

Government Freebie Schemes: An Assessment of Their Impact on the Economic Status and Expectations of Beneficiaries

Dr. S. Deepa Lakshmi

Guest Faculty,

Department of Economics,

Government Arts college for women,

Salem.

Abstract

Freebies will help the people who are in the below poverty line and of the lesser developed states, especially if they are large in numbers, to be uplifted from poverty. Generally, the provision of a series of promises done by political parties by providing free electricity, free public transport, free water, and waiver of pending bills and loans are often regarded as freebies. For the last 3 decades the state Government offered more freebies in the form of goods and services, in which few notable freebies are No cost Rice, free electricity to agricultural purposes and domestic use, Color TV, Table Fan, Grinder and Mixture Grinder, Cattles, Dhothi, Saree, Electricity, Lap-top, Cycle, Gold for Mangalyam, Cheppal, Food, Free transportation for Ladies, etc. The major objectives of this research are to find out the real impact of state (especially Govt. of Tamilnadu) freebies on changing the economic status of the beneficiaries and a usually such freebies become need/demand-based depending on the situation in question. 20% more likely to talk about something they received for free. It is found that most of freebies are underutilized and majority of them are expecting in the form of cash and assured employment. This research undertaken in Krishnagiri District and conducted survey from 672 beneficiaries having "Green Ration Card". It is concluded that the No cost Lap-top, Cattles, free electricity to agricultural purposes and Rice are highly beneficial and supported for livelihood of the economically backward people.

Keywords: Freebies, Beneficiaries, Green Ration Card and Economically backward people

I. INTRODUCTION

Concept and Debate on Freebies and Welfare Schemes

The term “freebie” generally refers to a good, service, or benefit provided to an individual without direct payment. In commercial usage, the term commonly denotes promotional goods or services distributed free of charge to attract consumers. In the political and public-policy context, however, the term has acquired a broader meaning. During election periods, political parties may promise voters a variety of free or subsidized goods and services, including electricity, drinking water, laptops, bicycles, household appliances, food grains, transportation facilities, and financial assistance. Following the formation of government, such electoral commitments may be implemented through various welfare schemes financed through public revenues. State governments allocate substantial financial resources to implement welfare programmes and provide benefits to economically and socially disadvantaged sections of society. These schemes are generally intended to reduce household expenditure, improve access to essential goods and services, strengthen livelihoods, and promote social welfare. However, the requirements and expectations of economically disadvantaged households may differ considerably according to their geographical location, occupation, income, demographic characteristics, and socio-economic conditions. Consequently, a welfare measure that is highly beneficial to one group may have limited relevance to another. This highlights the importance of designing welfare programmes according to the specific needs of different sections of the population rather than adopting a uniform approach.

Freebies and Food Security

The debate surrounding freebies needs to be considered in the broader context of social protection and poverty reduction. Public welfare programmes such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) have played an important role in improving food security among economically vulnerable households. Research on India's PDS has highlighted the potential relationship between effective food distribution and improvements in household food security and poverty-related outcomes. In several states, improvements in the functioning of the PDS have strengthened access to essential food grains among poor households. The debate also raises an important conceptual question: What constitutes a freebie? Not every publicly funded welfare intervention can necessarily be classified as a freebie. There is an important distinction between welfare measures intended to address basic needs and economically productive capabilities and measures primarily designed as short-term political inducements. For example, questions may arise regarding whether subsidized or free food grains distributed through the PDS, emergency food assistance during a crisis, LPG subsidies, pensions for widows and elderly

persons, employment guarantees, maternity benefits, housing assistance, and other social-security measures should be categorized as freebies. These programmes are generally intended to provide social protection and reduce economic vulnerability.

The Freebie Debate in Tamil Nadu

The debate over welfare schemes and freebies has particular significance in Tamil Nadu. The state's political economy has historically been characterized by extensive public provisioning and welfare-oriented policies. Dravidian political movements have placed considerable emphasis on social justice, redistribution, human development, and access to essential public services. Successive governments led by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) have introduced several welfare-oriented programmes addressing nutrition, education, healthcare, women's welfare, employment support, and household consumption.

Examples of major welfare interventions associated with Tamil Nadu include the Nutritious Noon Meal Programme, free or subsidized educational support, distribution of laptops to students, marriage assistance, maternity-related benefits, Amma Canteens, and several other social-welfare initiatives. Such programmes have sought to improve access to essential goods and services among economically disadvantaged sections of society.

