



Laadli Yojana in Delhi: A Critical Appraisal of Public Policy and Planning

PRERNA SIWACH
Research Scholar
Department of Geography
University of Delhi

MAANSI MALIK
Research Scholar
Department of Geography
University of Delhi

Abstract:

A public policy is a deliberate and carefully studied decision that provides guidance for addressing selected public concerns. Policies reflect the long term objectives, devolution of decision making power to where potential contributions are greatest. Laadli yojana is an initiative to reduce discriminatory child sex ratio. The main objective of the study is to assess the level of awareness that people have regarding policies and to evaluate their functioning whether they have generated the desired results or not. The paper traces the broader perspective that people having regarding public policies.

Keywords: *Child sex ratio, Human development. Laadli yojana, Public policy and planning*

1. Introduction

Policy making and planning are core elements of public governance. A public policy is a deliberate and carefully studied decision that provides guidance for addressing selected public concerns. Policy making is 'the process by which governments translate their political vision into programmes and actions to deliver 'outcomes', in other words the desired changes in the real world. A human development perspective on policy analysis holds that:

1. The success of policies should be assessed according to whether they promote people's freedoms and choices.
2. Policies should respect people's agency and be specifically based on their ability to participate.

Social welfare policy is defined as the strategy of action indicating the means and methods adopted to implement the social welfare services. Social Welfare Services include programmes which are intended to cater to the needs of persons and groups who, by reason of some handicaps - social, economic, physical are unable to avail of or are traditionally denied the amenities and services provided by the community. In other words, the term social welfare service refers to the field which offers services for those who need special care (Dubey, 1971). We are a welfare state in India. The state takes upon itself the role of a guardian; not only for protecting the liberty of the people, and maintaining the sovereignty of the nation, but the sovereign state is also required to take care of the wellbeing of its people. For decades, the state, the media and non-governmental organisations have been raising the alarm about discrimination against the girl child and the declining sex ratio. Since then both the central and the state governments have earmarked a number of schemes and programmes for the education of girls all intended to persuade families to end discrimination. The old perception that it is primarily poverty that drives families to abort the female foetus has long since had to be abandoned. The sex ratio is extremely poor in some of the wealthier states such as Haryana and Punjab. Thus

policies are required which enhance the status of the girl child and further empower them. These incentive based schemes aim at improving the value of the girl child on the premise that financial benefits would trigger behavioural changes among parents and communities. In the long run such initiatives hope to ensure the survival and well-being of girls. Though most of these schemes are steps in the right direction, very little is known about their implementation and effectiveness.

2. The Objectives

1. To assess the level of awareness among people regarding social welfare schemes or public policies.
2. To present a critical review of programme (scheme) design and assess its strength and weaknesses vis-a-vis its relevance , competence to address the micro issues.
3. To evaluate the achievements of the objectives identified in the light of the services provided under the scheme and evaluate the impact of the policy implemented.

3. Research Methodology

Research design consists of both from as primary

and methodology collecting data secondary as well source.

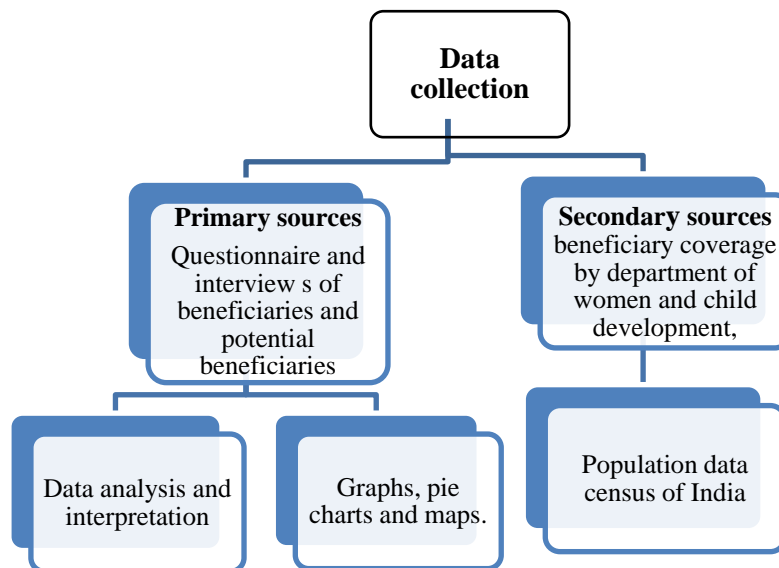


Figure 1.1: Research methodology

The primary data was collected through the analysis of wards and household levels through interviews and field survey. It was collected through the questionnaire method. Data from secondary sources envisages collection of information on details of scheme composition and components, implementation strategy guidelines (including beneficiaries coverage), brought out by the website as well as office of the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India. The data regarding the population provisional has been collected through the primary census abstract, census of India.

