safe, equitable, and rights-based. Failure to comply with these obligations can harm beneficiaries and undermine public trust in welfare institutions. One of the most important legal frameworks in this context is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015, which regulates the care, protection, and rehabilitation of children in need.

3.1.4.1 Legal Issues in Social Welfare

Legal issues refer to the statutory obligations that social welfare agencies and professionals must follow while delivering services. These include compliance with laws, regulations, standards, and reporting requirements.

3.1.4.1.1 Compliance with the Juvenile Justice Act 2015

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 is a comprehensive law that governs the protection, treatment, and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law and children in need of care and protection.

Legal obligations under the Act include:

1. **Child Welfare Committees (CWCs):** Social welfare agencies must produce any child found in vulnerable circumstances before the CWC within 24 hours. CWCs hold the authority to make decisions regarding care, rehabilitation, foster care, and adoption.

2. **Child Care Institutions (CCIs):** Agencies running shelters, children's homes, observation homes, or special homes must register under the JJ Act and comply with prescribed Minimum Standards of Care related to food, accommodation, safety, education, health, and staff qualifications.
3. **Mandatory Reporting:** Section 32 mandates that any individual or organisation aware of a child in need of care must report the case to the appropriate authority. Failure to report can result in penalties.
4. **Child Protection Policy:** Institutions must adopt a Child Protection Policy to prevent abuse, exploitation, and neglect within their facilities.
5. **Prohibition of Corporal Punishment and Abuse:** The Act strictly prohibits physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in any child care setting. Staff are required to follow humane disciplinary practices.
6. **Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration:** CCIs must prepare Individual Care Plans for each child, focusing on counselling, education, skill development, and family reunification, where possible.
7. **Adoption Procedures:** The JJ Act provides a legal framework for adoption, monitored by the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA). Agencies must follow the prescribed process, documentation, and matching guidelines.

For social welfare officers, teachers, counsellors, and NGO workers, compliance with the JJ Act is not optional—it is a legal duty that ensures children's safety and rights are protected.

3.1.4.1.2 Other Relevant Legal Frameworks

Social welfare agencies must also comply with several other laws, such as:

1. **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005:** Ensures support and protection for survivors of domestic violence.
2. **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:** Mandates child-friendly procedures and strict reporting of child sexual abuse.

3. **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016:** Mandates accessibility, non-discrimination, and equal rights for persons with disabilities.
4. **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:** Ensures that elderly persons receive maintenance and protection from neglect.
5. **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:** Prevents exploitation and violence against Scheduled Castes and Tribes.
6. **Labour Laws:** Including the Minimum Wages Act, Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, and MGNREGA guidelines.

These laws collectively provide the legal foundation for welfare agencies to function ethically and responsibly.

3.1.4.2 Ethical Issues in Social Welfare Administration

Ethical issues arise from the moral obligations that administrators, social workers, and welfare personnel must uphold when engaging with beneficiaries. Ethics guide behaviour even when laws do not explicitly cover every situation.

Principles of Ethics in Social Welfare

1. **Respect for Human Dignity:** Every beneficiary—child, woman, older person, or person with a disability—must be treated with respect and sensitivity.
2. **Confidentiality:** Personal information about beneficiaries must be kept confidential unless disclosure is necessary for protection or mandated by law.
3. **Non-discrimination:** Services must be delivered without bias on the basis of caste, gender, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status.
4. **Informed Consent:** Beneficiaries should be aware of the services offered and must voluntarily agree to participate.
5. **Professional Integrity:** Social workers must avoid conflicts of interest, corruption, and misuse of authority.

6. **Protection from Harm:** Agencies must ensure that their services do not expose beneficiaries to additional risks.
7. **Accountability:** Welfare administrators must be answerable for decisions, resource use, and actions that affect vulnerable populations.

Common Legal and Ethical Challenges

Despite clear guidelines, welfare agencies often face practical challenges such as:

1. Underreporting of abuse due to fear of retaliation or stigma.
2. Insufficient training on the JJ Act, POCSO, and child protection standards.
3. Overcrowded child care institutions, leading to compromised care.
4. Lack of trained counsellors and social workers in rural areas.
5. Ethical dilemmas in balancing confidentiality with mandatory reporting.
6. Resource constraints, resulting in poor living conditions in some welfare facilities.
7. Bias or discrimination from staff, affecting the quality of services.

These challenges highlight the need for continuous training, ethical awareness, and strict legal compliance.

Strengthening Legal and Ethical Practice

To improve adherence to legal and ethical standards, agencies should focus on:

1. Regular training programmes on the JJ Act, POCSO, and disability rights.
2. Internal monitoring committees to ensure compliance with standards.
3. Child Protection Policies in all institutions.
4. Grievance redress mechanisms for beneficiaries.

5. Periodic audits by independent bodies.
6. Clear documentation of all cases and decisions.
7. Stronger coordination with the police, judiciary, health department, and NGOs.

A rights-based approach supported by legal compliance and ethical conduct ensures welfare programmes fulfil their intended purpose.

Legal and ethical issues form the core of responsible social welfare administration. Laws such as the Juvenile Justice Act, POCSO Act, and disability rights legislation protect the rights of vulnerable populations, while ethical principles ensure that welfare workers act with integrity, compassion, and fairness.

For administrators, social workers, and field staff, understanding these obligations is essential for delivering safe, just, and effective welfare services. Ultimately, legal compliance combined with ethical sensitivity helps build a welfare system that protects rights, upholds human dignity, and strengthens public trust in social institutions.

Summarized Overview

This unit explores the administrative and financial dimensions of social welfare administration in India. It begins with budgeting, explaining its meaning, objectives, types (line-item, performance, programme, zero-based, and outcome budgets), and process. Budgeting serves as both a planning and control mechanism, linking financial allocations to programme performance.

The section on financial management elaborates on principles such as transparency, accountability, efficiency, and equity. It discusses financial control mechanisms, including audits, internal financial advisors, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), and social audits. It also highlights technological tools like PFMS and DBT that have enhanced financial transparency in welfare governance.

The unit then examines Human Resource Management (HRM) in social welfare agencies, emphasising recruitment, training, motivation, supervision, and ethical conduct. HRM ensures that welfare delivery is professional, compassionate, and efficient. However, challenges such as staff shortages, low motivation, and inadequate training remain persistent issues.

Finally, the unit discusses legal and ethical issues, focusing on key laws such as the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015; POCSO Act, 2012; RPwD Act, 2016; and the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007. It highlights the importance of ethical principles like respect, confidentiality, and non-discrimination. Together, these elements strengthen accountability, protect beneficiaries' rights, and ensure that welfare programmes operate with integrity and social justice at their core.

Self-Assessment

1. Define budgeting and explain its objectives in social welfare administration.
2. Discuss the different types of budgets used in social welfare programmes.
3. Explain the process of budgeting and financial planning in welfare administration.
4. Describe the key principles of financial management and their importance in welfare governance.
5. Examine the mechanisms of financial control, such as audits and accountability systems.

Assignments

1. Analyse the significance of Human Resource Management in social welfare agencies.
2. Discuss the major challenges faced in managing human resources in welfare administration.
3. Explain the legal obligations of welfare agencies under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.
4. Discuss the importance of ethical principles such as confidentiality and non-discrimination in social work practice.
5. Suggest strategies to strengthen financial transparency, HR efficiency, and ethical accountability in welfare administration.

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UNIT 2

Contemporary Issues in Social Welfare

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the impact of globalisation on social welfare systems
- analyse the role of NGOs and civil society in welfare administration
- examine major digital transformation initiatives in social welfare governance
- evaluate challenges posed by inequality, labour market changes, and fiscal pressures
- assess how adaptive, inclusive policies can strengthen welfare outcomes

Background

Contemporary social welfare administration operates in a dynamic environment shaped by global economic integration, rapid technological change, and evolving civil society engagement. Globalisation has connected national economies but also intensified inequalities, placing pressure on welfare systems to protect vulnerable groups. At the same time, NGOs and civil society have emerged as influential actors, bridging service gaps, advocating for rights, and strengthening democratic accountability. Digital transformation has further reshaped welfare governance through platforms like DBT, PFMS, e-Shram, and Poshan Tracker, ensuring real-time monitoring, efficient fund flow, and transparent service delivery. These developments present enormous opportunities but also significant challenges—such as labour market vulnerabilities, rising inequality, fiscal constraints, and the need for stronger citizen engagement. Understanding these contemporary issues is essential to ensuring that social welfare administration remains inclusive, resilient, and responsive to changing societal needs.

Keywords

Globalisation, NGOs , Civil Society, Digital Governance, Direct BenefiTransfer

Discussion

3.2.1 Impact of Globalisation on Social Welfare

▶ Economic competitiveness

Globalisation has emerged as a defining force in the modern world, transforming economies, labour markets, and social structures. It refers to the growing interconnectedness of nations through trade, technology, finance, and migration. While globalisation has contributed to higher economic efficiency, expanded markets, and rapid technological innovation, its influence on social welfare is far more complex. For many countries, globalisation has created a tension between the pursuit of economic competitiveness and the responsibility to protect vulnerable populations. Social welfare systems, which are intended to promote equity and security, often struggle to adjust to the economic and fiscal pressures associated with global integration. Understanding how globalisation shapes welfare outcomes is therefore essential for students and practitioners of public administration.

Globalisation and Labour Market Inequality

▶ Widening income gap

One of the most visible impacts of globalisation is the widening income gap between skilled and unskilled workers. As economies integrate, firms increasingly rely on advanced technologies, knowledge-intensive services, and high-skilled labour to remain competitive. Skilled workers thus enjoy better employment opportunities, higher wages, and greater job security. In contrast, unskilled and semi-skilled workers frequently experience reduced demand for their labour. Companies outsource labour-intensive operations to low-wage countries, automate routine tasks, and reorganise production to minimise costs. These trends result in stagnant wages, irregular employment, and greater vulnerability among low-income groups. The labour market gradually becomes segmented, with a relatively small group of highly skilled workers benefiting disproportionately from global integration, while the majority face declining economic security. This divergence in opportunities and earnings directly influences social welfare by intensifying poverty risks and increasing dependency on public support systems.

Economic Growth Without Corresponding Social Welfare

▶ Benefits are concentrated

Globalisation often increases national income by promoting trade, investment, and technological progress. However, the gains from growth are not always shared equitably. A country may record higher GDP while large sections of the population experience declining real wages, insecure employment, and reduced access to essential services. When economic benefits are concentrated among a small segment of society, social welfare does not necessarily improve. In fact, rising inequality can erode welfare by weakening social cohesion, reducing the ability of poor households to invest in education and health, and limiting social mobility across generations. Over time, inequality can also undermine productivity, as marginalised groups lack the resources to develop skills or participate fully in the economy. Thus, globalisation can create a situation where economic efficiency increases but overall welfare stagnates or even declines.

Pressure on Social Welfare Systems

▶ Capacity of states to finance and expand social welfare

Globalisation also affects the capacity of states to finance and expand social welfare programmes. To remain attractive to global investors, many governments reduce corporate taxes, privatise public services, and adopt fiscal policies that prioritise macroeconomic stability over social spending. These measures may encourage investment but often result in shrinking welfare budgets or shifts from universal to targeted programmes. Social expenditure on health, education, and social protection may stabilise or decline as governments seek to limit deficits. In some countries, global competition has triggered a form of fiscal rivalry, where nations compete to offer lower taxes, which ultimately reduces revenue for public welfare. This dynamic constrains the ability of governments to support vulnerable populations, particularly during economic downturns when welfare needs rise most sharply.