The expansion of welfare programmes in Tamil Nadu has also been discussed in the context of structural changes in the state's economy. The transition from an agriculture-dominated economy towards manufacturing and services has generated new employment opportunities but has not necessarily absorbed all workers displaced or underemployed in traditional agricultural activities. In this context, welfare programmes have functioned as mechanisms for reducing household economic vulnerability and improving access to essential services.

Some scholars have therefore argued that describing all welfare programmes as “freebies” may oversimplify the nature of Tamil Nadu's social-policy framework. From this perspective, welfare expenditure can be interpreted as an expression of public action aimed at addressing social and economic inequalities rather than merely as a form of political patronage or vote-buying. At the same time, critics argue that excessive expenditure on recurrent welfare transfers may reduce the resources available for productive investment, infrastructure, employment generation, and long-term economic development.

Welfare, Poverty and Human Development

The impact of welfare programmes should therefore be assessed not only in terms of their immediate fiscal cost but also in terms of their social and economic outcomes. Welfare measures relating to food security, pensions, housing,

healthcare, education, nutrition, and women's welfare can substantially reduce household expenditure and improve the standard of living of vulnerable populations. Such programmes do not necessarily eliminate poverty permanently. However, they can reduce the severity of poverty and economic vulnerability by ensuring access to essential goods and services. For households facing extreme deprivation, welfare assistance can contribute to food security, educational participation, healthcare access, and a basic standard of living. In this sense, welfare programmes can provide a foundation for individuals and families to lead a life with greater economic security and dignity. At the same time, the long-term effectiveness of welfare policies depends on whether they are accompanied by measures that enhance productive capacity. Employment generation, skill development, quality education, healthcare, infrastructure development, access to credit, and opportunities for entrepreneurship can complement welfare assistance and help households move towards greater economic independence.

Political and Economic Dimensions of Freebies

The political economy of freebies remains a subject of considerable debate in India. Supporters argue that welfare schemes are necessary to protect vulnerable populations and redistribute the benefits of economic growth. Critics, on the other hand, contend that excessive or poorly targeted freebies can create fiscal pressures, encourage dependency, distort public expenditure priorities, and potentially reduce investment in productive sectors.

The debate has also attracted judicial and public attention in Tamil Nadu. Concerns have occasionally been expressed regarding the use of highly visible consumer goods and cash benefits as electoral promises and the possibility that such promises could influence voter behaviour. Critics have argued that governments should give greater priority to employment generation, infrastructure development, healthcare, education, agricultural development, and other productive investments.

However, the classification of a public benefit as a “freebie” requires careful consideration. A welfare intervention that improves human capital, reduces poverty, promotes health and education, or strengthens productive capacity may generate long-term economic and social returns. Therefore, the evaluation of welfare schemes should consider their cost, targeting, utilization, effectiveness, sustainability, and measurable impact on beneficiaries, rather than merely whether the benefit is provided without direct payment.

Need for a Balanced Approach

There is therefore a continuing need to distinguish between essential welfare measures and fiscally unsustainable or poorly targeted benefits. Welfare policies should be designed based on objective assessments of beneficiaries' needs

and should prioritize vulnerable groups such as women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, low-income households, and other disadvantaged communities.

A balanced approach should combine immediate social protection with long-term measures for economic empowerment. Food security, healthcare, education, housing, pensions, and other essential welfare provisions can protect vulnerable households from severe deprivation. At the same time, employment opportunities, skill development, entrepreneurship, infrastructure, agricultural investment, and access to financial resources can strengthen their capacity to achieve sustainable improvements in income and living standards.

Welfare Schemes and Their Contribution to Tamil Nadu's Economic Development

An article published in *The Week* on 4 September 2022 by Lakshmi Subramanian examined the contribution of welfare-oriented schemes, commonly described as “freebies”, to the socio-economic development of Tamil Nadu. The article illustrates the practical impact of welfare measures through the experience of a young domestic worker residing in Chennai. Before the introduction of free public bus travel for women, she reportedly spent approximately ₹150 per day on commuting to work. The scheme enabled her to save a substantial portion of this expenditure, which she could subsequently use for the education and other needs of her children. This example demonstrates how a welfare intervention can reduce household expenditure and indirectly improve the economic well-being of vulnerable families.