4. LAADLI Scheme: A Critical Appraisal

The word Laadli literally means darling, loved or pampered one. First used in a campaign by Population first to generate awareness about declining sex ratio and the value of the girl-child in India in 2005. The word Laadli was to evoke an image of a loving girl child to be the centre of the family's attention. The first such scheme was launched by the Tamil Nadu government in 1992 which was named the Girl Child Protection Scheme (GCPS). The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of NCT of Delhi launched the Delhi Laadli Scheme in 2008 amidst much fanfare. It covers all the ten districts of the NCT of Delhi. The Secretary, Department of Women and Child Development, is the implementing authority for the scheme. At the district level, the district officers 32 of the department implement the scheme. The main objectives of this scheme can be classified under three headings:-

- 1. Educational objectives:** It promotes the education of girl children up to at least pre-college level. Knowledge and awareness will empower them and give them the strength to broaden their horizons and have better ambitions in life. This would lead to better career opportunities for the individual. Also they will become aware of their rights and will stand up for themselves and for other women who are not being treated well by the society.
- 2. Economic objectives:** The scheme offers a monetary incentive to girl children while they are studying in schools. A girl child can get incentive up to Rs. 1 lac in this scheme.
- 3. Social objectives:** This scheme aims at curbing sex determination, foeticide, infanticide and discrimination against girl children. It also aims to improve the sex ratio of the city. The scheme emphasizes that a girl is an asset to a family and not a liability.

5. Service and Coverage Norms

The financial assistance to be given under this scheme is subject to the following **eligibility conditions**.

- (a) The parent/guardian/applicant must be a bonafide resident of the National Capital Territory of Delhi for at least three years preceding the date of application. Ration Card/ Voter ID Card or any other valid identity proof should be attached with the application form.
- (b) The girl child must have been born in Delhi: Birth Certificate issued by the Registrar must be attached.
- (c) The annual income of the parents of a girl child should not exceed Rs 100,000. Income certificate or affidavit should be attached.
- (d) This scheme can be implemented in any recognised government school, MCD School, private school, public school, NDMC School or Delhi cantonment board school provided that the girl child satisfies all the above eligibility conditions.
- (e) The financial assistance under this scheme can be availed by not more than two eligible girls in a particular family Development.

6. Application Process

1. The parents of girls born after 1 January, 2008 can apply for the scheme within one year of the birth of the child.
2. Alternatively, girls taking admission in Class I, VI, IX or XII as well as those passing Class X can apply under this scheme within a period of 90 days from the date of admission, with the help of headmaster/ principal/ class teacher/Laadli coordinator of the school.
3. The application form can be obtained from the nearest authorized branch of State Bank of India/ government schools/ deputy education officer/ deputy director education /Anganwadi centers and district offices, Department of Women and Child and Department of Social Welfare. They have to duly fill up the form and submit the same at the nearest district office of DWCD. The form is available free of cost.
4. Upon receiving the forms, the officers will verify the details entered, check if all necessary documents are attached and then issue acknowledgement letter/ receipt to the selected applicants.
 - a. When an application gets sanctioned, the department will intimate the bank to open bank accounts in the name of the girl child where the money can be transferred.
 - b. It is mandatory to renew the application procedure at each stage.

7. Financial Assistance

Under this scheme, the state government intends to deposit upto Rs.1 lac in an account opened with the State Bank of India in the name of a girl child by the time she attains the age of 18 or at least passes class X. Payment for the child will be deposited in the following manner :-

1. Payment of Rs. 11,000/- if the girl child is born in a Hospital/ Nursing Home/institutions in the NCT of Delhi.
2. Payment of Rs. 10,000/- if the girl child is born outside the above mentioned Hospitals/ Nursing Homes/institutions.

3. Payment of Rs. 5000/- on admission of the child in Class I.
4. Payment of Rs. 5000/- on admission of the child in Class VI.
5. Payment of Rs. 5000/- on admission of the child in Class IX.
6. Payment of Rs. 5000/- on the child's passing the Class X.
7. Payment of Rs. 5000/- on admission of the child in Class XII.

