

Executive Summary

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Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) is a major reform initiative of the Government to ensure better and timely delivery of benefits from Government to the people. This marks a paradigm-shift in the process of delivering benefits like wage payments, fuel subsidies, food grain subsidies, etc. directly into the bank accounts of the beneficiaries, removing leakages and enhancing financial inclusion.

DBT was initiated by the erstwhile Planning Commission (January 2013) and later transferred to Department of Expenditure (July 2013). DBT Mission was brought under Cabinet Secretariat in September 2015. State DBT Portal was launched in September 2017. The concept and scope of DBT has been evolving over the years.

Direct Benefit Transfer stipulates that transfer of benefits should be done directly to beneficiaries under various Government Schemes and Programmes using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Necessary process reengineering to minimize intermediary levels and to reduce delay in payments to intended beneficiaries with the objective of minimizing pilferage and duplication should be done for all Government Schemes and Programmes. The process for implementation of DBT as prescribed should be adopted.

In Haryana, as per DBT Mission guidelines, a DBT cell under Finance Department was constituted in June 2016 and a State DBT Portal was created in September 2017 to aggregate benefit transfer information and the activities for the State DBT Cell through an electronic platform. This is integrated with the DBT Bharat Portal.

The Departments are implementing DBT on applicable State and Centrally sponsored schemes. If any, new DBT scheme is identified by the Department, it is uploaded by DBT cell on the State DBT portal on the request of Department. The concerned Departments classify/identify the DBT applicable schemes and identified schemes are uploaded on the state DBT portal by DBT Cell.

Performance Audit on the DBT was conducted to assess whether necessary process reengineering was done for implementation of DBT so as to minimize intermediary levels, reduce delay in payments to intended beneficiaries, pilferage and duplication; and whether the infrastructure, organization and management of DBT was adequate and effective.

The Performance Audit was conducted during March 2020 to July 2021 covering the period from 01 April 2017 to 31 July 2020. The audit covered DBT Cell and Social Justice and Empowerment Department of the State Government.

Validation of findings noticed on analysis of data was carried out in the selected sample of six districts of Haryana.

Significant Audit Findings

There was delay in enrolment of beneficiaries in the scheme ranging between one day to 963 days resulting in violation of the provisions of Haryana Right to Service (RTS) Act, 2014 and objectives of the schemes to serve as income support schemes to beneficiaries was compromised.

(Paragraph 2.4)

The department failed to identify dead beneficiaries in time resulting in Pension of ₹ 98.96 crore being transferred to the dead beneficiaries account under various social security schemes.

(Paragraph 2.6.1)

To ensure the payment of pension to targeted beneficiaries, the process of linking beneficiary accounts with Aadhaar numbers was not being done effectively due to incomplete and incorrect digitalization of legacy data.

(Paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9)

Disbursement monitoring mechanism was absent leading to disbursement of multiple pension payments or double payments to same beneficiaries in two schemes viz. Old Age Samman Allowance and Ladli Social Security Allowance. District Social Welfare Officer's (DSWOs) were unable to identify beneficiaries, verify their eligibility status and ensure that pensions are being disbursed to the correct beneficiaries.

(Paragraph 2.10)

Pension of ₹ 54.54 crore was transferred to different bank accounts instead of correct beneficiaries account in two schemes viz. Old Age Samman Allowance and Widow and Destitute Pension

(Paragraph 2.11)

The benefit of social security pension schemes was disbursed to retired Government employees also which was against the rules of the schemes.

(Paragraph 2.13)

Pension amounting to ₹ 64.13 crore was transferred to 0.38 lakh beneficiaries whose status had been shown as untraceable by the banks.

(Paragraph 2.14)

The audit trails related to 5.56 lakh beneficiaries was missing in the data dump. In absence of audit trails it could not be ascertained when and from which IP address and by whom they were enrolled. Besides there was gap in beneficiary ID sequence and missing records of beneficiaries in master database.

(Paragraphs 2.15.3 and 2.20)

Identification of DBT applicable schemes in 28 departments was not done.

(Paragraph 3.1)

The data regarding schemes, amount transferred through DBT and saving after implementation of DBT depicted on the DBT Portal was not complete since Agriculture department did not provide any information and had also not uploaded the DBT data including savings on the state DBT Portal.

(Paragraph 3.3)

Recommendations

- ❖ To ensure transfer of payment to correct beneficiaries' accounts, the Government may evolve proper systems for authentication of *Aadhaar* numbers of legacy beneficiaries with Aadhaar portal.
- ❖ The Government/Department may carry out a comprehensive review of the beneficiaries' data including legacy data to ensure its completeness, authenticity and correctness.
- ❖ The Government/Department may put in place a robust system for scrutiny of applications, validation and verification process of beneficiaries and transfer of benefit in correct account. Access to state pensioner database should be obtained and before enrolment of beneficiaries cross verification should be carried out.
- ❖ Distribution of pension to deceased persons should be avoided by linking the software with various agencies and not only from data of Registrar General of India. System of disseminating information like payment of financial assistance to the beneficiaries through SMS should be considered.
- ❖ The Government may consider evolving real time monitoring mechanism for effective decision making and supervision. This would assist in assessing the undisbursed amount of pension in respect of untraceable beneficiaries and discontinuance of pension of unauthorized beneficiaries. and to revert back the amount in these cases in the Department's account and evolve Information System for regular SMS notifications to the beneficiaries.

- ❖ The Department may put in place a mechanism to ensure preparation of required documents (User Requirement Specifications, System Requirement Specifications, Detailed Design Document, etc.) whenever development of new system is taken up.
- ❖ The State Government may evolve proper systems for identification and on boarding of all DBT applicable schemes on DBT portal, beneficiaries and saving earned after implementation of DBT.
- ❖ The State Government may take strenuous efforts for effecting recovery of inadmissible payment of assistance besides fixing responsibility for inaction by the authorities concerned.
- ❖ DBT Cell may ensure that meeting of advisory board is conducted periodically as envisaged in the guidelines.