Impact on Health, Education, and Labour Policies

The influence of globalisation on health and education systems is mixed. While some nations have improved healthcare technology and expanded educational opportunities, others have faced declining public investment, especially in basic education. Private sector participation has increased in both sectors, which can improve quality for some groups but also widen inequalities in access. Those who cannot afford private services may be left with inadequate public facilities. Labour policies have also shifted in response to global competition. Flexibility in hiring, short-term contracts, subcontracting, and informal employment have become more widespread. Although such practices may help firms adjust quickly to market fluctuations, they often weaken job security, reduce collective bargaining power, and limit access to social protection for workers. These shifts contribute to a more fragile labour environment, heightening social risks that welfare systems must address.

▶ Mixed impact

Broader Social Consequences

The broader social consequences of globalisation include increased economic uncertainty, heightened competition for jobs, and a growing sense of insecurity among workers. Communities that depend heavily on traditional industries may face unemployment and decline as production relocates to more competitive regions. Household savings, education choices, and health decisions are deeply affected by unstable incomes. Globalisation also influences migration patterns, both internal and international, creating demographic changes that require new forms of social support. As inequality rises, societies may witness increased social tensions, reduced trust in public institutions, and a weakening of the social contract. These trends highlight the need for strong welfare systems to cushion the negative effects of global integration.

▶ Economic uncertainty

Need for Inclusive and Adaptive Policies

To ensure that globalisation contributes to social welfare, governments must develop policies that promote inclusion, fairness, and resilience. Investments in education and skill development are essential to prepare workers for technologically advanced sectors. Strengthening labour protections, improving working conditions, and ensuring fair wages can help mitigate the vulnerability of low-skilled workers. Social protection systems should be designed to be flexible and comprehensive, providing safety nets during economic transitions. Progressive taxation, public investment in health and education, and community-level development programmes are critical for reducing inequalities. Ultimately, the impact of globalisation on welfare depends not on globalisation itself, but on how countries manage its consequences through thoughtful and inclusive public policies.

Globalisation has brought significant economic opportunities; yet, its benefits have not been equally shared. While it can promote growth and innovation, it can also deepen labour inequalities, strain welfare systems, and create economic insecurities for large segments of the population. The overall effect on social welfare is therefore mixed and often uneven. Strong governance, equitable distribution of resources, and responsive social protection measures are essential to ensure that globalisation contributes positively to human well-being. For public administration, the central challenge lies in balancing the demands of a competitive global economy with the moral responsibility to protect vulnerable groups and uphold the principles of social justice.

▶ Inclusion, fairness, and resilience

Globalisation and Social Welfare in India

In India, the impact of globalisation on social welfare has been both transformative and uneven. On one hand, global integration has accelerated economic growth, expanded the service sector, and created new opportunities in information technology, telecommunications, finance, and modern manufacturing. These developments have enabled a segment of India's skilled workforce to access better salaries and living standards. However, a much larger portion of the population remains engaged in informal, low-paying, and insecure employment. Global competition has encouraged the adoption of contract labour, flexible staffing, and outsourcing, which often deprive workers of job security, social protection, and fair wages. Traditional industries such as textiles, leather, and small-scale manufacturing have struggled to compete with cheaper global imports, leading to job losses in several regions.

Globalisation has also influenced the capacity of the Indian state to deliver welfare. While the growing economy has expanded fiscal resources, pressures to remain investment-friendly have led to reductions in certain subsidies and shifts toward targeted welfare programmes. At the same time, global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals have encouraged India to strengthen its investment in social sectors, especially health, education, and gender equality. Schemes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the Public Distribution System reforms, Ayushman Bharat, and digital cash transfers represent attempts to create a stronger social safety net in a globalised environment. Although India has made significant progress in poverty reduction, health access, and education, the benefits are unevenly distributed. Rural areas, informal workers, women, and marginalised communities continue to face vulnerabilities that globalisation has sometimes amplified rather than reduced.

▶ Transformative and uneven

Overall, India's experience shows that globalisation can generate opportunities for development, but its benefits do not automatically reach all sections of society. Effective welfare policies, strong labour protections, and investments in human development are essential to ensure that global integration supports inclusive and equitable social progress.

3.2.2 Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Social Welfare Administration

▶ Addressing gaps in service delivery

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups are central to the functioning of modern social welfare systems. While the state remains the primary provider of welfare, its vast responsibilities and limited administrative reach make collaboration with non-state actors essential. NGOs, community-based organisations, self-help groups, and social movements complement government efforts by addressing gaps in service delivery, mobilising communities, and advocating for social justice. Their presence strengthens democratic participation and ensures that welfare policies are shaped not only by administrative priorities but also by the lived experiences of people.

Service Delivery and Grassroots Outreach

▶ Ability to reach left-out populations

One of the most critical roles of NGOs in social welfare is their ability to reach populations that are often left out of government systems. Remote areas, marginalised communities, and vulnerable groups such as street children, persons with disabilities, victims of trafficking, and elderly individuals frequently depend on NGOs for access to essential services. NGOs operate shelters, rehabilitation centres, homes for children in need of care, community health clinics, and educational support programmes. Their flexibility, smaller size, and close proximity to communities allow them to respond quickly to emerging needs, tailor programmes to local contexts, and innovate in ways that large government institutions may find difficult. For populations that feel alienated from formal systems, NGOs serve as a bridge of trust and approachability.

Advocacy, Rights Protection, and Empowerment

▶ Rights-based engagement

Civil society plays a powerful role in shaping the social justice landscape through advocacy and rights-based engagement. Organisations working in areas such as women's rights, disability rights, environmental protection, and child protection raise awareness, monitor violations, and demand accountability from state institutions. They bring attention to issues that may otherwise remain invisible, such as custodial abuse, trafficking, gender-based violence, discrimination against Dalits and tribal communities, and violations of child protection laws. Their campaigns and public mobilisation efforts influence legislation, policy reforms, and judicial interventions. Through legal aid, counselling, and public education, civil society ensures that individuals understand their rights and can access mechanisms of justice.

Capacity Building and Community Mobilisation

▶ Ability to participate in decision-making processes

NGOs often play a vital role in strengthening the capacity of communities and local institutions. They organise self-help groups, cooperatives, village-level committees, and youth clubs, enhancing people's ability to participate in decision-making processes. They train community members in leadership, financial literacy, livelihood skills, health awareness, and legal rights. These efforts build local resilience and enable communities to take ownership of their developmental needs. In government schemes such as ICDS, MGNREGA, and various health missions, NGOs frequently function as training agencies, technical resource organisations, or community mobilisers, ensuring that programmes are implemented more effectively at the grassroots level.

Innovation, Experimentation, and Best Practices

▶ Social innovation

NGOs are often laboratories of social innovation. They experiment with new models of service delivery, community participation, and behavioural change. Concepts such as microfinance, community-based rehabilitation, participatory rural appraisal, and rights-based development gained prominence through NGO initiatives before being adopted into mainstream government policy. Their ability to pilot small-scale initiatives, learn from community feedback, and adapt quickly allows them to create models of best practice. Many successful government programmes today, including self-help groups, women's collectives, and community health worker models, have origins in NGO experiments.

Partnership with Government and International Agencies

▶ Collaborative

The relationship between the government and civil society has gradually evolved from being parallel to increasingly collaborative. Governments often depend on NGOs to implement welfare schemes, conduct awareness campaigns, monitor programme outcomes, and provide specialised services in health, education, disability care, and child protection. International development agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, and WHO also partner with NGOs to implement global and national programmes. These partnerships bring technical expertise, innovation, and community knowledge into governmental systems, enhancing both efficiency and accountability.

Social Accountability and Democratic Participation

▶ Watchdog

Civil society plays a crucial role in ensuring that welfare administration remains transparent and accountable. Through tools such as social audits, public hearings, community monitoring, and media advocacy, NGOs highlight gaps in service delivery, corruption, and resource misuse. Their monitoring efforts under programmes such as MGNREGA and PDS have strengthened democratic oversight and forced improvements in administrative practices. Civil society acts as the watchdog that ensures welfare initiatives reach their intended beneficiaries. In doing so, it reinforces participatory governance by giving citizens a voice in planning and monitoring public programmes.

Challenges Faced by NGOs and Civil Society

Despite their significant contributions, NGOs and civil society groups face several constraints. Limited financial resources, reliance on donor funding, bureaucratic registration procedures, and increasing regulations can hinder their functioning. Some organisations struggle with professional capacity, accountability, and long-term sustainability. In certain contexts, tension between the state and civil society emerges when advocacy groups question government decisions or highlight rights violations. These challenges underline the importance of building strong institutional frameworks and ensuring transparency within the NGO sector, while also safeguarding the democratic space in which civil society operates.

NGOs and civil society are indispensable partners in the pursuit of social welfare. They complement government efforts by reaching underserved communities, protecting rights, innovating new solutions, and strengthening accountability. Their work amplifies citizen voices and ensures that welfare systems remain responsive, humane, and inclusive. In a nation as diverse and complex as India, the combined efforts of the state, NGOs, and civil society form the foundation of an effective and equitable welfare system. Their continued collaboration is essential for building a compassionate society and sustaining democratic governance.

Case Study 1: Pratham

Pratham is one of India's most influential NGOs in the field of education, known for its large-scale community-based interventions and innovative approaches to improving learning outcomes among children. Established in 1994 in Mumbai, Pratham began by working in slums where many children were out of school despite living close to municipal schools. The organisation recognised that simply enrolling children in school was not enough; the real challenge lay in ensuring that children actually learned foundational skills. Pratham developed a simple yet powerful solution known as the "Teaching at the Right Level" (TaRL) methodology. Instead of grouping children by age or grade, they were grouped according to learning level and taught basic reading and arithmetic through short, focused activities. This approach rapidly improved learning outcomes and became a model adopted by multiple Indian states and even other developing countries.

Pratham is also widely known for its annual ASER (Annual Status of Education Report), an independent survey assessing learning levels across rural India. ASER revealed a major learning crisis: many children in Grade 5 could not read a Grade 2 text or solve basic arithmetic problems. These findings shaped national education debates, informed policy reforms, and influenced programmes such as the National Education Policy and state-level learning improvement missions. Pratham's strength lies in its ability to mobilise volunteers, engage communities, and collaborate with governments while maintaining a strong focus on measurable outcomes. Its work demonstrates how an NGO can generate large-scale social impact by combining grassroots engagement, evidence-based methods, and consistent advocacy for quality education. Today, Pratham continues to work across India, offering preschool support, remedial education, vocational training, and digital learning, making it one of the country's most impactful civil society organisations in the realm of child development and education.

Case Study 2: HelpAge India

HelpAge India is a leading national organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life of elderly persons. Established in 1978, the organisation works to ensure that senior citizens—especially the poor, destitute, and socially neglected—receive care, respect, and support. India's elderly population has been growing rapidly, with many older persons facing poverty, isolation, illness, and abandonment. HelpAge India responds to these challenges through a combination of advocacy, service delivery, and community-based care. One of its most recognised interventions is the Mobile Healthcare Unit (MHU) Programme, which brings basic medical care to elderly persons in underserved rural and urban areas. These mobile clinics, staffed with doctors, nurses, and social workers, provide monthly check-ups, medicines, counselling, and referrals to thousands of older persons who otherwise struggle to access healthcare.

Another major contribution of HelpAge India is its role in advocating for policies that protect senior citizens. The organisation played a key role in generating public awareness and mobilising support for the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, which legally obligates children to care for their elderly parents. HelpAge also operates elder helplines, supports old-age homes, and runs livelihood programmes for destitute elders. Through its "Adopt-a-Gran" sponsorship programme, it enables individual donors to directly support the nutrition and healthcare needs of vulnerable elderly persons. The organisation also promotes digital literacy, financial awareness, and intergenerational bonding through school outreach programmes. HelpAge India's work highlights how NGOs can address emerging demographic challenges, influence policy, and provide dignity and care to one of the most neglected social groups. It stands as a strong example of compassionate, rights-based, and community-centred social welfare practice.