The amount disbursed to them at the end of lock-in-period will vary depending on the stage at which each girl child enters the scheme and registers under it. Financial arrangements for implementation of this scheme have been made with the SBI Life Insurance Company Ltd. and with the State Bank of India providing the front and services for accounting purposes. Two situations are most likely to be there.

- A girl born on or after 1 January 2008, who gets registered under this Scheme right in the first stage and continues applying for it in the other five stages, will get approximately Rs 100,000 at the age of 18.
- Other girls born before 1 January 2008, who get registered under the scheme at a respective stage will receive the amount deposited in their bank accounts along with interest at the age of 18. This amount will therefore be less than Rs 100,000.

8. Analysis and Interpretation

The data has been collected through the primary survey which was based on the technique of random sampling along with secondary data. The sample size is 100. The composition of the sample is diverse as it includes the beneficiaries, potential beneficiaries and people belonging to all the strata of life. As already mentioned the objective of the report is to check the level of awareness that people have regarding the policies and assess their implementation and provide a critical assessment of it.

- Announcing this, Kiran Walia said the scheme introduced in January, 2008 has shown a "positive" impact on improving the sex ratio and also contributed towards enrolment of more girls in the schools and bringing a "much-needed" change in societal attitude towards girls. Though it is evident from the increase in the sex ratio of Delhi over the years which shows a positive change. "Enrolment under Ladli scheme is expected to touch 2.5 lakh". There has been a steady increase in the number of beneficiaries. Figure 1.3 shows the spatial distribution of the number of beneficiaries across the region. The highest number of beneficiaries can be seen in the north east district whereas the lowest registration has been recorded in New Delhi constituency.

