

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q17

'Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India remain mere show pieces until and unless they are backed by political will'. Discuss with reference to the performance of the major poverty alleviation programmes in India. (250 words).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · GS II · 15 marks · Poverty and Hunger

Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

Core demand of the question

- 'Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India remain mere show pieces until and unless they are backed by political will'. Discuss with reference to the performance of the major poverty alleviation programmes in India

Revision summary

Political will is timely money, last-mile staff, and protection of the poor against local capture.

IRDP/SGSY often looked like showpieces because assets and targeting failed.

MGNREGA and NFSA/PDS work where States own them and fail where they are starved.

PMGSY and rural housing show that visible, ring-fenced assets can perform better than fuzzy subsidies.

The quote is mostly right; design still matters alongside will.

Introduction

Poverty alleviation in India is a stack of wage, food, asset, housing and livelihood programmes, not one scheme. Political will means budgets on time, staff at the last mile, honest targeting, and a willingness to let the poor enforce rights against the local powerful. Without that will, even a well-drafted law becomes a board on a wall. Performance of the major programmes shows both the cost of missing will and the gain when will appears.

Body**Why political will sits at the centre**

- Poverty is local power as much as missing income. A programme that threatens contractors, ration dealers, or land-controllers needs protection from the top and from the law, not only a guideline PDF.
- Federal finance, State capacity, and panchayat agency all depend on parties treating the poor as a constituency worth angering other lobbies for.
- Showpiece means a launch, a logo, and a thin evaluation. Will means social audits that sting, vacancies filled, and delays punished.

Major programmes and their performance

- Integrated Rural Development Programme and later SGSY mixed assets and subsidy. Leakage, poor asset quality, and one-off cattle-and-pump stories made them easy to call showpieces. Will failed at selection and follow-up, not only at the **Planning Commission**.
- **MGNREGA (2005)** is the test case of will. Where States paid wages on time, opened works in peak distress, and allowed social audits, rural poverty and distress migration eased. Where funds were throttled, works delayed, and audits blocked, it became a notice-board right. Performance tracks political ownership more than the text of the Act.
- Public Distribution System and then the **National Food Security Act, 2013**, cut hunger where States ran e-PoS, sealed leaks, and expanded coverage; they failed where cards were missing and grain was diverted. The same central law, different State will.
- National Rural Livelihoods Mission and SHG credit work when federations are not captured and when markets exist. Without will, revolving funds stop at the book.
- Housing (Indira Awaas, then PMAY-G) and rural roads (**PMGSY**) show that engineering programmes with ring-fenced money and visible assets often outperform fuzzy "beneficiary" subsidy schemes - partly because roads and houses are harder to hide, which is a kind of built-in will.
- Urban missions (earlier SJSRY, then NULM, and housing for the urban poor) lagged because urban poor votes are fragmented and municipal capacity is weak. Under-performance here is political geography, not a mystery of design.
- Direct Benefit Transfer, Aadhaar seeding, and Jan Dhan reduced some ghost leakage and created new exclusion errors. Technology is not will; it can serve will or decorate its absence.

Discussing the quote

- The quote is largely right for IRDP-type subsidy and for any right-based Act that the treasury starves.
- **It is too sweeping if it ignores design:** a badly targeted scheme can fail even with speeches of will, and a simple infrastructure scheme can succeed with boring bureaucratic continuity.
- Best performance has come when law, finance, and local organisation align - MGNREGA plus PDS in committed States, **PMGSY** nationwide, NFSA in reforming States.
- Political will must also mean the will to measure poverty honestly and to accept that growth, health, and education are poverty policy, not only named "alleviation" yojanas.

What would make programmes more than showpieces

- Statutory rights with time-bound wages and food, independent social audit, and panchayat control of plans.
- Stable, on-budget finance rather than year-end rushes.
- **Convergence:** livelihood, housing, health and work on the same poor household, which needs a ministry that can lose turf.

Flow diagram

Political will -> Budget staff audit
 Budget staff audit -> MGNREGA NFSA NRLM
 Budget staff audit -> PMGSY PMAY
 No will -> Showpiece leakage delay
 MGNREGA NFSA NRLM -> Poverty reduction
 Showpiece leakage delay -> Persistent poverty

Conclusion

Major poverty programmes perform when political will funds them, staffs them, and defends the poor against local capture, as seen in better MGNREGA and PDS States and in visible assets like **PMGSY**. They remain showpieces when subsidy lists, delayed wages, and starved rights laws meet a silent treasury. The quote is a fair diagnosis of Indian poverty policy, provided design quality is not ignored.

Facts & figures

MGNREGA, 2005

Legal right to rural wage work; performance varies sharply by State on wage delay, works and social audit.

National Food Security Act, 2013

Legal entitlement to subsidised grain for eligible households; delivery depends on State PDS reform.

DAY-NRLM

Livelihood mission through SHGs; success needs federations and markets, not only revolving funds on paper.

PMGSY

Rural roads programme with relatively ring-fenced finance and measurable assets.

IRDP / SGSY

Older self-employment subsidy lines criticised for leakage and poor-quality assets.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/gs-2/2017/poverty-alleviation-programmes-in-india-remain-mere-show-pieces-until-and-unless-they-are-backed-by-political-will-discuss-with-reference-to-the-performance-of-the-major-poverty-alleviation-programmes-in-india-250-words/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com