The article also highlighted the broader social and economic implications of free bus travel for women. According to the views cited in the article, the scheme has significantly benefited employed women and female college students, who constitute a substantial proportion of public transport users in the state. The reduction in commuting costs has enabled women to travel more independently and has reduced their dependence on family members for transportation expenses. In addition to providing direct financial savings, the scheme has encouraged women's participation in employment, education, and social activities outside the household. Thus, the intervention can be viewed not merely as a transport subsidy but also as a measure contributing to women's economic empowerment and social mobility.

Welfare-oriented policies have a long history in Tamil Nadu's political and economic development. The state's welfare model can be traced back to the period when food insecurity and poverty were major social concerns. In 1967, C.N. Annadurai of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) emphasized subsidized rice as a major electoral promise. Although the financial sustainability of the initial

proposal became a concern, the commitment to welfare-oriented public policy continued to influence the state's political economy.

Another important milestone was the development of the school nutrition programme. After becoming Chief Minister in 1977, M.G. Ramachandran of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) expanded the existing school meal programme with the objective of encouraging school attendance and improving children's nutrition. Subsequent governments led by M. Karunanidhi and J. Jayalalithaa further expanded welfare interventions relating to school meals, uniforms, footwear, and educational support. More recently, the welfare approach has been extended to include breakfast programmes for schoolchildren.

The scope of welfare-oriented electoral commitments expanded considerably during the 2000s. During the 2006 Assembly election, the DMK included several household-oriented welfare measures in its manifesto, including the distribution of colour televisions, cooking equipment, electricity-related assistance, and loan waivers for selected occupational groups. Subsequently, the AIADMK government introduced and expanded several consumer-oriented welfare programmes, including the distribution of mixer grinders, fans, and other household appliances. Further welfare commitments included bicycles, marriage assistance, and subsidized mobility-related schemes.

Despite substantial expenditure on welfare programmes, Tamil Nadu has simultaneously experienced significant economic and social development. The state's experience therefore raises an important question about whether welfare expenditure should necessarily be interpreted as economically unproductive expenditure. Supporters of the Tamil Nadu welfare model argue that appropriately designed welfare interventions can reduce household expenditure, improve human capital, increase access to education and healthcare, promote women's participation in the workforce, and contribute to more inclusive economic growth.

The article further suggests that welfare priorities should be determined according to the socio-economic and geographical characteristics of individual states. The type of welfare intervention required in one region may not necessarily be relevant to another. For example, access to drinking water may be a more pressing concern in water-scarce regions, while other states may prioritize entrepreneurship incentives, educational assistance, social security, or women's mobility.

Therefore, welfare policy should be based on the actual needs of the population rather than following a uniform model across all regions. In the case of Tamil Nadu, educational assistance, nutrition programmes, marriage-related support, and subsidized or free public transportation have been presented as instruments that can contribute to social inclusion and women's empowerment.

The experience of Tamil Nadu demonstrates that welfare schemes can have both direct and indirect economic effects. Direct effects include reductions in household expenditure and increased access to essential goods and services, while indirect effects may include improved school attendance, greater women's mobility, increased labour-force participation, enhanced human capital, and improved household welfare. Consequently, the economic impact of welfare schemes should be evaluated not merely on the basis of their fiscal cost but also in terms of their contribution to poverty reduction, social inclusion, human development, and long-term economic participation.

Krishnagiri District – An Overview

Krishnagiri District is known for its scenic landscape, hills, valleys, agricultural activities, and diverse cultural heritage. The district was carved out of the erstwhile Dharmapuri District and was established as the 30th district of Tamil Nadu on 9 February 2004. The name “Krishnagiri” is generally associated with the words *Krishna*, meaning black, and *Giri*, meaning hill, reflecting the presence of dark-coloured granite hills in the region. The district also has historical associations with the Vijayanagara ruler Krishna Deva Raya, and the name is sometimes attributed to this historical connection.

Krishnagiri District is bounded by Vellore and Tiruvannamalai districts to the east, Karnataka State to the west, Andhra Pradesh State to the north, and Dharmapuri District to the south. The district covers an area of approximately 5,143 square kilometres. Its elevation varies considerably, ranging from about 300 metres to 1,400 metres above mean sea level. Geographically, the district lies approximately between 11°12'N and 12°49'N latitudes and 77°27'E and 78°38'E longitudes.