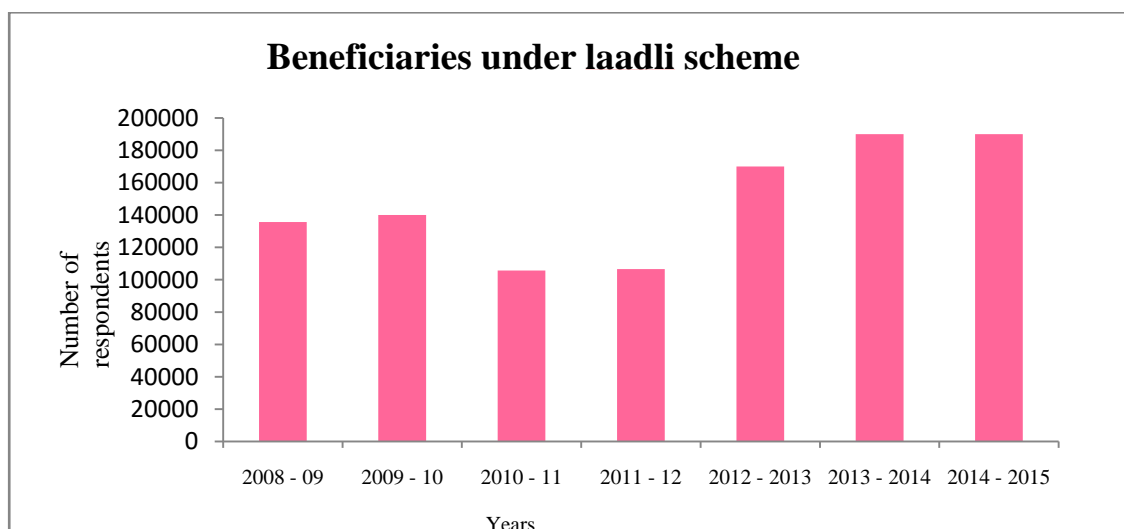


Figure 1.2 : Beneficiaries under the scheme

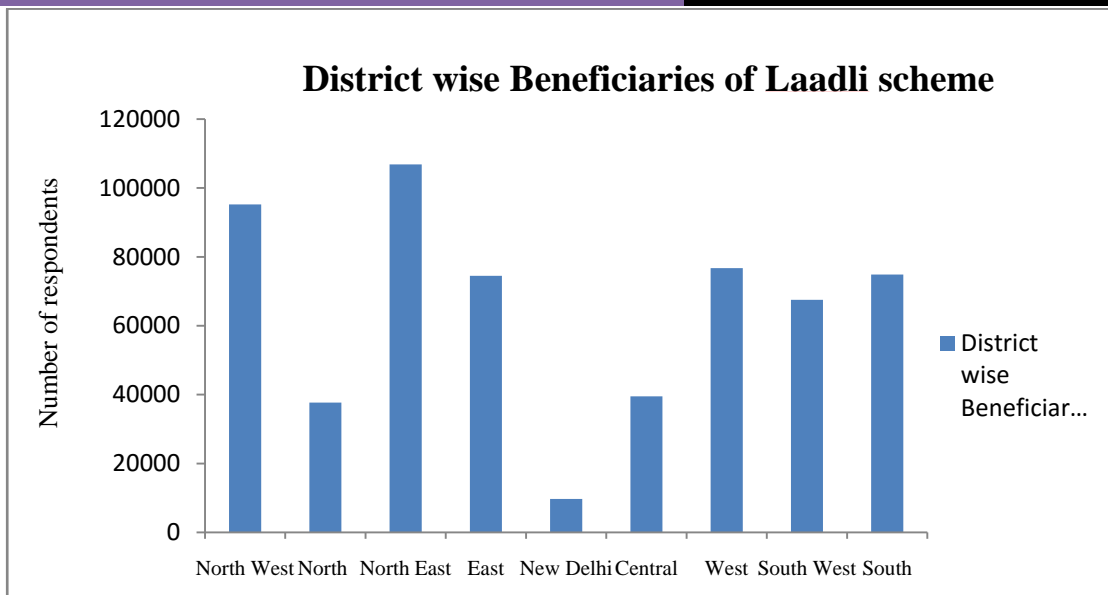


Figure 1.3: Spatial distribution of the beneficiaries.

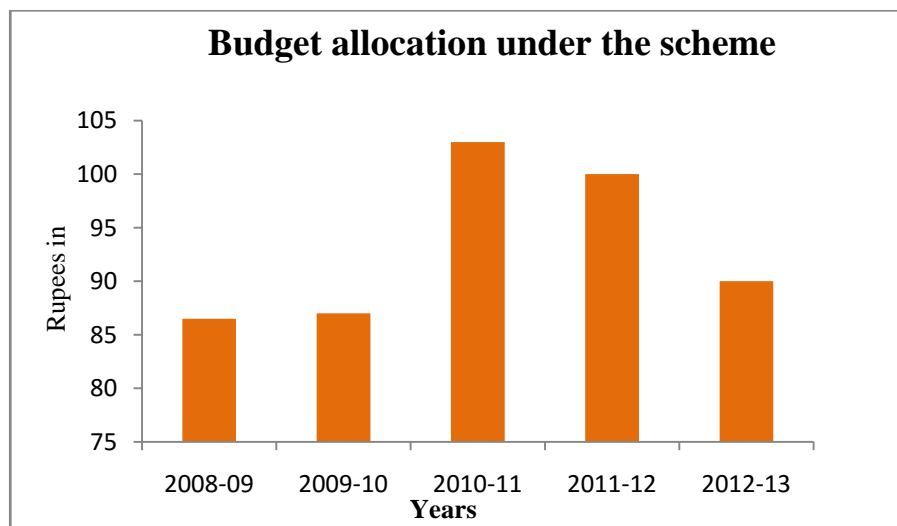


Figure 1.4: budget allocation

- The Delhi government allocated a budget of Rs.72.6 cr. in 2008 when Laadli Scheme was launched. But the response was so tremendous that they had to increase the budget to Rs 86.44 cr. As the graph shows the allocation to the scheme for 2010-11 has seen an increase of Rs.17 cr. from last year's plan outlay of Rs.87 cr. Since then the budgetary allocation has remained more or less at the same level for consecutive years.

