

Chief Statistician could be the choice for benchmarking 'poverty line'

Richa Mishra / Surabhi

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With various data sources at its disposal, the MoSPI is best suited for the task, say officials



New Delhi, April 8:

The task of establishing accurate benchmarks for defining 'poverty line' is likely to go to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation if the current thinking among the members of Niti Aayog task force on 'Eliminating Poverty' is anything to go by.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is best suited to work on a benchmark as "it already has data from various sources, which it can use to further refine the poverty estimates and provide separate indicators for beneficiaries of different schemes such as health, housing and food," a senior official familiar with the development said.

The NITI Aayog taskforce has already circulated its paper on 'Eliminating Poverty: Creating Jobs and Strengthening Social Programmes'. It is now seeking the opinion of States on the paper, which considers two broad issues — how should India measure poverty and what should be the strategy for its elimination.

MoSPI officials, however, said that they have not been formally apprised of the plan as yet. "There is a Committee of Secretaries working on this issue. The proposal may be with them," said a senior official.

The results of the Sixth Economic Census may also be used as it is one of the most up-to-date economic data sets with the government on employment and economic activities apart from the Socioeconomic Caste Census, which is the main indicator for rural poverty.

A taskforce set up by the NITI Aayog, in its draft report last month, had suggested using a poverty line, preferably the Tendulkar line, to measure and track the progress in reducing the number of poor in the country.

Tendulkar line

At present, the official measure for identifying the poor is the Tendulkar poverty line that fixed a daily expenditure of Rs. 27.2 in rural areas and Rs. 33.3 in urban areas.

However, it is considered to be highly controversial and criticised by many experts who point out that it is too low and would deprive many genuine beneficiaries of government assistance and schemes.

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