3.2.3 Digital Transformation

- Technology to strengthen service delivery

Digital technology has become an integral part of India's social welfare administration. Over the past decade, the government has increasingly used technology to strengthen service delivery, improve transparency, and ensure that benefits reach the intended population without delay or leakages. These digital interventions have transformed welfare governance by simplifying procedures, reducing corruption, and bringing services closer to citizens. Five important initiatives illustrate the growing impact of digital tools in social welfare.

e-Shram Portal

- Unorganised workforce

The e-Shram Portal is a national digital platform created to register and provide social security benefits to India's vast unorganised workforce. Launched in 2021, it enables construction workers, domestic workers, street vendors, gig workers, migrant labourers, and other informal-sector workers to create a universal e-Shram ID linked to Aadhaar. This ID serves as a permanent social security number, allowing workers to access welfare schemes such as accidental insurance, pension programmes, and state-level social protection measures without repeated registration. The portal helps the government build a comprehensive database of unorganised workers, enabling better policy planning, targeted delivery of benefits, and crisis response—particularly for migrant workers who often remain invisible in official records. By digitising worker identity, simplifying enrolment, and integrating multiple welfare schemes, e-Shram represents a major step towards formalising India's informal labour sector and ensuring that vulnerable workers receive timely support and protection.

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

- Directly in their bank accounts

The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system is one of India's most transformative digital reforms in social welfare. It ensures that subsidies, pensions, scholarships, maternity benefits, and other cash transfers reach beneficiaries directly in their bank accounts. By linking Aadhaar, bank accounts, and mobile numbers, DBT eliminates middlemen and reduces corruption, leakages, and delays. Beneficiaries receive real-time SMS alerts, and the government can track every transaction with accuracy. DBT has strengthened programmes such as PAHAL (LPG subsidy), PM-KISAN, old-age pensions, and disability assistance. It has improved efficiency, saved billions in public funds, and ensured payments reach the right person at the right time.

Public Financial Management System (PFMS)

▶ Real-time flow of funds

The Public Financial Management System is an online platform used to monitor the real-time flow of funds under central and state welfare schemes. PFMS tracks every stage of financial movement—from the release of funds by the Ministry of Finance to their final utilisation in villages, schools, anganwadis, and panchayats. This digital system helps administrators detect delays, identify bottlenecks, and prevent the misallocation of funds. PFMS has significantly improved transparency and accountability in schemes such as MGNREGA, National Social Assistance Programme, SC/ST scholarships, and various health and nutrition programmes. It also supports direct payments to beneficiaries, making it a key backbone of India's welfare financing.

Aadhaar-enabled Public Distribution System (AePDS)

▶ Authenticate themselves

The Aadhaar-enabled Public Distribution System is a major digital intervention to reform India's vast food security network. Under this system, beneficiaries authenticate themselves through Aadhaar biometrics at ration shops before receiving their entitlements. This step helps eliminate duplicate and ghost beneficiaries and ensures that subsidised food grains reach the rightful families. Real-time online stock monitoring and electronic point-of-sale (ePoS) machines further enhance transparency. AePDS has reduced the diversion of food grains, improved targeting, and enabled the portability of ration benefits under initiatives like One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC), making the PDS more efficient and citizen-friendly.

Poshan Tracker (under ICDS/PM POSHAN)

▶ Record beneficiary data

The Poshan Tracker is a mobile and web-based application developed to strengthen service delivery under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme. Anganwadi workers use the app to record beneficiary data, track nutrition levels, update growth charts, monitor supplementary nutrition distribution, and maintain attendance records for children and pregnant women. This digital tool provides real-time information on malnutrition hotspots, enabling timely intervention by supervisors and district authorities. It has improved transparency in food distribution, reduced manual errors, and created a national nutrition database to guide policymaking under Mission Poshan 2.0. The Poshan Tracker represents a shift from paperwork to digital, data-driven governance in child welfare.

Summarized Overview

This unit examines the contemporary issues that shape social welfare administration today. It begins with the impact of globalisation, highlighting how economic integration intensifies labour market inequality, places pressure on social welfare budgets, and leads to uneven access to health, education, and employment. Globalisation in India has produced both opportunities—such as growth in the technology sector—and vulnerabilities for informal workers and traditional industries. The unit then discusses the role of NGOs and civil society, emphasising their contributions to service delivery, advocacy, community mobilisation, innovation, and social accountability. Case studies of Pratham and HelpAge India demonstrate how civil society organisations can transform educational outcomes and elderly care through community-driven approaches. The third component focuses on digital transformation, explaining the significance of the e-Shram Portal, DBT, PFMS, AePDS, and the Poshan Tracker in ensuring transparency, reducing leakages, streamlining welfare delivery, and improving real-time monitoring. Together, these elements illustrate how contemporary forces—economic, social, and technological—shape the future of welfare administration in India.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the major ways in which globalisation has influenced social welfare systems worldwide.
2. Discuss how globalisation contributes to labour market inequality and its implications for social welfare.
3. Examine the fiscal pressures globalisation creates for welfare states and its impact on social spending.
4. Analyse the role of NGOs in service delivery, community mobilisation, and innovation in welfare administration.
5. Describe how civil society organisations contribute to advocacy, rights protection, and social accountability.

Assignments

1. Evaluate the contributions of Pratham to improving educational outcomes in India.
2. Discuss the role of HelpAge India in promoting elderly welfare and policy reform.
3. Explain the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system and its advantages for welfare governance.
4. Describe the functions and significance of PFMS, e-Shram Portal, and AePDS in ensuring transparency in welfare administration.
5. Assess the challenges and opportunities associated with digital transformation in social welfare programmes.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

UNIT 3
Social Advocacy and Community Participation

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the concept and role of advocacy in social welfare administration
- analyse how advocacy influences policy reform and state accountability
- examine the significance of community mobilisation and participation in welfare delivery
- evaluate major advocacy initiatives such as the Right to Food Campaign
- identify strategies for effective advocacy and community engagement

Background

Social welfare administration is not limited to policies, budgets, and institutions; it also relies on the active involvement of citizens, civil society, and advocacy groups. Advocacy has emerged as a powerful mechanism through which individuals and organisations highlight injustices, influence public opinion, and push governments toward greater accountability and rights-based welfare. At the same time, community participation ensures that welfare programmes remain grounded in local needs, culturally appropriate, and socially inclusive. India's diverse social landscape makes advocacy and community mobilisation central to addressing structural inequalities, hunger, poor service delivery, and gaps in policy implementation.

This unit explores the multifaceted role of advocacy in shaping welfare reforms, the importance of community participation in strengthening democratic governance, and the strategies that make advocacy effective. The Right to Food Campaign is examined as a landmark example of how collective action can transform welfare entitlements and bring systemic change. Together, these perspectives underscore that social welfare works best when people are empowered to claim their rights and participate actively in public decision-making.

Keywords

Advocacy, Community Mobilisation , Rights-Based Approach, Accountability, Right to Food Campaign

Discussion

3.3.1 Role of Advocacy in Social Welfare

Advocacy is a powerful instrument in the field of social welfare, enabling individuals and organisations to influence public policy, shape social attitudes, and ensure that the rights of vulnerable groups are protected. In a democratic society, many welfare concerns—such as hunger, child protection, disability rights, gender equality, and labour rights—require more than programme implementation. They need active public engagement, policy reform, and sustained pressure on the state to fulfil its constitutional obligations. Advocacy therefore bridges the gap between the lived experiences of marginalised groups and the decision-making processes of governments, helping transform welfare needs into actionable policies.

▶ Active public engagement

Advocacy as a Catalyst for Policy Change

Advocacy plays a crucial role in shaping social welfare legislation and programmes. Civil society organisations, NGOs, activists, researchers, and community groups use advocacy to highlight issues that might otherwise remain invisible within formal administrative processes. Through campaigns, public hearings, media engagement, social audits, research reports, and public interest litigation, advocacy initiatives bring attention to rights violations and systemic gaps. This process compels the state to address structural inequalities, improve service delivery, and adopt rights-based welfare measures. Advocacy often serves as the moral voice of society, reminding governments of their commitments to justice, equality, and human dignity.

▶ Shaping social welfare legislation

Strengthening Accountability and Transparency

Effective social welfare requires transparency in fund allocation, programme design, and implementation. Advocacy groups monitor the functioning of welfare schemes, expose irregularities, and demand accountability from authorities.

▶ Monitor the functioning of welfare schemes

Their efforts help identify corruption, inefficiency, and misuse of funds, thereby strengthening public trust. Advocacy groups often collaborate with communities to conduct surveys, public audits, and fact-finding missions, creating spaces where beneficiaries can speak for themselves. This participatory approach not only improves the effectiveness of welfare programmes but also empowers citizens to claim their rights and engage in democratic governance.

Empowering Marginalised Communities

Advocacy does not only operate at the policy level; it also works directly with communities to build awareness of rights and entitlements. Many people, especially in rural and disadvantaged areas, are unaware of welfare schemes designed for their benefit. Advocacy groups conduct awareness camps, legal literacy programmes, and community meetings to educate citizens and help them navigate bureaucratic systems. By supporting communities to articulate their demands, file grievances, and access benefits, advocacy strengthens the agency of the poor and fosters a culture of rights-based development. It transforms passive beneficiaries into active participants in the welfare process.

- Awareness of rights and entitlements

Case Study: Right to Food Campaign

The Right to Food Campaign is one of India's most significant advocacy initiatives in the field of social welfare. Emerging in the early 2000s during a period of drought and hunger, the campaign brought a stark contradiction to public attention: while millions of tonnes of food grains lay stocked in government warehouses, large sections of the population suffered from malnutrition and starvation. Activists, lawyers, and civil society groups mobilised to highlight this injustice, arguing that access to adequate food was not just a welfare measure but a fundamental human right rooted in the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.

The campaign used a combination of grassroots mobilisation, media engagement, research, and public interest litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court. The landmark case, PUCL vs Union of India, resulted in a series of judicial orders that transformed India's food security landscape. The Court directed the government to universalise key schemes such as the Mid-Day Meal Programme, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and food grain allocations under the Public Distribution System (PDS). These orders effectively converted a number of welfare schemes into legal entitlements. The campaign also played a central role in shaping public debate, exposing hunger deaths, and monitoring the implementation of food schemes through local networks.

One of the campaign's most enduring contributions was its influence in the drafting and enactment of the National Food Security Act (2013). This law provides subsidised food grains to two-thirds of India's population and guarantees legal rights to food for children, pregnant women, and vulnerable groups. The Right to Food Campaign continues to monitor implementation, highlight nutritional gaps, and advocate for stronger measures to address malnutrition and hunger. Its work demonstrates how persistent advocacy can reshape national policy, convert welfare schemes into rights, and strengthen the accountability of the state towards its most vulnerable citizens.

Advocacy is indispensable in social welfare. It challenges injustice, amplifies the voices of the marginalised, and ensures that welfare systems function with transparency and responsiveness. The Right to Food Campaign illustrates how sustained advocacy can transform public consciousness, influence judicial decisions, and reshape national policy. In a diverse and complex society like India, advocacy complements governmental efforts by ensuring that welfare is not merely a policy objective but a lived reality grounded in human dignity and constitutional rights.

3.3.2 Community Mobilisation and Participation

- People at the centre of development

Community mobilisation and participation are essential components of effective social welfare administration. Modern welfare approaches recognise that sustainable development cannot be achieved through top-down decisions alone; communities must be actively involved in identifying their needs, planning solutions, and implementing programmes. When people participate in decisions that affect their lives, welfare initiatives become more relevant, inclusive, and accountable. Community mobilisation therefore represents both a process and a philosophy—one that places people at the centre of development rather than treating them as passive beneficiaries.