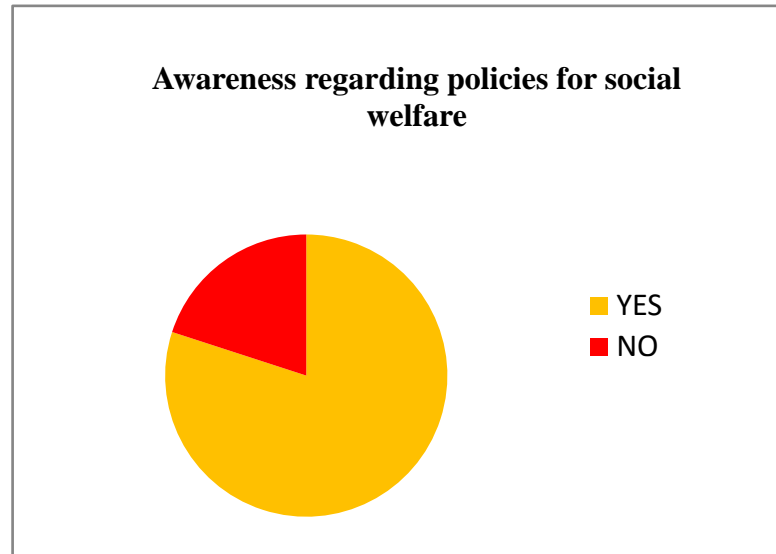


Figure 1.5: Awareness regarding policies for social welfare

- The question of awareness regarding the policies was asked to the different classes of people in different areas and It is quite evident from the sample that 80% of the people had awareness regarding the policies framed by the government whereas 20% of the people had no idea about any kind of policies. Also it was noticed that 20% which had no idea belonged to economically sound background, their response was simply because they do not require the assistance. So this gives a clear picture that the target group for which the policies are designed is at least well aware of them. This awareness was only superficial in most of the cases; respondents didn't have a deeper understanding. However, when asked if they were the beneficiaries under any of the schemes the following was the response.

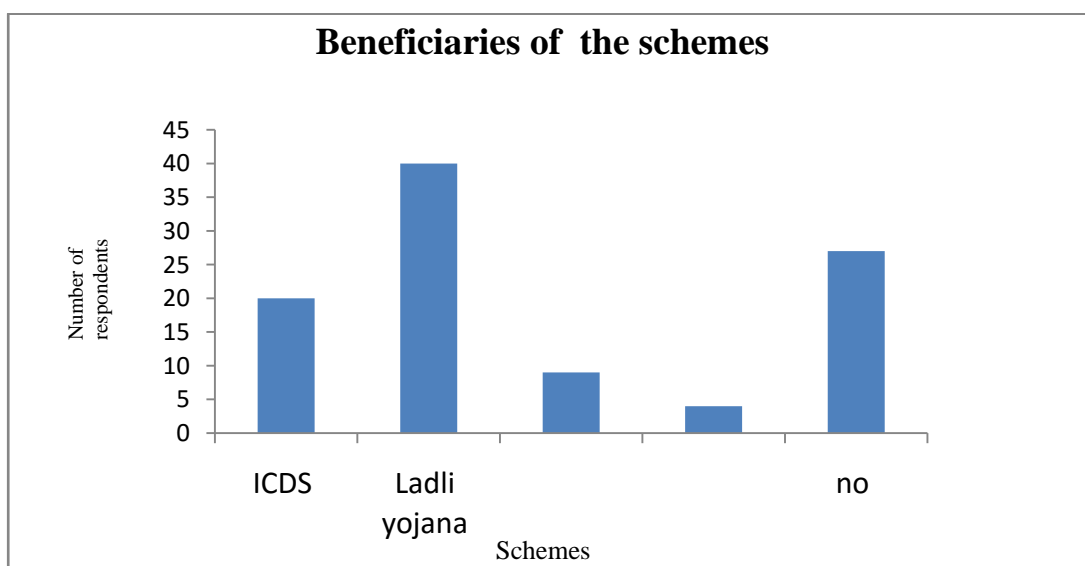


Figure 1.6: Beneficiaries of various schemes.

- Of the total respondents 73% of them are the beneficiaries of various schemes and 27% are not availing the benefits of any of the schemes and mostly those who are not availing the benefits are either not in need of it or doesn't belong to the target group. And out of the total beneficiaries 40% are enrolled under the Delhi Laadli scheme, 27% under the ICDS and the remaining 6% under

Balika samridhi yojana. Also those who are not enrolled under any of the schemes, includes potential beneficiaries but due to lack of awareness they couldn't reap the benefits of it.