The district experiences variations in climate because of its geographical and topographical characteristics. The eastern parts generally experience warmer climatic conditions, while the western and elevated areas have comparatively cooler conditions. The district receives an average annual rainfall of approximately 830 mm. The summer season generally extends from March to June, the rainy season from July to November, and the winter season from December to February.

Krishnagiri is characterized by considerable linguistic and religious diversity. Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada are among the major languages spoken in the district. Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity are the major religions followed by the population. The coexistence of different linguistic and religious communities reflects the district's cultural diversity and social integration. Administratively, the district consists of two revenue divisions—Krishnagiri and Hosur—and eight taluks: Krishnagiri, Hosur, Pochampalli, Uthangarai, Shoolagiri, Bargur, Anchetti,

and Denkanikottai. The district also has several panchayat unions and local administrative bodies serving rural and urban populations.

Agriculture

Agriculture is an important economic activity in Krishnagiri District. The major crops cultivated in the district include paddy, maize, ragi, banana, sugarcane, cotton, tamarind, coconut, mango, groundnut, vegetables, and flowers. The district possesses considerable potential for agricultural and horticultural development and provides opportunities for agribusiness and allied activities.

The Regional Agricultural Research Station at Paiyur, functioning under Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, has played an important role in agricultural research and technology transfer in the region. The research station undertakes activities relating to crop improvement, development of suitable agricultural technologies, and dissemination of improved cultivation practices among farmers. Research and extension activities have contributed to the adoption of improved varieties and modern cultivation techniques.

The district is also endowed with considerable forest resources and biodiversity. Various timber species, including rosewood, teak, and sandalwood, are found in the region. Several medicinal plants and minor forest products are also available. Trees such as *Cassia fistula* and *Pongamia pinnata* are found in different parts of the district. Pongamia seeds can be used for extracting oil, which has potential applications as a biofuel.

Minerals and Industries

Krishnagiri District is well known for its granite resources. Multicoloured granite, popularly known as “Paradise” granite, is an important mineral resource of the district. Black granite is also available in areas around Hosur and Denkanikottai. Several granite processing units operate in and around Hosur, where granite blocks are processed into polished slabs and other finished products. The granite industry contributes significantly to the industrial and export activities of the district. Processed granite products are marketed both domestically and internationally. The availability of raw materials, industrial land, transportation facilities, and other supporting infrastructure has contributed to the development of the granite-processing sector.

Other mineral resources found in the district include quartz and limestone, particularly in areas such as Denkanikottai and Uthangarai.

Rivers

The major rivers flowing through Krishnagiri District include the Kaveri and South Pennar. The Kaveri enters the district through the southwestern part of Denkanikottai Taluk and forms important natural features before continuing towards the neighbouring districts.

The South Pennar River originates in Karnataka and flows through parts of Hosur, Krishnagiri, and Uthangarai. The Vanniyar and Markanda rivers are among the tributaries associated with the South Pennar system. These rivers and their associated water resources are important for irrigation and agricultural activities in the district.

Reservoirs and Irrigation

Several reservoirs and irrigation structures contribute to agricultural development in Krishnagiri District. Important irrigation sources include the Krishnagiri Reservoir Project, Shoolagiri-Chinnar Reservoir, Thangarai Reservoir, Pambar Reservoir, Kelavarapalli Reservoir Project, and Barur Tank.

These water resources support irrigation and contribute to agricultural production in different parts of the district. According to the data considered for the study, these irrigation sources collectively support approximately 18,965 hectares of agricultural land.

Local Bodies

The district includes urban and rural local administrative institutions. Hosur Corporation and Krishnagiri Municipality are important urban local bodies. Town Panchayats include Uthangarai, Kaveripattinam, Kelamangalam, Bargur, Denkanikottai, and Nagojanahalli, among others.

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a systematic research methodology to examine the impact of State Government welfare schemes, commonly referred to as “freebies”, on the economic status and expectations of economically disadvantaged beneficiaries in Krishnagiri District.

Primary data were collected using a structured interview schedule from 672 beneficiaries holding Green Ration Cards. The respondents were selected from different geographical and socio-economic settings within the district. Secondary data were also collected from government publications, official reports, books, journals, research studies, and other relevant sources.

The collected data were systematically classified, tabulated, analysed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical techniques. The findings of the analysis form the basis for drawing conclusions and making suitable suggestions regarding the effectiveness, utilization, and future orientation of welfare schemes.