Meaning and Importance of Community Mobilisation

▶ Bringing community members together

Community mobilisation refers to the process of bringing community members together to collectively address social issues, utilise local resources, and take ownership of development initiatives. It involves building awareness, fostering mutual support, strengthening local leadership, and encouraging community groups to work together toward common goals. Mobilisation generates a sense of unity and shared responsibility among people, ensuring that welfare programmes respond to real needs rather than assumptions made by external agencies. In contexts where government resources and administrative capacity are limited, community mobilisation becomes an invaluable mechanism for extending welfare services to the grassroots level.

Forms of Community Participation

▶ Consultative involvement to active decision-making

Community participation can take many forms, ranging from consultative involvement to active decision-making. In some cases, communities contribute ideas and feedback on ongoing programmes; in others, they participate directly in planning, monitoring, and managing welfare activities. Panchayati Raj Institutions, self-help groups, youth clubs, women's collectives, and village committees are common platforms through which participation occurs. The level of participation often determines the success of an initiative. When communities merely receive services, welfare outcomes tend to be limited, but when they participate meaningfully—contributing labour, resources, ideas, and leadership—programmes become more rooted, sustainable, and transparent.

Mobilisation in Government Welfare Programmes

Several of India's flagship welfare schemes rely on community mobilisation as a core strategy. The National Rural Health Mission engages community health workers and village health committees to improve maternal and child health. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme mobilises mothers' groups and local communities to support anganwadi services. MGNREGA empowers Gram Sabhas to identify local development works and monitor implementation. Similarly, the Swachh Bharat Mission used large-scale community engagement campaigns to encourage behavioural change in sanitation practices. These programmes demonstrate that when communities are actively engaged, the reach and effectiveness of welfare initiatives increase significantly.

Role of NGOs and Local Institutions

- Intermediaries between the community and government

Non-governmental organisations, voluntary groups, and local institutions play a vital role in facilitating community mobilisation. They help create awareness about rights and entitlements, organise training programmes, develop leadership skills, and provide platforms for collective action. NGOs often serve as intermediaries between the community and government agencies, ensuring that community voices are heard in planning and policy decisions. They also help build confidence among marginalised groups, such as women, scheduled castes and tribes, and persons with disabilities, enabling them to participate more effectively in welfare administration.

Outcomes of Community Participation

- Control over decisions

When communities participate actively, welfare programmes tend to achieve better outcomes. Participation ensures greater transparency because community members monitor the flow of resources and prevent misuse or corruption. It also leads to higher utilisation of services since people feel a sense of ownership and trust in the system. Community-driven initiatives are more responsive to local needs, culturally appropriate, and easier to sustain in the long run. Most importantly, participation empowers people by giving them control over decisions that affect their lives, strengthening democracy at the grassroots level.

Challenges in Mobilisation and Participation

Despite its importance, community mobilisation faces several challenges. Social inequalities, caste divisions, gender norms, and political conflicts can hinder collective action. Lack of awareness, low literacy levels, and inadequate facilitation may also limit meaningful participation. Sometimes, local elites dominate community spaces, preventing marginalised groups from voicing their concerns. For mobilisation to be effective, it must be supported by continuous capacity building, inclusive processes, transparent communication, and strong leadership at the village or neighbourhood level.

Community mobilization and participation are cornerstones of effective social welfare administration. They transform welfare programmes from externally driven interventions into community-owned processes. When people are involved in identifying needs, making decisions, and monitoring services, welfare schemes become more efficient, equitable, and sustainable. Mobilization not only strengthens social cohesion and community resilience but also deepens democratic governance. In a diverse country like India, community participation is not simply an administrative strategy—it is a vital pathway to achieving inclusive and people-centred development.

3.3.3 Strategies for Effective Advocacy

Advocacy in social welfare requires more than raising demands; it calls for thoughtful planning, clear communication, and strategic engagement with different stakeholders. Effective advocacy begins with a deep understanding of the social issue at hand. Advocates must gather accurate information, analyse the root causes of the problem, and identify the affected groups. Research provides credibility and helps shape messages that are persuasive and evidence-based. A well-prepared advocacy initiative is grounded in facts, supported by data, and sensitive to the social, cultural, and political context within which it operates.

▶ Understanding of the social issue at hand

Another important strategy is building coalitions and alliances. Advocacy becomes stronger when individuals and organisations join together around a common cause. Coalitions bring diverse expertise, resources, and social networks, enabling the movement to reach wider audiences. When NGOs, community groups, academics, lawyers, and affected communities speak with one voice, policymakers are more likely to respond. Collaboration also helps avoid duplication of efforts and provides collective strength, especially when confronting powerful institutions or entrenched interests.

▶ Partners in identifying problems

Engaging with the community is central to any advocacy effort. Communities must not be treated merely as beneficiaries; they are key partners in identifying problems, articulating demands, and sustaining pressure for change. Effective advocacy empowers people by educating them about their rights, helping them articulate grievances, and providing platforms where their voices can be heard. Public meetings, awareness campaigns, and local consultations help build legitimacy and ensure that advocacy reflects real needs rather than external assumptions.

Communication is another vital strategy. Advocacy messages must be clear, simple, and compelling, using language that resonates with the intended audience. Different tools—such as social media, public campaigns, press releases, reports, street theatre, or cultural events—can be used to inform the public and draw attention to the issue. The choice of communication method depends on the target audience. For policymakers, brief policy notes and evidence-based reports may be effective, while for the general public, visual campaigns and storytelling may have a greater impact. Successful advocacy uses the right message, delivered through the right channel, at the right time.

▶ Engagement with government institutions

Engagement with government institutions is also essential. Advocates must understand the policy process—how laws are made, how budgets are allocated, and which departments are responsible for relevant decisions. Meeting officials, presenting evidence, providing constructive suggestions, and participating in public consultations help to influence the policy environment. Sometimes, advocacy also involves using legal mechanisms such as public interest litigation to demand accountability and enforce rights. Working with sympathetic policymakers, bureaucrats, and elected representatives can help to translate advocacy demands into concrete policy changes.

Monitoring, documentation, and sustained follow-up form another important strategy. Advocacy is rarely achieved through a single event; it requires persistence. Advocates must document violations, track government promises, and monitor the implementation of orders or schemes. Periodic reports, social audits, and fact-finding missions keep the pressure alive and ensure that authorities remain accountable. Continuous engagement also helps to adapt strategies based on feedback and changing circumstances.

In essence, effective advocacy is a combination of research, community participation, alliance-building, strategic communication, political engagement, and sustained follow-through. It empowers communities, strengthens democratic governance, and ensures that social welfare policies remain responsive, equitable, and people-centred. Advocacy becomes transformative when it is grounded in evidence, driven by collective action, and sustained through consistent, ethical, and informed effort.

Summarized Overview

This unit examines the critical role of advocacy and community participation in strengthening social welfare administration. It begins by explaining the concept of advocacy—an organised effort to influence public policy, protect rights, and amplify the voices of the marginalised. Advocacy shapes welfare programmes through public campaigns, research, media engagement, and legal interventions. It enhances accountability by exposing irregularities and demanding transparency from welfare institutions.

A major focus of the unit is the Right to Food Campaign, a landmark advocacy initiative that used public interest litigation, grassroots mobilisation, and sustained monitoring to transform food security policies in India. Its efforts led to the universalisation of schemes such as ICDS and Mid-Day Meals and eventually contributed to the enactment of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

The unit then discusses community mobilisation and participation, highlighting their significance in improving welfare delivery. Community involvement ensures that programmes are responsive to local needs, increases transparency, and empowers people to take ownership of development initiatives. NGOs, self-help groups, Panchayati Raj Institutions, and other community-based organisations play essential roles in deepening participation.

Finally, the unit presents strategies for effective advocacy, including research, coalition-building, communication, stakeholder engagement, and sustained follow-up. These strategies enable advocates and communities to influence policy decisions and strengthen democratic governance.

Self-Assessment

1. Define advocacy and explain its importance in social welfare administration.
2. Discuss how advocacy strengthens transparency and accountability in welfare governance.
3. Explain the role of civil society and NGOs in promoting rights-based welfare.
4. Describe the key features and outcomes of the Right to Food Campaign in India.
5. Analyse how public interest litigation contributed to welfare reforms through the Right to Food Campaign.

Assignments

1. Define community mobilisation and discuss its significance in welfare programme implementation.
2. Examine the role of self-help groups, village committees, and local institutions in community participation.
3. Discuss the challenges faced in community mobilisation and participation in India.
4. Explain the strategies necessary for effective advocacy in welfare administration.
5. Evaluate the relationship between advocacy, community participation, and democratic governance.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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BLOCK 4
Social Welfare Administration in Kerala

UNIT 1 Historical Context and Current Scenario

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the historical evolution of social welfare in Kerala from pre-Independence to the present
- analyse the role of social reform movements in shaping Kerala's welfare orientation
- examine the development of Kerala's welfare state model in the post-Independence era
- study the current institutional structure and functioning of Kerala's social welfare administration
- evaluate Kerala-specific policies and legislation addressing vulnerable groups

Background

Kerala's social welfare system is widely recognised for its strong historical foundations, deep social reform traditions, and consistent commitment to human development. Unlike many regions in India where welfare initiatives were largely state-driven, Kerala's welfare consciousness emerged much earlier through powerful reform movements that challenged caste oppression, promoted education, and expanded access to public spaces. These early struggles laid the moral and political foundation for a rights-based welfare culture.

After Independence, Kerala embraced an inclusive and universalistic welfare strategy, investing heavily in land reforms, public health, education, and social security. The state's achievements in literacy, life expectancy, and gender indicators became globally known as the "Kerala Model of Development," highlighting how human development could be achieved even with modest economic growth.

The post-1991 phase saw Kerala modernising and decentralising its welfare system through local self-government reforms, community-based initiatives like Kudumbashree, and the digital transformation of welfare delivery. Today, Kerala combines strong state institutions, active civil society participation, and decentralised governance to maintain one of the most comprehensive welfare systems in India. This unit traces this unique historical journey and explains the current administrative structures and policy frameworks that support social welfare delivery in the state.

Keywords

Kerala Model, Social Reform, Decentralisation, Kudumbashree, Welfare State

Discussion

4.1.1 Historical Development of Social Welfare in Kerala

▶ Story of continuous reform

The history of social welfare in Kerala is a story of continuous reform, public action, and people-centred governance. Long before Independence, Kerala witnessed powerful social reform movements that challenged caste oppression, expanded access to education, and laid the foundations for a welfare-oriented society. These struggles shaped a political culture that valued rights, social justice, and collective well-being. After Independence, the state deepened this commitment through land reforms, universal education, public health initiatives, and social security measures, eventually giving rise to what is known as the "Kerala Model of Development." The post-1991 era of economic liberalisation further transformed welfare delivery through decentralised planning, community-based programmes, and the modernisation of public services. Tracing this history reveals how Kerala built one of the most comprehensive welfare systems in India through sustained reform and broad-based participation

Pre-Independence Era: Social Reform as the Foundation

The roots of social welfare in Kerala can be traced to the powerful social reform movements that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Unlike many regions in India, where welfare reforms were state-led, Kerala's early welfare consciousness was largely shaped by reformers, community organisations, and princely state initiatives. The region was divided among the princely states of Travancore, Cochin, and the Malabar district under British rule, each of which faced rigid caste hierarchies, widespread illiteracy, untouchability, and deep social inequalities. Leaders such as Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Chattampi Swamikal, Vakkom Moulavi, and Mannathu Padmanabhan spearheaded movements that challenged caste oppression, opened schools for oppressed communities, promoted inter-dining and intermarriage, and demanded access to public spaces and education.