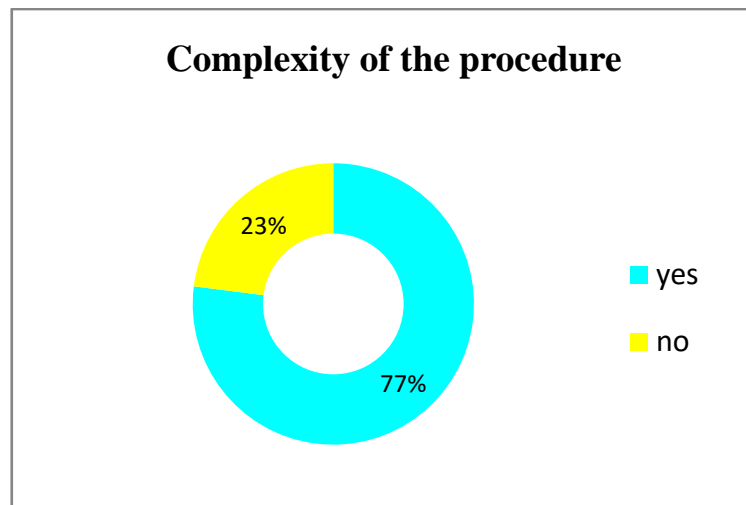


Figure 1.7: Complexity of the procedure

- When asked about the complexity of the criteria and procedure of these schemes, 77% felt that the procedure is quite complex and many found it as extremely cumbersome and complex due to the hassle thus many refrained themselves from enrolling under it
- In terms of effective implementation of the policies 40% of the respondents felt that they are below average i.e. bad when it comes to implementation, whereas only 13% felt that they were being implemented in a fairly good manner. The remaining 47% felt that they are performing just averagely. One common perception the respondents had was that what these policies are on paper is far away from the reality. The beneficiaries told that they didn't receive the amount of money that was promised to them.
- When questioned whether the incentives provided through these policies are efficient in improving the declining sex ratio, reducing gender discrimination and empowering girl child. Half the people responded in a positive manner and other half in a negative manner. But they said that this will promote people to go for girl child and also it will reduce the cases of female foeticide

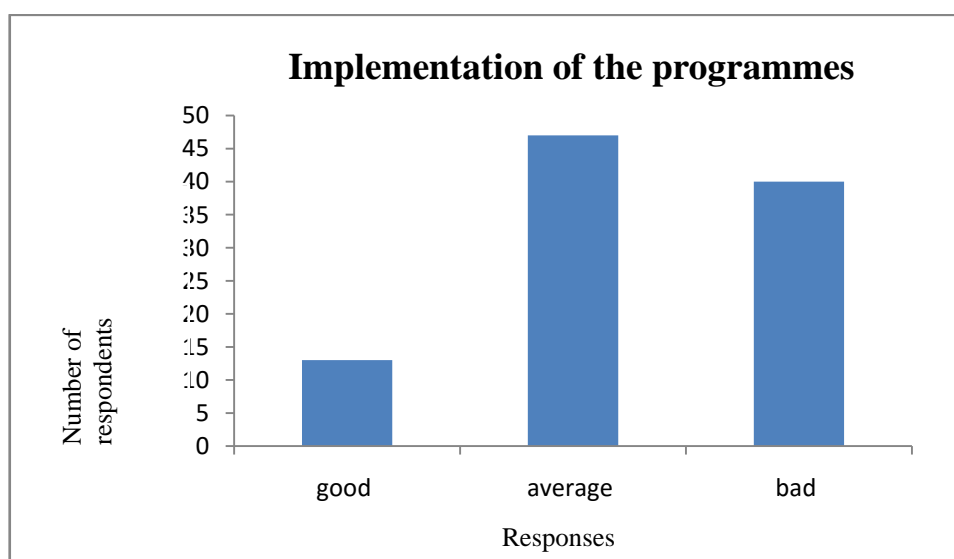


Figure1.8: Implementation of the programmes

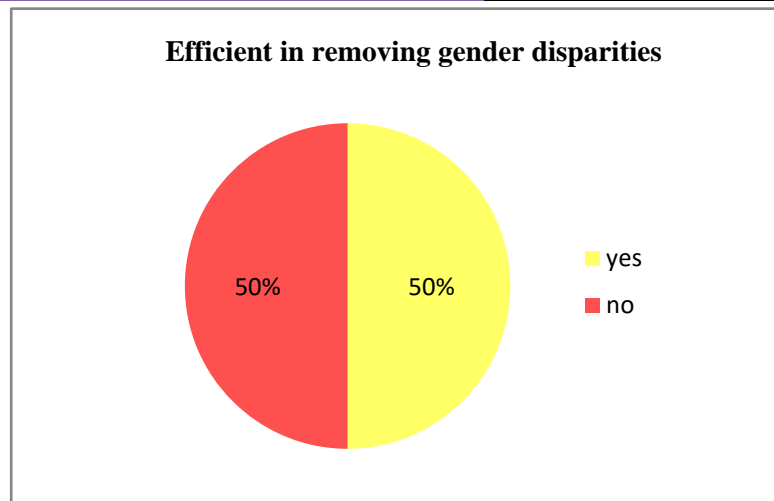


Figure 1.9: Efficiency in removing gender disparities

9. Merits of the Scheme

In 2007, the number of female births in Delhi registered was 848 per 1000 boys. This increased to 1004 per 1000 boys in year 2008, the same year when Laadli Scheme was launched, it is mandatory to attach the birth certificate of a girl child while applying for this scheme. So there was an incentive for parents to get their daughters registered. Thus it helped in bringing a much-desired increase in the number of girl births registered, which is a positive development. Since 2008, 275,651 girls have registered under this scheme. Out of this, 83% of the girls are school-going while 17% are newly born girls. 4635 girls have already received the money. These are those girls who took admission under the scheme in class XII in the academic year 2008-2009.

