

## STATUS OF PENDING APPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT SCHEMES AMONG SCHEDULED CASTES IN BANASKANTHA DISTRICT

### **Executive summary:**

Government have a large range of schemes as part of poverty alleviation aiming at attainment of socio-economic equity. Banaskantha Dalit Sangathan (BDS), an organization active with the issues of dalit came with a long time observation that a huge number of applications made by dalit families remains as pending in government departments for years after years; so the central focus of the study is on the number of applications made under various departments and their status within a time period of five years.

This study aims to assess the situation of availing benefit from government schemes by dalit families in Banaskantha district and to find out the reasons for higher proportion of 'pending application'.

The study covers sixteen villages in five talukas (Dhanera, Palanpur, Tharad, Vadgam and Vav) in Banaskantha district. A census survey of dalit households (including six castes – Chamar, Vankar, Garo or Shrimali, Senva, Turi Barot and Valimiki) was carried on these selected villages covering a total of 688 respondents.

The central tendency of the findings based on taluka specificity, caste specificity towards utilisation of different government schemes including level of awareness, their being equipped with APL / BPL ration card holding, education and income generation activities.

### **↻ *Major findings of survey***

- Extent of applications for availing schemes: This is found that more than half of the dalit population does not apply for government schemes; among those more than half are BPL cardholders.
- Applications – talukawise: The proportion of application is more sharply varies with talukas; more than half of the total applicants are from Palanpur and Vadgam while Vav has the lowest number of applicants.
- Who applied and benefited: The government employees, casual labourers, private jobholders and businessmen have higher proportion of applicants than others. However, in receiving benefits, labourers, illiterates and BPL cardholders are given priority.
- Level of awareness about government schemes - talukawise: Awareness level regarding government schemes is lower in Dhanera, Tharad and Vav compared to Palanpur and Vadgam taluka. Awareness has strong relationship with extent of application; among aware population, proportions of applications are comparable among all five talukas.
- Level of awareness also varies from department to departments and scheme to scheme. The schemes of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) are much popular while that of Schedule Caste Development Corporation (SCDC) is least popular. Similarly the schemes that offer large sum financial assistance, for example, housing and loan schemes are more popular than others.
- Beneficiaries and extent of 'pending applications': Of total applicants (307), 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the applicants (229) have able to avail benefit of government schemes while there are a few applicants who availed benefit from one scheme but application for the second is

remaining as pending, combining both, a total of 1/3<sup>rd</sup> applicant's applications are remaining as pending.

- Beneficiaries – castewise: Comparison within castes shows that Senva families rank higher followed by Valmiki, Shrimali, Turi Barot and Chamar in applying for the scheme.
- Major reasons of availing benefits from government scheme are found as submission of proper documents, the channel i.e. through whom the applications are made and follow up actions.
- Awareness about various components in the process of availing benefit, including role and responsibilities of elected representative and government officials is far lower, only one fourth of the respondents are aware about such components.
- Proportion of pending application is higher in Vadgam and Vav talukas; proportion is also high among BPL cardholders, higher educational level and occupational group of traditional occupation, cultivators and casual labourers. More than half of the pending applications are of casual labourer and around 1/3<sup>rd</sup> are of cultivators.
- Neither those who availed benefit nor those whose applications are pending have submitted all the documents, albeit, proportion of proper documents submitted is more among applicants who availed benefit than those whose applications are pending.
- Who helped in availing schemes: There is a strong correlation between key persons who helped in availing benefit. A large proportion of beneficiaries have taken help from Sarpanch, Talati and Gramsevak, while the applicants whose applications are pending have taken help from village-mates, relatives, other beneficiaries and other informal agencies (others). The key person also varies from scheme to scheme, for example, for Indira Awas Yojna the key person is sarpanch while for Milking Cattle loan the key person is gramsevak.
- Reasons for not applying for schemes: Among the major reasons of not applying for government scheme 'face lots of problems' ranks at top; almost all castes reported this problem, followed by 'lack of awareness' by all castes except Senva families, who rank the highest among applicants. Among Chamar families, 'not having BPL card' and 'no separate ration card' are also problems that they face followed by Shrimali families.
- The illiterates and the respondents with education up-to higher secondary reported 'face lots of problems' as the foremost reason for not applying followed by 'lack of awareness', not having BPL card' and 'no separate ration card' are also problems that they face.
- The labourers and cultivators reported all kinds of problems with similar ranking. Surprisingly, the respondents working in government and in private sector also reported facing all types of problems and gave similar reasons for not applying.

#### ↪ ***Government data on selected schemes and observations of research team***

- Data collected from taluka and district level government offices for the schemes covered under the study shows that the data available at government offices are either incomplete or inconsistent.
- There are large-scale discrepancies in government data in allocation of fund, utilization and amount received by per beneficiary.
- There are also huge functional gap in administrative system at taluka and district level, for example, there is only one gramsevak for 134 villages in Tharad taluka and only four observers in Social Welfare department shouldering responsibilities of 12 talukas.

- The key findings of the study including awareness level, criteria for availing benefit, taluka variation etc were shared with Government official and interviewed to incorporate their views into the study, even if many of them are aware about some of the gaps but they are not accepting many serious findings of the study.

In the conclusion it is found that except a few policy issues, there is a set of local issues that must be addressed to increase outreach of government scheme for the real beneficiaries. The study is emphasizing on recommendations like organizing information and guidance camp/mela, creation of taluka profile, data bank and lobbying with government officials.