▶ Social reform movements

The Temple Entry Proclamation of 1936 in Travancore marked a milestone in social justice, granting lower castes the right to enter temples. Parallel to these reform movements, princely rulers implemented progressive measures in education, healthcare, and public administration. Travancore was among the first states in India to introduce compulsory primary education and a systematic public health programme. Missionary organisations also played an important role by establishing schools, hospitals, and orphanages. By the 1930s and 1940s, Kerala already exhibited strong social indicators compared to the rest of India, setting the stage for a welfare-oriented society. The early welfare efforts were thus rooted in struggles against caste discrimination, social exclusion, and ignorance, establishing a culture of rights rather than charity.

▶ Progressive measures

Struggles and Transformations During the Freedom Movement

As the national movement gained momentum, Kerala witnessed strong labour, peasant, and anti-feudal agitations. The Malabar Rebellion (1921) reflected not merely religious tensions but deeper economic and agrarian grievances. Tenant movements such as the *Karshaka Sanghams*, struggles against *janmi* landlords, and protests demanding fair wages for coir workers and agricultural labourers contributed to a strong political mobilisation of the masses. The emergence of socialist and communist movements in the 1930s and 1940s politicised welfare demands, linking them with broader questions of class justice and state responsibility.

Women's organisations, such as the *Mahila Samajams*, began advocating for education and health rights. Fisherfolk, plantation workers, toddy tappers, and beedi workers organised themselves to negotiate for welfare benefits. These struggles

▸ Welfare-driven governance model

transformed welfare from a benevolent gesture of rulers into a political right demanded by the people. By the time of Independence, Kerala had developed a vibrant civil society, active trade unions, and a politically aware population that would later influence its welfare-driven governance model.

Post-Independence Period: Building a Welfare State Model

After Independence and the formation of the state of Kerala in 1956, social welfare received unprecedented state support. The first democratically elected Communist government in 1957, under E.M.S. Namboodiripad, introduced reforms with long-term impacts on welfare. The Land Reform Acts reduced tenancy exploitation and redistributed land, weakening feudal structures and enhancing rural security. These reforms improved access to resources, increased the bargaining power of labour, and laid the foundation for inclusive development.

The state invested heavily in public education and public health. Government schools and hospitals expanded across rural areas, supported by policies ensuring free basic education, mid-day meals, and health infrastructure. The cooperative movement grew rapidly, offering credit, insurance, and livelihood support to farmers, fishermen, and vulnerable workers.

▸ Kerala Model of Development

Kerala also pioneered welfare pensions for the elderly, widows, agricultural labourers, and persons with disabilities. Strong trade union movements ensured better working conditions and labour rights. The state emphasised universalism in welfare, focusing less on economic growth and more on human development. By the 1980s, Kerala achieved high literacy rates, low infant mortality, and improved life expectancy, giving rise to what scholars later called the "Kerala Model of Development." This model demonstrated that social welfare investments could yield high human development outcomes even with modest economic growth.

Post-1991 Liberalisation: Reforming and Expanding Welfare

The economic reforms of 1991 introduced a new phase in Kerala's welfare journey. Liberalisation brought economic opportunities but also challenges such as unemployment, migration pressures, and fiscal stress on the state. Instead of reducing welfare commitments, Kerala responded by restructuring and deepening its welfare strategies. This period saw the rise of decentralised governance, gender empowerment programmes, and innovative community-driven development initiatives.

▶ Welfare strategies

The People's Planning Campaign (1996) marked a turning point. Nearly 35–40% of the state budget was devolved to local bodies, empowering panchayats and municipalities to design and implement welfare programmes. This made social welfare more participatory and responsive to local needs. The creation of Kudumbashree in 1998, a statewide women's network for poverty eradication, transformed community mobilisation, microcredit, livelihood generation, and local governance. Kudumbashree became one of the world's largest women-led community organisations and strengthened social welfare delivery through local participation.

During this period, welfare schemes became more targeted and institutionalised. Social security pensions expanded in scope and coverage. Health initiatives such as community health centres, palliative care networks, and later the Aardram Mission strengthened the public health system. Kerala also responded to globalisation-induced challenges, such as vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers, concerns about the ageing population, and women's labour market participation by designing innovative schemes like the Aawaz Insurance for migrant labourers, the Kerala Social Security Mission, and various gender budgeting initiatives.

While liberalisation encouraged private participation in education and healthcare, Kerala simultaneously worked to modernise its public institutions. The state adopted digital governance in welfare administration through portals such as e-Sevanam, welfare pension digitisation, and health information systems. Thus, the post-1991 period did not weaken Kerala's welfare state; instead, it diversified, decentralised, and modernised welfare delivery.

▶ Modernised welfare delivery

The historical development of social welfare in Kerala reflects a unique and deeply rooted commitment to social justice, shaped by reformers, mass movements, democratic governance, and community participation. From the anti-caste struggles of the pre-Independence era to the land reforms and universal welfare programmes of the post-Independence period, and finally to the decentralised, technology-enabled initiatives of the post-liberalisation era, Kerala has consistently prioritised human development. Its welfare path demonstrates that a society can achieve high social outcomes through sustained political will, community mobilisation, and an unwavering emphasis on dignity, inclusion, and collective well-being.

4.1.2 Current Status and Structure of Social Welfare Administration in Kerala

Institutional Framework

▶ Department of Social Justice

Kerala's social welfare system is anchored by the Department of Social Justice (SJD) at the state level, supported by specialised agencies such as the Kerala Social Security Mission (KSSM), the State Commissionerate for Persons with Disabilities, and statutory bodies like the Kerala State Women's Commission. These institutions provide policy direction, coordination, and oversight for programmes targeting the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, and children.

Local Self-Government and Decentralisation

Local self-government institutions — panchayats, municipalities, and corporations — play a vital implementation role. After the People's Planning reforms, LSGIs were assigned responsibilities for pension delivery, local welfare programmes, and Anganwadi support, enabling more context-sensitive and participatory welfare action.

Service Network and Institutional Care

▶ Network of welfare institutions

The state maintains a wide network of welfare institutions. As of 2015–16, the SJD ran 78 government institutions for children, women, the elderly, and the disabled, while over 2,200 NGO-run registered institutions served tens of thousands more beneficiaries. This mixed public–voluntary institutional ecosystem expands coverage across urban, rural, and tribal areas.

Coverage and Social Assistance

Social assistance is extensive: pension schemes administered through LSGIs covered around 34 lakh beneficiaries in 2015–16, and Welfare Fund Boards extend protection to millions of unorganised workers. Programmes such as Vayomithram and Age-Friendly Panchayat provide targeted services for older persons, while numerous disability and women's schemes address specialised needs.

Child Protection and Early Childhood Services

ICDS and Integrated Child Protection Services (ICPS) form the backbone of child welfare. Kerala operates over 33,000 Anganwadi centres that provide nutrition, pre-school education, and health linkages, complemented by child protection units, juvenile homes, and the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

Disability Services and Specialised Institutions

Disability administration combines prevention, rehabilitation, and livelihood support. Institutions like NISH, NIPMR, and the Kerala State Handicapped Persons Welfare Corporation provide clinical services, assistive devices, and skill training. A 2015 statewide disability survey informed targeted policies, though gaps remain in specialised care for intellectual and multiple disabilities.

Financing and Fiscal Arrangements

Financing draws on state plan allocations, central scheme funds (e.g., NSAP, ICDS), statutory Welfare Fund Boards, and local budgets. The state has prioritised social security in plan outlays, and procedural reforms such as DBT for pensions (from 2015) have modernised payments and reduced leakages.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Service Quality

Monitoring structures exist at departmental and mission levels, but outcome-oriented evaluation is uneven. Infrastructure audits reveal that many Anganwadis lack basic amenities and that some institutions operate below sanctioned capacity, indicating a need for improved quality assurance and results-based monitoring.

Role of NGOs and Community Institutions

NGOs and community networks like Kudumbashree remain central to outreach, early intervention camps, shelter services, and livelihood support. Their partnership with the government strengthens delivery in remote and marginalised areas and enables flexible, locally adapted responses.

Emerging Challenges

Kerala faces demographic ageing, rising chronic morbidity among elders, increasing crimes against children, and persistent pockets of malnutrition and preschool exclusion. The demand for specialised disability care and better institutional infrastructure remains a pressing concern.

Policy Priorities and Reform Directions

Key priorities include integrated inter-departmental planning, consolidation of fragmented Welfare Fund Boards, upgrading Anganwadi infrastructure, expanding specialised facilities for intellectual disabilities, and strengthening digital beneficiary registries and grievance systems to reduce exclusion and improve coordination.

Kerala's social welfare administration combines a historical commitment, broad coverage, and active civil society partnership. The immediate task is to shift from wide coverage to deeper quality and integration — strengthening specialised services, improving infrastructure, and institutionalising outcome-based monitoring to sustain the state's welfare achievements into the future.

4.1.3 Key Policies and Legislations Specific to Kerala

▶ Framework for social welfare

Kerala has developed a distinctive policy and legislative framework for social welfare, shaped by its long-standing commitment to social justice, decentralised governance, and rights-based development. The state's welfare vision is reflected in a series of policies and laws that address the needs of vulnerable groups such as children, women, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, and unorganised sector workers. Many of these policies reinterpret national guidelines to suit Kerala's social context, demographic patterns, and administrative strengths.

▶ Rights-based social protection

A central pillar of Kerala's welfare approach is the emphasis on rights-based social protection, visible in policies such as the State Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2015), the State Old Age Policy (2013), the State Child Policy (2016), and its gender-related policy framework. These policies articulate the state's responsibilities toward vulnerable groups and emphasise participation, inclusion, dignity, and accessibility. They also recognise the importance of prevention, early intervention, community-based care, and the need for convergence between departments such as Social Justice, Health, Education, and Local Self Government. Though each policy differs in scope, they collectively mark a shift from charity-oriented approaches to structured, long-term welfare strategies.

Kerala's legislative landscape complements national social welfare policies through the effective implementation of central laws alongside the formulation of state-specific rules and institutional mechanisms. The state has operationalised key national legislations—including the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, and the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act—by framing detailed state rules, establishing dedicated authorities, and strengthening monitoring and grievance redressal systems. Through these measures, Kerala ensures that statutory protections are not merely symbolic but are translated into accessible services and institutional support.

Kerala has also reinforced women's rights through the functioning of bodies such as the Kerala Women's Commission, with strict enforcement of laws related to dowry prohibition, gender-based violence, workplace safety, and harassment prevention. In the field of transgender rights, the state has taken progressive steps by implementing welfare schemes, identity recognition mechanisms, and support services in alignment with national legislation, thereby promoting inclusion, dignity, and non-discrimination.

- Effective implementation of central laws

In the area of child protection, institutional mechanisms such as Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, adoption agencies, Special Juvenile Police Units, and District Child Protection Units operate within a clearly structured legal framework shaped by state-level adaptations of national child rights laws. These institutions ensure care, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children in need, reflecting Kerala's commitment to rights-based and institutionally supported social welfare governance.

Another defining feature of Kerala's welfare legislation is its focus on decentralisation and local governance. The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act and the Kerala Municipality Act (both 1994) institutionalised democratic decentralisation and assigned substantial social welfare responsibilities to local governments. This legal framework underpins the People's Planning Campaign and enables panchayats and municipalities to manage pensions, support Anganwadis, implement protection schemes, and design local welfare projects. As a result, many welfare functions operate within a legal–administrative partnership between the state and local self-government institutions (LSGIs), making Kerala's social welfare system more participatory and responsive.

Kerala also has a strong legal framework for the welfare of workers, including those in the unorganised sector. A wide range of Welfare Fund Boards operates under state legislation, covering workers in agriculture, coir, beedi, fisheries, construction, toddy tapping, and various other sectors. These boards, supported by statutory provisions, provide pensions, health benefits, insurance, and financial assistance. The state's approach to labour welfare—especially for informal workers—has long been regarded as one of the most comprehensive in India.