- The scheme provides a ray of hope for the poor and the needy who have been burdened by the clutches of the society. The scheme has been made more citizen-friendly and the requirement of affidavit as proof of family income has been done away with. Now the applicants can give a declaration of their family income in the application form itself.
- According to some reports, the scheme helped in bringing more girls to schools. The registration of girls not only in government schools but also in schools run by MCD has shown an increase. According to the Chairman of the Education Committee of MCD, "One reason for this improvement is the Laadli Scheme."
- The procedure for enrolment under the scheme has been simplified. The application forms are free of cost. Application forms for new-born girls are available at anganwadi centres, Maternity Homes and district offices of WCD. School going girls can obtain the forms from the concerned school itself. The Principal send the applications to the district offices of WCD.

10. Demerits of the Scheme

Though the scheme has been launched with the intention to narrow down the gender disparities and further empower the girl child. The scheme has also been successful to quite an extent, although it's difficult to provide a complete evaluation or assessment of the scheme as it is quite recent and is to yield the desired results. Over the period of time it has been realized that the policy suffers not only from implementation problems but it also faces design and procedural problems.

- The first and the foremost drawback is that scheme is limited to up to two girl children only. Any family having more than two girl child can avail the financial assistance only for two daughters of the family thus rendering the one.

- The procedure of applying for Laadli scheme is very complex. Although, the application form is very simple to fill and only requires parents to fill basic information, the process of getting it renewed in successive stages makes it very complicated. For example, the parents of a girl child who is born after 2008 will be required to apply for this scheme within one year of her birth. Then they will be required to renew their application each time when she takes admission into class I, VI, IX and XII. Also when she passes class X, they are required to reapply for the scheme. There is excess of paper work involved in the scheme.
- The Laadli Scheme rules clearly state that a girl shall be able to receive the money only once she turns 18 as well as passes class X. However during some of my field trips I met parents who complained that their daughters have not yet received any funds under the scheme even when they have completed their schooling i.e. passed class X and XII and have attained the age of 18 years. Some of them have not even received any acknowledgement letter from the department stating the date of maturity after which they can collect the money deposited into their bank accounts. Also the department has not clearly laid down whether or not the scheme will get forfeited in case the annual income of the parents rises from Rs 1 lakh over the years. Thus the complexity in the design and lack of clarity in the scheme are discouraging many parents to apply, even when they are eligible for doing so.
- The number of documents required to be produced to avail the benefits of the policy such as the voter Id card or the ration card, proof of residence, birth certificate etc. are not easily available with the people who intend to avail the benefits. Also not everybody has a permanent residence to reside in thus many who live on the footpath and other poor people are deprived of this benefit. Out of the 1,65,385 applications received by the department in the year 2010-2011 1496 applications have been rejected. The reason for most of the applications have been rejected on the basis of incomplete documents majorly the proof of 3 yrs. of residence in the territory.
- The intention with which the scheme was launched i.e to improve the sex ratio and empower the girl child is hardly being attained. As the ambit of the scheme is only restricted to the sphere of education thus those girl child who by any chance are not able to study are not being benefited by this scheme. Whereas to remove gender disparities a holistic approach needs to be followed this takes into account the people from all strata.
- The Laadli Scheme rules clearly state that a girl shall be able to receive the money only once she turns 18 as well as passes class X i.e. if somebody who hasn't passed class x is not entitled to get the benefits and even those who passes class x have to wait for a period of an year to get the money.
- Lack of awareness despite the fact that government has spent about 2.5 to 3.5 cr. of rupees in generating awareness about Laadli scheme through the FM radio, posters, banners and hoardings and nukkad natak at public places, people are still not aware of the policy and the concerned procedure.
- One of the major drawback of this scheme is the lack of co-ordination of the between the various agencies responsible for effective implementation of the scheme. Such as between the ministry and the education department and the NDMC officials. Also the problem of lack of infrastructure has been sighted at the district level. Officials complain that some Officers of the Education Department do not show any interest in the scheme and that they felt that promoting the Laadli Scheme was not part of their departmental activities. This has created problems and delay in the implementation of the Laadli Scheme.
- 18 years is too long a period for any girl to receive the monetary incentive by the government. Stakeholders argue that if the parents make their daughters drop-out from schools, get transferred or migrate to a different city, then the scheme will get forfeited and they will not be able to get any money from the government. Similarly if the girl expires

before she collects the money from the bank then the amount shall not even get paid to the parents.