Scope Of the Study

The study focuses on male and female residents of Krishnagiri District who possess Green Ration Cards and belong predominantly to economically disadvantaged sections of society. The respondents comprise beneficiaries of various State Government welfare schemes.

The study covers different categories of beneficiaries, including housewives, male household members, farmers, and parents of children studying in government schools. By examining beneficiaries from different socio-economic backgrounds, the study attempts to understand their awareness, utilization, perceived benefits, economic impact, and expectations concerning State Government welfare measures.

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The descriptive approach was considered appropriate because the study aims to obtain a systematic, clear, and comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic characteristics of beneficiaries, their awareness and utilization of welfare schemes, and their expectations regarding future welfare interventions.

Objectives of the Study

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the impact of State Government welfare schemes on the economic status of economically disadvantaged beneficiaries.
2. To assess the expectations of economically disadvantaged people regarding welfare schemes and identify the types of assistance they consider most beneficial for improving their livelihoods.
3. To examine the awareness and reach of various State Government welfare schemes among economically disadvantaged beneficiaries.
4. To assess the extent to which beneficiaries utilize the welfare benefits provided by the Government.
5. To identify the major factors influencing beneficiaries' perceptions regarding the effectiveness and usefulness of welfare schemes.

Limitations Of the Study

1. The study was confined to Green Ration Card holders in Krishnagiri District and therefore the findings may not be directly generalizable to the entire population of Tamil Nadu.
2. The study was conducted within a limited period, which restricted the time available for extensive data collection and follow-up investigation.
3. The level of awareness regarding different welfare schemes varied among respondents. Some beneficiaries were not fully aware of all the schemes offered by the Government.
4. The study relied substantially on responses provided by beneficiaries, and therefore the findings may be influenced by individual perceptions, recall, and personal experiences.

5. The effectiveness and utilization of welfare schemes may vary according to location, occupation, income, family structure, and other socio-economic characteristics, which may create differences among beneficiary groups.

Data Source

The study relied primarily on primary data collected directly from beneficiaries. A structured and non-disguised interview schedule was prepared to obtain information relating to the respondents' socio-economic characteristics, awareness of welfare schemes, utilization of benefits, economic impact, and expectations.

The interview-schedule method was adopted because it enabled the researchers to collect relevant and comparable information directly from respondents, including those who might have difficulty completing a self-administered questionnaire.

Secondary data were also collected from government reports, official publications, research articles, books, journals, statistical reports, and other relevant sources to supplement and contextualize the primary findings.

Population, Sample Size and Sampling Design

The population of the study consists of economically disadvantaged beneficiaries holding Green Ration Cards in Krishnagiri District. A sample of 672 respondents was selected for the study. The study employed a convenience sampling technique, whereby respondents who met the specified criteria and were accessible to the researchers during the period of data collection were included in the sample. The respondents were drawn from rural, urban, and tribal areas of the district to obtain representation from different geographical settings.

Study Area and Period of the Study

The study was conducted in Krishnagiri District of Tamil Nadu, covering all eight taluks:

- Krishnagiri
- Hosur
- Pochampalli
- Uthangarai
- Shoolagiri
- Bargur
- Anchetti
- Denkanikottai

The survey covered respondents from rural, urban, and tribal areas in order to capture variations in the awareness, accessibility, utilization, and expectations relating to State Government welfare schemes.

General Findings of the Study

The major findings of the study based on the responses of 672 beneficiaries are presented below:

1. Gender: Out of the 672 respondents, 497 (74.0 per cent) were female and 175 (26.0 per cent) were male, indicating that female beneficiaries constituted a substantial majority of the sample.
2. Family Monthly Income: A majority of the respondents (55 per cent) reported that their monthly family income was up to ₹5,000, indicating the economically vulnerable nature of the beneficiary households covered by the study.
3. Receipt of Government Freebies: About 64 per cent (430 respondents) reported that they had received all the welfare benefits/freebies considered in the study, while the remaining 36 per cent had received only some of the benefits.
4. Utilization of Freebies: A substantial proportion (68 per cent) of the respondents reported that they were not using the freebies received from the Government. This indicates a considerable degree of underutilization of the welfare benefits provided.
5. Relevance to Livelihood: Only 22 per cent of the respondents considered the freebies received from the Government to be useful and relevant to their livelihood, whereas 78 per cent felt that the benefits were not sufficiently useful or relevant to their livelihood requirements.
6. Major Welfare Benefits Received: Among the 672 respondents, 98 per cent received rice, 96 per cent received grocery items, 90 per cent received edible oil, 72 per cent received free dhotis and sarees, and 98 per cent received cash assistance. About 3 per cent received cattle or other farm animals. Further, 45 per cent received free domestic electricity, 42 per cent received free household appliances such as fans and mixer/grinders, 41 per cent received televisions, 30 per cent benefited from free bus travel for women, and 12 per cent received other welfare benefits.
7. Children Studying in Government Schools: About 73 per cent of the respondents reported that their children were studying in Government schools, while 27 per cent reported that their children were not studying in Government schools.
8. Benefits Received by School-Going Children: Among the 492 respondents whose children were studying in Government schools, 24 per cent reported receiving bicycles, 15 per cent received laptops, 22 per cent received toothpaste or dental-care materials, 47 per cent received footwear, 38 per cent received sanitary napkins, 49 per cent received notebooks and books, 49 per