▶ Focus on decentralisation

Across all sectors, Kerala's policies and legislation reveal a clear pattern: a commitment to universal access, institutionalised rights, decentralised implementation, and close alignment with national and international human rights frameworks. While individual schemes and programmes will be examined in detail in subsequent units, this broad policy environment highlights how Kerala's welfare system is supported by a strong legislative foundation that continues to evolve with emerging social needs, demographic changes, and new forms of vulnerability.

Summarized Overview

The history of social welfare in Kerala reflects a long tradition of social reform, public action, and rights-based development that began well before Independence and evolved into one of India's most comprehensive welfare systems. Early reformers such as Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, and Chattampi Swamikal challenged caste oppression, expanded education, and laid the foundations of a socially conscious society. After 1956, the state deepened this orientation through land reforms, universal public education, robust health services, welfare pensions, and labour rights, culminating in what became known as the "Kerala Model of Development." The post-1991 era further strengthened welfare delivery through decentralisation via the People's Planning Campaign, community-driven initiatives like Kudumbashree, and the modernisation of public services through digital governance. Today, Kerala's welfare administration operates through institutions such as the Department of Social Justice, the Kerala Social Security Mission, Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs), and numerous specialised agencies addressing child protection, disability, elderly care, and workers' welfare. While the state continues to deliver broad welfare coverage, emerging challenges such as ageing, infrastructure gaps, chronic diseases, and rising vulnerabilities necessitate continuous reform, integrated planning, and improved service quality to sustain Kerala's strong welfare achievements.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the role of social reform movements in shaping Kerala's early welfare consciousness.
2. Discuss the significance of the Temple Entry Proclamation (1936) in Kerala's social welfare history.
3. Analyse the major contributions of the post-Independence government to Kerala's welfare state model.
4. Describe the impact of land reforms on Kerala's socio-economic development.
5. Examine the People's Planning Campaign and its impact on decentralised welfare administration.

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of Kudumbashree in community-based poverty alleviation and women's empowerment.
2. Explain the current institutional structure of social welfare administration in Kerala.
3. Analyse the role of the Kerala Social Security Mission (KSSM) in supporting vulnerable groups.
4. Discuss the importance of Kerala-specific policies for children, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities.
5. Evaluate the emerging challenges faced by Kerala's welfare system and suggest reform directions.

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UNIT 2 Social Welfare Programmes in Kerala

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand the range and purpose of major social welfare programmes implemented in Kerala
- analyse targeted schemes for women, children, elderly persons, and marginalised communities
- examine Kerala's innovative welfare initiatives and their impact on inclusive development
- assess the role of decentralised governance and community participation in welfare delivery
- evaluate the effectiveness of specific programmes through case studies from the state

Background

Kerala's social welfare landscape is shaped by its long tradition of rights-based development, people-centric governance, and strong decentralisation. The state has consistently prioritised vulnerable groups—including women, children, elderly persons, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, coastal communities, and migrant workers—through a broad spectrum of welfare programmes. Unlike many regions where welfare interventions remain fragmented, Kerala's approach integrates community participation, institutional support, and innovative models to ensure that services reach the last mile. Flagship programmes such as Kudumbashree and Aardram Mission demonstrate Kerala's ability to combine community mobilisation with administrative reforms, while child-centred schemes like ICDS, ICPS, and Snehapoorvam ensure both protection and development for younger populations. Similarly, senior citizens benefit from structured support systems through Vayomithram, social security pensions, and age-friendly initiatives, while the marginalised receive focused attention through tribal education programmes, coastal development schemes, migrant worker protections, and forest rights implementation. Kerala also leads in innovation through initiatives such as the Gender Park, Vathilpadi Sevanam, M-Trans, and Karunya medical assistance. Together, these programmes highlight a welfare culture deeply rooted in inclusion, equity, and community empowerment.

Keywords

Kudumbashree, ICDS, Vayomithram, M-Trans, Social Security Pension

Discussion

4.2.1 Social welfare schemes in Kerala

▸ Comprehensive interventions

Kerala's social welfare landscape is characterised by a wide network of programmes designed to support diverse sections of society, reflecting the state's long-standing commitment to equity, inclusion, and rights-based development. Over the years, Kerala has implemented comprehensive interventions for women, children, and the elderly, alongside targeted initiatives for marginalised communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, coastal groups, and migrant workers. Many of these programmes—ranging from Kudumbashree's women-led development to child protection under Snehapoorvam and senior care through Vayomithram—are rooted in community participation and decentralised governance. At the same time, the state has introduced special schemes like the Aardram Mission and ST-specific development packages to address structural disadvantages faced by vulnerable communities. Kerala is also known for innovative welfare models such as the Nirbhaya Project for survivors of violence, demonstrating a shift toward integrated, service-based approaches. Together, these programmes illustrate how the state combines universal services with targeted and innovative interventions to ensure social protection across different population groups.

4.2.1.1 Programmes for Women

Kudumbashree Mission

▶ Neighbourhood groups

Kudumbashree, launched in 1998, is Kerala's poverty eradication and women's empowerment programme implemented through neighbourhood groups (NHGs). It provides women with access to microcredit, supports self-employment through micro-enterprises, and facilitates skill development under programmes like YuvaKeralam and Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana. Kudumbashree members also run services such as catering units, home shops, farming collectives, and community resource groups, making it one of the largest women-led development networks in India.

Nirbhaya Programme

▶ Nirbhaya Homes

The Nirbhaya Programme focuses on the protection and rehabilitation of women facing sexual violence and exploitation. It includes the operation of Nirbhaya Homes in several districts, offering temporary shelter, medical care, counselling, and legal support. One-Stop Crisis Cells located in district and taluk hospitals integrate emergency medical services with police assistance and legal aid. The programme also funds rescue operations, rehabilitation plans, and follow-up care to ensure long-term support for survivors.

Snehasparsham

▶ Monthly financial assistance

Snehasparsham provides monthly financial assistance to unwed mothers identified by the Kerala Social Security Mission. The assistance helps meet basic needs and reduces dependence on informal or exploitative support systems. Beneficiaries are registered through local self-governments, and the scheme ensures regular payments via direct benefit transfer. It specifically targets mothers facing stigma, lack of family support, and economic vulnerability.

4.2.1.2 Programmes for Children

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)

▶ Through Anganwadi Centres

ICDS delivers early childhood services through Anganwadi Centres, providing supplementary nutrition, immunisation support, health check-ups, growth monitoring, and preschool education. Kerala operates over 33,000 Anganwadis under this programme, covering children under six years, as well as pregnant and lactating mothers. It is a key intervention for reducing child malnutrition, improving school readiness, and strengthening maternal health.

Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)

▶ Institutional care

ICPS is Kerala's main child protection framework, implemented through Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, District Child Protection Units, and specialised homes. It provides care and protection for children who are abandoned, orphaned, abused, trafficked, or in conflict with the law. The programme supports institutional care (children's homes, observation homes, special homes) and non-institutional options such as foster care, sponsorship, and adoption through accredited agencies.

Snehapoorvam

▶ Financial assistance scheme for children

Snehapoorvam is a financial assistance scheme for children who have lost one or both parents and whose remaining family members are unable to provide adequate care. Implemented through KSSM, the scheme provides monthly support to school-going and college-going children. It aims to prevent school dropout, ensure emotional stability, and support the nutritional and educational needs of orphaned children.

4.2.1.3 Programmes for the Elderly

Vayomithram Programme

▶ Support services

Vayomithram, implemented by the Kerala Social Security Mission, provides health and social support services to elderly persons (65+) in urban areas. Services include home-based palliative care visits, free medicines, regular medical camps, help-desk facilities, and counselling. The programme functions through trained nurses and volunteers and is active in all municipal corporations and many municipalities.

Social Security Pension for Senior Citizens

▶ Direct benefit transfer

Kerala provides old-age pensions through local self-governments as part of the state's social security network. Eligible elderly persons receive monthly pensions via direct benefit transfer. The pension is intended for those without regular income or family support and covers one of the largest beneficiary groups in the state's welfare system. Pension delivery is linked to Aadhaar and local verification to ensure timely payments.

▶ Accessible public spaces

Age-Friendly Panchayat Programme

The Age-Friendly Panchayat initiative, linked to the Kerala State Old Age Policy, promotes local-level facilities and services that enhance the quality of life for older persons. Activities include establishing accessible public spaces, organising social and recreational activities, providing health linkages through ASHA workers, and ensuring priority access to government services. Selected panchayats implement action plans tailored to the needs of the elderly population in their area.

4.2.1.4 Programmes for Marginalised Communities in Kerala

ST Development Department's Model Residential Schools

▶ Free residential education

Kerala operates Model Residential Schools specifically for Scheduled Tribe children to address long-standing educational disadvantages. These schools provide free residential education, nutrition, uniforms, and academic support, particularly for tribal students from isolated hamlets with limited access to formal schooling. By offering a structured academic environment, the programme helps improve enrolment, prevent dropouts, and ensure continuity in higher education among tribal youth.

Coastal Area Development Corporation's Coastal Housing and Livelihood Support

▶ Housing and livelihood assistance

Through the Kerala State Coastal Area Development Corporation, housing and livelihood assistance is provided to marginalised fishing communities. The programme includes the construction of disaster-resilient houses, infrastructure development in fishing villages, and financial support for traditional fishermen. It also promotes alternative livelihoods, such as aquaculture and fish-processing units, to reduce vulnerability during periods of low catch or climatic disruptions.

Kerala Migrant Workers Welfare Scheme (Aawaz Insurance)

▶ Social security to workers

Aawaz Insurance—administered by the Labour Department—provides free health insurance and accidental death coverage to migrant workers, who constitute a highly vulnerable and often invisible labour group in Kerala. Registered workers receive a biometric card, free hospitalisation up to a prescribed limit, and compensation in the case of disability or death. The programme offers crucial social security to workers who typically lack employer-based protection.

Forest Rights Implementation for Tribal Communities

Kerala's implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Forest Rights) Act focuses on granting land titles and community rights to tribal households historically dependent on forest resources. Through this programme, eligible ST families receive individual forest land titles for cultivation, and communities gain rights over minor forest produce and habitat governance. This strengthens livelihood security, reduces landlessness among Adivasis, and protects traditional cultural and ecological practices.

- Granting land titles and community rights

Aardram Mission

Aardram Mission is a comprehensive health-sector reform initiative aimed at improving access to quality healthcare for Kerala's most vulnerable populations, including SC/ST communities living in remote and tribal regions. Under this mission, Primary Health Centres (PHCs) are upgraded into Family Health Centres with extended outpatient hours, improved diagnostics, and better staffing. Special outreach services, mobile medical units, and tribal health initiatives ensure that marginalised communities receive continuous, affordable, and modern healthcare.

- Access to quality healthcare

4.2.1.5 Innovative Welfare Programmes in Kerala

Gender Park

The Gender Park, established by the Government of Kerala, is an innovation-driven platform dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. It serves as a hub for research, policy dialogue, entrepreneurship support, and gender-focused innovations. Initiatives such as the "She Taxi" project—India's first women-operated taxi network—have provided safe transport services while creating dignified self-employment opportunities for women. The Gender Park's approach blends policy advocacy, capacity building, and social enterprise development, making it a unique institutional model in the country.

- Gender equality

Vathilpadi Sevanam (Doorstep Assistance Programme)

Vathilpadi Sevanam is an innovative doorstep service programme that delivers government welfare services to elderly persons, bedridden individuals, and persons with disabilities at their homes. Trained volunteers and officials visit beneficiaries to assist with documentation, pension applications, medical

- Doorstep service programme

referrals, and essential services. By reducing the need for vulnerable individuals to physically visit offices, the programme promotes inclusion and ensures that entitlements reach those who are often left out due to mobility limitations.