The scheme applicable to all girls, irrespective of their age, has attracted the parents as is evident from the number of applicants within three years of its inception. However, simplifying documentation procedures and better coordination between other agencies (like Education Department, Municipal Corporation, etc.) will improve its implementation. Also concerted effort by the government is the need of the time.

11. Recommendations and Conclusion

Taking into consideration all the drawback and the challenges faced by the scheme both in the structure as well as the implementation some recommendations have been made based on the personal understanding and on the inputs given by the people while conducting the survey and interviews.

- A lot of paper work is involved in this scheme starting from filling up of the forms till the complete enrollment. Various documents need to be attached. So, there should be conscious efforts by the government to reduce the paper work. For an applicant who first applied for this scheme when his/her daughter was born, reapplication of the form in the next successive stages is mandatory. Besides, parents are also required to attach the same documents along with the application form which they attached at the time of enrollment. This leads to wastage of time, efforts and resources. Something like a report card should be issued at the initial stage only which could be just simply signed at each successive stage by the concerned authority.
- At present there is no grievance cell where parents can report their grievances or queries and get information or assistance regarding the same. The department should consider having a helpline number and a grievance cell in each district office and schools where parents can approach the concerned officers who can assist them and help solving their problems. Similarly the department should include a complaints/ grievance section in its website.
- Eighteen years is too long a duration to reap the benefits of the scheme. There should be some mechanism through which the amount of money could be withdrawn in two or three installments at the specified stages.
- Better coordination between DWCD, directorate of education and schools. The main department responsible for implementing Laadli Scheme in Delhi is DWCD. However in order to make sure that the scheme gets implemented successfully, the Directorate of Education (DoE) must also involve itself in the process. It should be made mandatory for all the schools in the city to promote this scheme and assist parents and students in the Laadli Scheme procedure, and then more girl students will be able to avail the benefits of this scheme. The procedure should be more transparent.
- Also it has been recommended that the amount of money given under the scheme should be increased because only the girl who has been enrolled under this scheme since birth will receive 100000 lakh Rs. whereas if somebody who enrolls herself under this scheme in class xii will receive only 5000 Rs. So, it was recommended by many beneficiaries to increase the amount of the money received under the scheme.
- Role of NGO'S in this field is quite important as they can reach a larger target group which is at times outside the purview of the government. They even organize nukkad nataks and use the medium of theatre to explain the procedure of this scheme to the target groups. There are NGOs like Pardarshita which is assisting such marginalised people in filling the form, obtaining the right documents and even filing an RTI application in case parents do not know the status of their application.

- Training of public information officers and staff in government Offices. The people appointed to provide information about the Laadli Scheme to the general public must be well-trained and well-informed about its procedure and other details. They should be genuinely willing to explain this to the parents, considering not many parents may be fully aware of the procedure. This will lead to clarity of thought and clarity in action.
- There should be an increased role of anganwadi centres in the Laadli scheme. Their role in the Laadli Scheme is limited; they provide application forms to the parents of a newly born girl child and assist them in filling the forms if they ask for assistance. They should be allowed to collect the filled Laadli forms from applicants and then submit to the district office of the DWCD. This will help in the creation of a new registration Centre where parents can submit the Laadli application forms besides schools and as anganwadi centres are more accessible to local people this will increase the efficiency.
- The scheme should not be restricted only up to 2 girl child. The horizon should be expanded.
- Corruption at all levels should be checked as it hampers the growth of progress be it the officers at administrative level or at the grass root level (workers at the anganwadi centres).
- Most importantly policy framework for public policy should aim at changing the position of the target group in the society rather than changing the present conditions, thus empowering them.

Despite all the loop holes the scheme is a huge success and attracts a number of beneficiaries. All the drawbacks that the scheme faces are concerned with the implementation of the scheme. Proper implementation mechanism will increase the success ratio of the scheme. People are generally not aware of the policies designed for them and even if they are aware then their knowledge is incomplete which is the biggest hindrance in the path of their development. Concerted efforts by the government are required to create awareness regarding these policies and their process and adequate measures should be taken to ensure their effective implementation. A grievance redressal cell should be set up to answer the queries of the beneficiaries and look into the other problems faced by the people. Though it can be concluded that public policies so designed, if implemented efficiently can really change the face of the society.

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