cent received school uniforms, and 25 per cent received other educational welfare benefits.

9. Underutilization of Welfare Benefits: About 83 per cent of the respondents reported that they did not frequently or regularly use the welfare benefits received. This indicates a significant level of underutilization of certain welfare goods.
10. Disposal of Unused Benefits: Among the 438 respondents who reported that they were not maintaining or using the welfare goods received, 60 per cent had sold the items, 17 per cent had given them to others, and 23 per cent had stored them in lofts or other unused spaces. This finding indicates that some goods distributed under welfare schemes may not correspond adequately to the actual needs of beneficiaries.
11. Agricultural Welfare Benefits: A total of 312 beneficiaries reported receiving welfare benefits related to agriculture. Among them, 99 per cent benefited from free electricity for agricultural purposes, 68 per cent received subsidized fertilizers, 34 per cent received subsidized seeds, 34 per cent received subsidized pesticides, and 36 per cent received subsidies for purchasing agricultural implements and machinery.
12. Impact on Economic Status: The findings indicate that 68 per cent of the respondents felt that the welfare benefits received had not brought about any significant change in their economic status and that they continued to live under substantially similar economic conditions. In contrast, 32 per cent reported that the welfare benefits had contributed to an improvement in their economic status.
13. Awareness of the Government Providing the Benefits: Only 27 per cent of the respondents were able to clearly recall the name of the Government or Chief Minister associated with the provision of the welfare benefits. About 12 per cent reported partial or uncertain recall, while 61 per cent could not recall the name. This suggests that the beneficiaries' awareness of the political or administrative source of welfare programmers was relatively limited.

Perceived Usefulness and Essentiality of Welfare Benefits

The respondents were also asked to identify the welfare benefits they considered useful and essential for improving their livelihood. Cash assistance and cattle/farm animals received the highest level of support, with 100 per cent of the beneficiaries considering them essential for livelihood improvement. This was followed by free rice, grocery items, and edible oil, which were considered useful by approximately 98 per cent of the beneficiaries. Other benefits were also considered useful at varying levels, including free domestic electricity (95 per cent), Pongal Festival assistance (80 per cent), free dhotis and sarees (55 per cent), free

bus travel for women (55 per cent), and household appliances such as fans and mixer/grinders (54 per cent). Other welfare benefits received relatively lower levels of preference. These findings suggest that beneficiaries tend to attach greater importance to benefits that directly reduce household expenditure or generate income and livelihood opportunities.

General Expectations of Beneficiaries

The major expectations expressed by the beneficiaries regarding their economic development and livelihood improvement are as follows:

1. A substantial majority (98 per cent) of economically disadvantaged beneficiaries expected cash assistance to meet essential household and personal expenses.
2. About 86 per cent of the beneficiaries considered laptops, cattle, free electricity for agricultural purposes, and rice to be particularly important for their development and livelihood.
3. About 78 per cent of the beneficiaries reported that they were well aware of welfare schemes provided through the Public Distribution System (PDS) and ration shops.
4. Welfare programmes such as Uzhavar Sandhai, mini-bus services, mid-day meals, free bus travel for women, and free electricity for domestic and agricultural purposes received favourable responses from the beneficiaries.
5. A significant finding is that many respondents preferred sustainable sources of income rather than repeated distribution of consumer goods. They expressed a preference for permanent employment and stable income opportunities to meet daily household expenses and support their children's education.
6. The expectations of beneficiaries varied according to their geographical location, occupation, economic status, and livelihood requirements. This indicates that a uniform welfare approach may not adequately address the needs of all sections of the population.