Saphalam Scheme for Transgender Students Pursuing Professional Courses

▶ Educational opportunities

The Saphalam scheme, implemented by the Department of Social Justice, Government of Kerala, is an innovative initiative aimed at improving educational opportunities for transgender students. Recognising that the transgender community continues to face deep-rooted discrimination, social stigma, and violations of basic rights, the scheme seeks to address one of the most persistent barriers to their empowerment: lack of access to professional education. Under the Saphalam scheme, financial assistance is provided to transgender students enrolled in degree-level or diploma-level professional courses such as engineering, nursing, paramedical programmes, and other technical disciplines. By covering essential educational expenses, the scheme ensures that qualified students do not discontinue their studies due to economic hardship. Its primary objective is to create supportive academic pathways for transgender youth who possess the competence and aspiration to pursue professional careers but lack the financial backing to continue.

Karunya Benevolent Fund (Karunya Scheme)

▶ Social lottery

The Karunya Benevolent Fund is a lottery-funded health care assistance programme that provides financial support for major illnesses such as cancer, kidney diseases, cardiovascular conditions, and haemophilia. Beneficiaries receive treatment support through government-approved hospitals without lengthy eligibility procedures. The use of a social lottery to fund high-cost medical treatments is regarded as an innovative approach, combining public participation with targeted welfare spending.

Bhavanam Foundation's Affordable Housing for the Marginalised

▶ Housing solutions for marginalised groups

The Bhavanam Foundation, established by the Government of Kerala, implements innovative housing solutions for marginalised groups who cannot access conventional housing schemes. It develops low-cost apartment complexes, shelters for migrant workers, and integrated housing projects tailored to vulnerable communities. The Foundation employs modern construction technologies, public–private partnerships, and livelihood-linked housing models, making it a distinctive initiative in inclusive urban development.

4.2.2 Case Studies

Kudumbashree and Women's Economic Empowerment

Meenakshi, a 36-year-old woman from Palakkad, had minimal income after her husband's illness forced him to stop working. With two school-going children, her financial burden increased sharply. In 2017, she joined a Kudumbashree Neighbourhood Group (NHG) in her panchayat, where she received basic financial literacy training and access to a small group loan of ₹25,000. She used the loan to start a micro-enterprise—a small-scale curry powder and masala unit managed by three other NHG members. Kudumbashree's micro-enterprise consultants assisted them with packaging, branding, and linking to local markets.

Within a year, the unit expanded to supply products to local shops and weekly markets. By 2020, it was formally registered as a Micro Enterprise Unit (ME) under Kudumbashree. Meenakshi's monthly income rose from approximately ₹3,000 to nearly ₹12,000, enabling her to repay debt, support her children's education, and rebuild household stability. Her participation in NHG meetings also gave her the confidence to contest for the post of NHG chairperson, fostering leadership development. This case illustrates how even small-scale Kudumbashree interventions can transform women's economic status and social visibility.

Aardram Mission and Tribal Health in Wayanad

Karimbil Colony, a remote tribal hamlet in Wayanad district, has historically faced severe barriers to accessing healthcare—long travel distances, limited public transport, and poor health awareness. In 2018, under the Aardram Mission, the nearby Primary Health Centre (PHC) was upgraded to a Family Health Centre (FHC) with extended OP hours, laboratory services, a telemedicine unit, and a mobile medical team.

The FHC launched weekly outreach camps within the colony, focusing on antenatal care, childhood immunisation, and chronic disease screening. ASHA workers trained under Aardram played a key role in mobilising tribal families. Within two years:

- Institutional deliveries increased from 45% to 92%
- Full immunisation coverage rose to above 95%
- Anaemia levels among adolescent girls reduced significantly
- Mobile medical units ensured regular check-ups for elderly tribal patients who previously had no access

This case demonstrates how service transformation under Aardram can bridge structural inequities in tribal health.

Summarized Overview

Kerala's social welfare system comprises an extensive and diverse range of programmes designed to support women, children, the elderly, marginalised communities, and vulnerable groups across the state. Rooted in decentralised governance and strong community participation, initiatives such as Kudumbashree promote women's economic empowerment through microcredit, skill development, and micro-enterprises, while schemes like Nirbhaya and Snehasparsham provide protection and financial support to women facing violence and social stigma. Child welfare is strengthened through ICDS, ICPS, and Snehapoorvam, which provide nutrition, early childhood education, and care for children in need of protection. Elderly-focused interventions, including Vayomithram, social security pensions, and Age-Friendly Panchayats, enhance healthcare, social support, and dignity for senior citizens. Programmes for marginalised groups—such as Aardram Mission for improved health services, Model Residential Schools for ST children, coastal livelihood support, Aawaz Insurance for migrant workers, and forest rights implementation—address structural disadvantages faced by vulnerable communities. Kerala also leads in innovative welfare approaches through Gender Park, Vathilpadi Sevanam, M-Trans, Karunya medical assistance, and inclusive housing initiatives by Bhavanam Foundation. Collectively, these programmes highlight Kerala's rights-based, inclusive, and responsive approach to welfare, reinforced by community-driven models and outcome-focused reforms.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the major features of Kudumbashree and its role in women's empowerment in Kerala.
2. Discuss the objectives and implementation of the Nirbhaya Programme for survivors of gender-based violence.

3. Describe the structure and services of ICDS and its significance in early childhood development in Kerala.
4. Analyse the functioning of ICPS and its contribution to child protection in the state.
5. Explain the importance of Snehapoorvam in supporting orphaned and vulnerable children.

Assignments

1. Evaluate the role of Vayomithram and social security pensions in promoting elderly welfare.
2. Discuss the Aardram Mission and its role in improving healthcare access for marginalised communities.
3. Examine the welfare initiatives for Scheduled Tribes, with special reference to Model Residential Schools.
4. Describe Kerala's innovative schemes such as Gender Park, Vathilpadi Sevanam, and M-Trans.
5. Analyse the case studies provided in the unit and explain how they reflect Kerala's approach to inclusive welfare delivery.

Reference

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

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UNIT 3

Case Studies and Best Practices in Kerala

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- understand successful welfare initiatives implemented in Kerala through case studies
- analyse best practices in decentralised planning and community participation
- examine innovative models that strengthen Kerala's welfare delivery systems
- evaluate how integrated and service-oriented approaches enhance welfare outcomes
- assess future directions needed for strengthening Kerala's welfare framework

Background

Kerala's social welfare landscape is widely recognised for its rights-based orientation, decentralised governance, and strong community participation. Over the decades, the state has created innovative models addressing poverty, housing insecurity, gender vulnerability, tribal marginalisation, and transgender welfare. These programmes are not merely schemes but comprehensive, service-oriented interventions built on integration across departments and active participation of local communities.

Case studies such as the Ashraya Project, LIFE Mission, and the Saphalam Scheme demonstrate how targeted welfare interventions can transform the lives of vulnerable families, landless households, and transgender youth. Complementing these success stories, Kerala's welfare governance also showcases best practices, including decentralised planning, convergence of departments, digital service delivery, and women-led community mobilisation through Kudumbashree. As the state faces new challenges—an ageing population, climate vulnerability, migrant influx, and changing social risks—the focus is shifting towards integrated registries, upgraded institutional infrastructure, stronger monitoring, and urban welfare expansion. Understanding these case studies and best practices provides valuable insights into how Kerala sustains a robust welfare system that remains adaptive, inclusive, and people-centred.

Keywords

Ashraya, LIFE Mission, Saphalam Scheme, Decentralisation, Destitute-Free Kerala

Discussion

4.3.1 Case Studies of Successful Initiatives

Case Study 1: Ashraya Project – Destitute-Free Kerala Initiative

The Ashraya Project, implemented through Kudumbashree and local self-governments, is one of Kerala's most successful interventions for destitute families. Under the project, each panchayat or municipality conducts a detailed survey to identify families facing extreme deprivation—such as those without income, shelter, access to food, or social support. For each family, an Individual Family Development Plan is prepared, outlining specific interventions required in nutrition, housing, healthcare, education, and livelihood support. In districts like Kannur and Ernakulam, families that were previously isolated and lacking basic amenities were rehabilitated through sustained support, including monthly food kits, access to pensions, school linkage for children, and assistance for income-generating activities. The project demonstrates how decentralised planning, combined with community mobilisation, can effectively lift households out of extreme poverty.

Case Study 2: LIFE Mission – Comprehensive Housing Security for the Landless and Homeless

The LIFE Mission (Livelihood Inclusion and Financial Empowerment), launched by the Government of Kerala, is one of the state's most ambitious housing programmes aimed at ensuring secure, dignified housing for all landless and homeless families. A notable example comes from Kollam district, where a cluster of families living in makeshift huts along the banks of a canal faced repeated flooding, health hazards, and lack of sanitation. These families, many of whom belonged to Scheduled Castes, elderly-headed households, and single women, were identified through a detailed local survey conducted by the panchayat. Under the LIFE Mission framework, they were allotted flats in a multi-storied housing complex built with a combination of state funds, central assistance, and local self-government contributions.

After shifting to their new homes, the families reported significant improvements in safety, access to clean water, sanitation, and overall living conditions. The children experienced better educational continuity as they no longer had to move frequently due to seasonal displacement. Women beneficiaries, in particular, noted increased security and stability, allowing them to participate more actively in neighbourhood collectives and livelihood programmes. The project also included provisions for skills training and microenterprise support, enabling several adults to secure stable income sources. This case demonstrates how the LIFE Mission addresses structural housing vulnerabilities by providing not just physical shelter but a pathway to long-term social and economic inclusion.

Case Study 3: Saphalam Scheme – Enabling Professional Education for Transgender Students

The Saphalam Scheme, implemented by the Department of Social Justice, represents Kerala's commitment to removing structural barriers faced by transgender individuals in accessing higher and professional education. A representative case from Thiruvananthapuram illustrates the transformative impact of the programme. Anila (name changed), a transgender student who had completed her Plus Two education with strong academic performance, secured admission to a diploma-level paramedical course. Despite her academic merit, she faced severe financial constraints after being estranged from her family due to gender identity issues. Without external support, continuing professional education seemed unlikely.

Through the district transgender cell, Anila was enrolled in the Saphalam Scheme, which provided financial assistance to cover her tuition fees, study materials, and examination expenses. This support ensured the uninterrupted continuation of her studies, shielding her from the economic pressures that often force transgender youth to abandon formal education.

With the help of the scheme and peer support groups, Anila completed her diploma and secured employment as a laboratory technician in a private hospital in Kochi. The stability of a professional job improved her financial independence, social confidence, and access to healthcare.

This case demonstrates how the Saphalam Scheme bridges a critical gap between aspiration and opportunity for transgender youth. By enabling access to technical and professional education, the programme enhances employability, reduces vulnerability, and contributes to the broader goal of mainstreaming the transgender community within Kerala's social and economic fabric.

4.3.2 Best Practices and Lessons Learned

- Decentralised planning

Kerala's social welfare experience offers valuable lessons in designing and implementing inclusive and accountable welfare systems. One of the most significant features of Kerala's model is its strong commitment to decentralised planning. Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) play a central role in planning and implementing welfare programmes, managing social security pensions, supporting Anganwadi centres, and conducting local needs assessments. This decentralised framework allows policies to be adapted to local realities and ensures that marginalised and vulnerable populations are identified more accurately. By placing decision-making authority closer to the people, Kerala has strengthened responsiveness, improved service targeting, and enhanced democratic participation in welfare governance.

- Community participation

Another defining feature of Kerala's welfare administration is community participation, particularly through women's leadership. The Kudumbashree network, comprising neighbourhood groups and community development societies, serves as a powerful mechanism for grassroots mobilisation. Women actively participate in identifying vulnerable households, monitoring welfare beneficiaries, facilitating access to schemes, and engaging in local governance processes. This community-centred approach not only increases accountability but also builds social capital and empowers women as agents of change. The integration of self-help groups with local governance structures ensures that welfare delivery is participatory rather than purely bureaucratic.

