



Basic income works and works well

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India has the technological capacity, the financial resources, and the need for a simple, transparent basic income scheme

- The three basic income pilots in West Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, in which over 6,000 men, women and children were provided with modest basic incomes, paid in cash, monthly, without conditions.
- The money was not much, coming to about a third of subsistence.
- The pilots involved the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and financial assistance from UNICEF and the UNDP.
- The outcomes exceeded expectations, partly because everybody in the community, and not just select people, received their own individual transfer.
- Nutrition improved, sanitation improved, health and health care improved, school attendance and performance improved, women's status and well-being improved, the position of the disabled and vulnerable groups improved by more than others.
- And the amount and quality of work improved.
- Critics said it would be a waste of money, but they were proved wrong.
- Above all, the basic incomes improved the community spirit and were emancipatory.

A ripe idea

- The international debate on basic income has advanced considerably in the past five years.
- Experiments have been launched in countries of different levels of per capita income, which include Canada, Finland, Kenya, Namibia, the Netherlands, Spain and the U.S., with plans being drawn up in England, Scotland, South Korea and elsewhere.
- India could take the lead as it has the technological capacity, the financial resources and, above all, the need for a simple, transparent scheme to liberate the energies of the masses now mired in economic insecurity, deprivation and degradation.

- It is strongly recommended that if the government is to go ahead, it should phase in the scheme gradually, rolling it out from low-income to higher-income communities, after local officials have been trained and prepared.
- It is also recommended that the authorities should not select particular types of individuals and give it only to them.
- Moreover, giving to all in the community fosters solidarity within households and the wider community, apart from enabling multiplier effects in the local economy.
- The beauty of moving towards a modest basic income would be that all groups would gain.
- That would not preclude special additional support for those with special needs, nor be any threat to a progressive welfare state in the longterm.

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