II. CONCLUSION

The study provides an empirical assessment of the impact, utilization, and expectations associated with government welfare schemes among economically disadvantaged beneficiaries in Krishnagiri District. The findings reveal that although welfare programmes provide important forms of assistance to vulnerable households, their effectiveness varies considerably according to the nature and relevance of the benefit provided. A major finding is that 83 per cent of the respondents reported that the welfare goods received were not used frequently or regularly, indicating substantial underutilization. Among those who were not using the goods, 60 per cent had sold them, 17 per cent had given them to others, and 23 per cent had stored them without regular use. Furthermore, 78 per cent of

respondents considered the benefits received to be less relevant to their livelihood requirements. These findings suggest that the design and targeting of welfare schemes should take greater account of the actual needs and circumstances of beneficiaries. At the same time, certain welfare interventions were found to provide significant benefits. Rice, cattle or farm animals, free agricultural electricity, and laptops were identified as particularly useful by beneficiaries. These benefits can contribute to household food security, agricultural productivity, education, and livelihood development. The findings therefore indicate that welfare programmers should not be evaluated collectively; rather, individual schemes should be assessed according to their utilization, economic relevance, and measurable impact on beneficiaries. The study also reveals that welfare benefits alone have not resulted in substantial economic transformation for a majority of the respondents. While 32 per cent reported an improvement in their economic status, 68 per cent stated that their economic condition had not changed significantly. This suggests that welfare assistance may provide short-term consumption support but may not necessarily generate sustainable improvements in household income. Another important finding is that beneficiaries increasingly expect cash assistance, permanent employment, and stable income opportunities rather than only consumer goods. This indicates a shift in expectations from short-term welfare support towards sustainable livelihood opportunities. Employment generation, skill development, entrepreneurship, agricultural support, and income-generating activities could therefore complement existing welfare programmes. The study also highlights differences in welfare requirements according to location, occupation, and socio-economic circumstances. Therefore, welfare policies should increasingly adopt a need-based and beneficiary-oriented approach rather than applying identical benefits uniformly across all communities.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following measures are suggested:

1. Government expenditure on welfare schemes should increasingly prioritize education, employment generation, skill development, and productive infrastructure.
2. Greater emphasis may be placed on special coaching programmes for higher-education entrance examinations and competitive examinations, particularly for students from economically disadvantaged families.
3. Welfare programmes should promote permanent employment and sustainable income-generation opportunities rather than relying exclusively on the distribution of consumer goods.

4. Agricultural beneficiaries should be provided with appropriate support for electricity, irrigation, machinery, seeds, fertilizers, technology, and market access according to their actual requirements.
5. Welfare benefits should be segmented according to location, occupation, income, age, gender, and livelihood requirements, as the needs of beneficiaries vary considerably.
6. Before introducing or expanding a welfare scheme, the Government should undertake beneficiary-needs assessments and periodic impact evaluations to determine whether the benefits are actually being utilized.
7. Greater awareness should be created regarding the objectives, eligibility criteria, and procedures associated with welfare schemes so that beneficiaries can make effective use of the available support.
8. Resources saved through the rationalization of underutilized schemes could be redirected towards healthcare, education, employment, rural infrastructure, agricultural development, and care facilities for elderly persons and children.

III.REFERENCE

1. Sivapandi, A. (2024). Assessing the impact of Prime Minister Welfare Schemes on beneficiaries with special reference to Tamil Nadu, India. *Shanlax International Journal of Management*, 11(3), 39–43.
2. Bhalla, S., Bhasin, K., & Virmani, A. (2022). Pandemic, poverty, and inequality: Evidence from India (IMF Working Paper No. 2022/069). International Monetary Fund
3. Afridi, F., Mukhopadhyay, A., & Sahoo, S. (2016). Female labor force participation and child education in India: The effect of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. *IZA Journal of Labor & Development*, 5.
4. Raising consumption through India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. (2017). *World Development*, 96, 245–263
5. Does the old-age pension scheme improve household welfare? Evidence from India. (2020). *World Development*.
6. Government transfers, COVID-19 shock, and food insecurity: Evidence from rural households in India. (2022).
7. Women's work, never done, now paid: Assessing Tamil Nadu's Urimai Thogai scheme. *World Development*.