

CHAPTER - I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India enjoin upon the State to undertake within its means a number of welfare measures, targeting the poor and the destitute in particular. Article 41 of the Constitution of India directs the State to provide public assistance to its citizens in the case of unemployment, oldage, sickness and disablement as well as in other cases of undeserved want, within the limit of the State's economic capacity and development. Social security, invalid and old age pensions figure as Items 23 and 24 of the 7th Schedule of the Constitution of India in the Concurrent List. It is in compliance of these guiding principles, that the Government of India introduced on Independence Day, 1995 the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) as a fully funded Centrally Sponsored Scheme targeting the destitutes, defined as any person who has little or no regular means of subsistence from his / her own source of income or through financial support from family members or other sources, to be identified by the States and UTs, with the objective of providing a basic level of financial support.

1.1.2 The NSAP initially had the following three components:-

- a) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)
- b) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)
- c) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS)

1.2 Changes in the composition of NSAP

1.2.1 *Transfer of National Maternity Benefit Scheme to Department of Family Welfare*

The National Maternity Benefit Scheme was transferred to the Department of Family Welfare to become part and parcel of the Population Stabilization Programme w.e.f. **1.4.2001**.

1.2.2 *Introduction of Annapurna Scheme*

On **1st April 2000**, a new scheme known as the Annapurna Scheme was introduced to provide 10 kgs of food grains per month free of cost to eligible beneficiaries who could not be covered under NOAPS.

1.2.3 *Transfer to State Plan as Additional Central Assistance (ACA)*

In the year **2002-03**, NSAP was transferred to the State Plan and funds were, from then on, released as Additional Central Assistance (ACA) to States and UTs with the Ministry of Finance releasing funds to the States Consolidated Fund as a single allocation for all the sub-schemes, and with the freedom given to the States to allocate to the individual sub-schemes as per need. In the case of Union Territories (UTs), the Ministry of Home Affairs made the releases.

1.2.4 *Expansion to cover all eligible BPL persons*

From the year 2007, the scheme was expanded to cover all eligible persons **Below Poverty Line (BPL)**. The scheme for old aged persons was renamed as **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)**.

1.2.5 *Introduction of Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) and Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)*

NSAP was expanded in 2009 to cover more vulnerable groups below poverty line. In **February 2009**, Government of India approved pension to widows below poverty line in the age group of 40-64 years. This scheme was named **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)**. It also approved pension to persons suffering from severe or multiple disabilities in the age group of 18-64 years. This scheme was named **Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)**. For the purpose of defining severe or multiple disabilities the following legal provisions are followed:-

- (a) As per Section 56(4) of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (PWD Act, 95), “persons with severe disability” means a person with 80% or more of one or more disabilities.
- (b) As per Section 2(h) of the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (National Trust Act, 1999), “Multiple Disabilities” means combination of 2 or more disabilities.

1.2.6 *Reconversion to Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)*

From 1st April, 2014, NSAP has again become a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) under the Ministry of Rural Development. Funds are now released by the Ministry of Rural Development to all States and Union Territories, based on annual allocation, sub-scheme wise.