Importance of convergence

Kerala has also demonstrated the importance of convergence across departments and agencies. Welfare challenges are rarely confined to a single sector; they often require coordinated action across health, education, social justice, women and child development, and SC/ST development departments. Programmes such as Aardram, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and Integrated Child Protection Services (ICPS) function through collaboration among Kudumbashree networks, Child Protection Units, health workers, and panchayats. This integrated approach reduces duplication of efforts, ensures optimal use of resources, and produces more holistic outcomes for beneficiaries.

Use of digital platforms

The effective use of digital platforms further strengthens Kerala's welfare administration. Digital tools such as Direct Benefit Transfer systems for pension payments, electronic health records under the Aardram mission, and disability databases contribute to real-time monitoring, transparency, and timely service delivery. By digitising beneficiary records and financial transactions, the state has reduced leakages, minimised delays, and improved accountability. Technology thus complements decentralisation by providing accurate data and strengthening oversight mechanisms.

Shift toward service-oriented models

A final lesson from Kerala's experience is its shift toward service-oriented models rather than purely scheme-based interventions. Instead of focusing only on the distribution of benefits, Kerala increasingly emphasises continuous and professional service delivery. Initiatives such as Family Health Centres under Aardram, One-Stop Crisis Cells under the Nirbhaya framework, and Vayomithram's doorstep healthcare services for senior citizens reflect this approach. These models prioritise sustained support, accessibility, and long-term well-being over short-term assistance.

Together, these best practices demonstrate that effective welfare administration requires decentralisation, community participation, interdepartmental convergence, technological innovation, and a service-oriented mindset. Kerala's experience illustrates how an integrated and participatory framework can translate social welfare policies into meaningful and sustainable outcomes for vulnerable populations.

4.3.3 Future Directions for Social Welfare in Kerala

Developing a Unified Social Welfare Registry

One of the major challenges in Kerala's welfare landscape is the fragmentation of beneficiary databases. A unified registry would help avoid duplication, ensure accurate targeting, and facilitate better inter-departmental coordination. This would also improve transparency and resource allocation.

Strengthening Welfare Services for an Ageing Population

With one of the highest proportions of senior citizens in India, Kerala needs more geriatric care centres, dementia care units, home-based services, and community support programmes. Expanding initiatives like Vayomithram and Age-Friendly Panchayats would help the state address emerging age-related vulnerabilities.

Addressing New Vulnerabilities and Social Risks

Kerala faces rising challenges related to migrant workers, climate-change-driven displacement, cyber abuse, mental health issues among youth, and vulnerabilities in tribal regions. Future welfare strategies must incorporate these emerging risks and develop specialised responses.

Improving Infrastructure in Anganwadis and Welfare Institutions

Many Anganwadi Centres and welfare homes require infrastructure upgrades to meet modern standards of safety, accessibility, and service quality. Investing in model Anganwadis and standardised institutional care facilities will improve the delivery of services to children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Expanding Urban Welfare Interventions

Rapid urbanisation has increased homelessness, unemployment, and housing insecurity. Programmes such as affordable housing schemes, night shelters, and migrant worker facilities need to be expanded to address urban-specific vulnerabilities.

Enhancing Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

Kerala's welfare system would benefit from a stronger outcome-based evaluation framework. Regular social audits, performance assessments, and community feedback mechanisms should be institutionalised to measure programme effectiveness and improve planning.

Kerala's social welfare initiatives reflect a long-standing commitment to rights-based development, decentralised governance, and community participation. The state has successfully implemented innovative programmes that have improved the lives of vulnerable groups through targeted interventions and integrated service delivery. The case studies and best practices discussed in this unit highlight the importance of strong local institutions, responsive policies, and collaborative governance. As Kerala prepares for future challenges—such as an ageing population, climate vulnerability, and changing social needs—it will need to build on these strengths while embracing innovation and strengthening monitoring mechanisms. Together, these efforts will ensure that Kerala continues to lead in inclusive and sustainable social welfare development.

Summarized Overview

This unit highlights Kerala's most impactful welfare initiatives through detailed case studies and identifies the best practices that make its welfare system one of the strongest in India. The Ashraya Project demonstrates how decentralised planning and community mobilisation can rehabilitate destitute families through individualised development plans, while the LIFE Mission showcases comprehensive housing security for landless and homeless households by integrating state funds, local bodies, and community support. Similarly, the Saphalam Scheme illustrates Kerala's commitment to educational inclusion for transgender youth by enabling access to professional courses and livelihood opportunities. The unit also outlines best practices such as participatory governance through LSGIs, women-led community mobilisation via Kudumbashree, interdepartmental convergence, digital platforms for welfare delivery, and integrated service models like Family Health Centres and One-Stop Crisis Cells. Future directions include unified beneficiary registries, ageing-friendly welfare systems, improved institutional infrastructure, urban welfare interventions, and stronger monitoring mechanisms. Together, these case studies and approaches underscore Kerala's ability to combine innovation, participation, and rights-based frameworks in achieving sustainable social welfare outcomes.

Self-Assessment

1. Describe the Ashraya Project and explain how it supports destitute families through decentralised planning.
2. Discuss the LIFE Mission and analyse its role in addressing housing insecurity among vulnerable households.
3. Explain the significance of the Saphalam Scheme for transgender students in Kerala.
4. Analyse how community participation and Kudumbashree strengthen welfare delivery in the state.
5. Discuss the importance of convergence among departments in implementing welfare programmes.

Assignments

1. Evaluate the impact of digital platforms (DBT, e-health records, disability census) on improving welfare governance.
2. Explain how service-oriented models such as Family Health Centres and One-Stop Crisis Cells differ from traditional schemes.
3. Discuss the need for a unified social welfare registry in Kerala.
4. Examine the emerging vulnerabilities faced by Kerala—such as ageing, migration, and climate impacts—and suggest welfare strategies.
5. Assess the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and social audits in improving Kerala's welfare outcomes.

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QP CODE: ....

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MODEL QUESTION PAPER - SET A

FOURTH SEMESTER M.A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE - M23PA06DE
SOCIAL WELFARE ADMINISTRATION
2024-25 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries one mark.

(10 × 1 = 10 Marks)

1. What does Sarvodaya mean?
2. What is social security?
3. What is the primary goal of social welfare?
4. What is social planning?
5. Which body was responsible for planning in India before NITI Aayog?
6. Within how many hours must a child found in vulnerable circumstances be produced before a Child Welfare Committee (CWC)?
7. What does the acronym PFMS stand for?
8. Which proclamation in Travancore was a milestone for social justice by allowing lower castes to enter temples?
9. In which year was Kudumbashree launched?
10. Which scheme provides financial assistance specifically to transgender students pursuing professional courses?
11. Which department serves as the primary anchor for the social welfare system at the state level in Kerala?
12. What is meant by social change?
13. What is the main objective of planning in a welfare state?
14. Name the doorstep service program that delivers welfare assistance to the elderly and bedridden at their homes.
15. What does the acronym LIFE stand for in the context of Kerala's housing mission?

SECTION B

Answer any five questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries two marks.

(5×2 =10 Marks)

16. What is the difference between social service and social work?
17. What is meant by the residual theory of social welfare?
18. Define social policy.
19. What is the difference between economic planning and social planning?
20. What is meant by inclusive development?
21. Define the ethical principle of "Confidentiality" in social welfare.
22. What was the significance of the 1957 Communist government's Land Reform Acts for social welfare?
23. How does the People's Planning Campaign (1996) contribute to decentralized welfare?
24. What kinds services are provided to the elderly in urban areas through the Vayomithram programme?
25. How does the "Gender Park" platform support women's empowerment in Kerala?

SECTION C

Answer any five questions in one paragraph. Each question carries four marks.

(5×4 = 20 Marks)

26. Discuss the evolution of social welfare administration in India.
27. Explain the Institutional Theory of social welfare.
28. Explain the features and objectives of social policy.
29. Discuss the relationship between social change and social development.
30. Explain the importance of social planning in national development.
31. How has globalisation impacted the labour market and inequality in the context of social welfare?
32. Explain the role of social reform movements in shaping Kerala's pre-Independence welfare culture.
33. Describe the structure and services of ICDS and its significance in early childhood development.

SECTION D

Answer any three questions in two pages. Each question carries ten marks.

(3×10 =30 Marks)

34. Analyse the constitutional foundations of social welfare administration in India with reference to the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and Directive Principles of State Policy.
35. Explain the importance and key features of social welfare administration.
36. Describe the comprehensive legal framework and ethical principles that guide social welfare administration in India. Use specific examples from the text, such as the Juvenile Justice Act and POCSO, to illustrate how these frameworks protect vulnerable populations.
37. Analyse the impact of globalisation on social welfare systems, specifically focusing on the tension between economic competitiveness and social justice. Evaluate how inclusive and adaptive policies can mitigate the negative consequences of global integration.
38. Discuss the role of Kudumbashree in community-based poverty alleviation and women's empowerment.
39. Examine Kerala's approach to inclusive welfare delivery by citing relevant case studies.

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MODEL QUESTION PAPER - SET B

FOURTH SEMESTER M.A PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE - M23PA06DE

SOCIAL WELFARE ADMINISTRATION

2024-25 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries one mark.

(10 × 1 = 10 Marks)

1. What is meant by a welfare state?
2. Who introduced the concept of POSDCORB?
3. Which programme was launched in India in 1952 for rural development?
4. Which article of the Constitution provides for ensuring living wages and decent conditions of work for all workers, and encourages cooperative enterprises?
5. Name the ministry responsible for social justice and empowerment in India.
6. What is meant by social policy?
7. Who formulates social policy in India?
8. What does decentralized planning refer to?
9. What is development?
10. What are the "twin pillars" of administrative efficiency in social welfare?
11. Which budget type requires every department to justify all expenditures from scratch each year?
12. In which year Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme was launched?
13. What technological tool facilitates the direct transfer of benefits like pensions and scholarships into bank accounts?
14. What is the name of the insurance scheme specifically designed for migrant workers in Kerala?
15. Which mission focuses on transforming Primary Health Centers into Family Health Centers with better staffing and diagnostics?

SECTION B

Answer any five questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries two marks.

(5×2 =10 Marks)

16. Define social service and mention its key feature.
17. Explain the concept of social welfare in brief.
18. State the role of the Directive Principles of State Policy in welfare administration.
19. What is the relationship between social policy and social welfare administration?
20. What are the main objectives of social planning?
21. Explain the role of the state in social policy formulation.
22. What is the relationship between social change and development?
23. Why is "Social Audit" considered a unique financial control mechanism?
24. How does Aadhaar-based verification strengthen the integrity of welfare schemes?
25. Define the primary objective of the "Ashraya Project."

SECTION C

Answer any five questions in one paragraph. Each question carries four marks.

(5×4 = 20 Marks)

26. Describe the POSDCORB view of social welfare administration.
27. Describe the structure and functions of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
28. Describe the role of planning institutions in India.
29. What are the key objectives of Human Resource Management (HRM) in social welfare agencies?
30. Describe the Institutional Theory of Social Welfare.
31. What are the major challenges currently faced in managing human resources within welfare administration?
32. Discuss the importance of Kerala-specific policies for children, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities
33. Discuss the administrative importance of Welfare Fund Boards for workers in the unorganized sector.

SECTION D

Answer any three questions in two pages. Each question carries ten marks.

(3×10 =30 Marks)

34. Examine the nature of social welfare administration as a blend of art and science.
35. Discuss the nature and process of social policy formulation in India.
36. Critically examine the role of social policy in promoting social justice and equality in India.
37. Analyse the significance of social planning in achieving balanced and inclusive development.
38. Provide a detailed description of the institutional framework and legislative landscape of social welfare administration in contemporary Kerala.
39. Analyze how Kerala's welfare system adapted during the post-1991 liberalization era, focusing on the concepts of decentralization and community participation.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

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