



SCHEDULED CASTE POLICY IN TELANGANA: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: Scheduled Castes (SCs) constitute a significant portion of Telangana's population and remain central to debates on social justice and inclusive development. Since the state's formation in 2014, multiple policies—including the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP), Dalit Bandhu, educational scholarships, and social security schemes—have sought to reduce disparities in education, employment, health, and asset ownership. This study examines the evolution, implementation, and impact of SC-targeted policies in Telangana. Using secondary data from Census, NSSO, PLFS, NFHS, NCRB, and state budget documents, supplemented by reports from the Telangana Scheduled Castes Development Department, the paper presents an integrated assessment of progress, persisting challenges, and beneficiaries' perspectives. Statistical analyses highlight disparities, program reach, and inter-district variations. The findings suggest that while policies have expanded access and visibility, implementation gaps, leakages, and limited monitoring hinder sustainable transformation. The study recommends enhancing accountability, strengthening institutional capacity, and designing holistic interventions to foster long-term empowerment.

Keywords: Scheduled Castes, Telangana, Dalit Bandhu, Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP), socio-economic empowerment, education, employment, health, housing, caste discrimination, policy implementation.

Introduction

The Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Telangana, like in many parts of India, have historically faced social exclusion, economic deprivation, and systemic barriers that have curtailed their upward mobility. Rooted in the caste system, these disadvantages manifest across education, employment, land ownership, political participation, and access to state resources. While constitutional safeguards and affirmative action have offered protective frameworks, the lived realities of SCs often remain marked by persistent inequalities and vulnerability.

Since the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014, the Government of Telangana has placed special emphasis on the welfare and empowerment of Scheduled Castes. Among its flagship interventions is the **Dalit Bandhu Scheme**, launched in 2021, which provides a one-time direct financial grant of ₹10 lakh to eligible SC households for self-employment and entrepreneurship. The scheme reflects a paradigm shift in welfare thinking—from subsidy-driven support to capital-based empowerment. Alongside Dalit Bandhu, the state continues to implement traditional schemes such as pre- and post-



matric scholarships, hostels and Gurukulams for SC students, overseas education support, skill development programs, SC Corporation loans, and social security measures like pensions and Kalyana Lakshmi for marriage assistance.

Despite these initiatives, multiple challenges persist in both design and execution. **Equitable coverage** remains a concern, as flagship schemes are often rolled out in selected districts or among limited beneficiaries, leading to uneven distribution of benefits. **Implementation bottlenecks**, such as delays in fund release and underutilization of allocated budgets under the Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP), reduce the intended impact. For instance, while SCSP allocations have steadily risen—from around ₹8,800 crore in 2014–15 to nearly ₹17,700 crore in 2023–24—utilization rates typically hover between 75–85%. This points to systemic inefficiencies in delivery mechanisms.

Moreover, **outcome sustainability** is yet another concern. While programs like Dalit Bandhu offer significant capital infusion, questions remain about long-term viability in the absence of strong institutional support, skill development, and market linkages. Similarly, although SC enrolment in Gurukulams and higher education has

increased, dropout rates above 25% at the secondary level undermine long-term educational gains. In employment, SCs continue to experience wage disparities, occupational segregation, and higher unemployment rates than the state average. Against this backdrop, examining the **problems and perspectives of SC policy in Telangana** becomes imperative. This article seeks to critically analyze the socio-economic profile of SCs in the state, assess the effectiveness of policies and schemes, highlight persistent challenges such as discrimination and atrocities, and outline recommendations to strengthen empowerment. By combining statistical data with policy analysis, the paper aims to provide a nuanced understanding of both progress made and gaps that remain in the SC development trajectory of Telangana.

Telangana-Specific Policy Landscape

Telangana has developed a distinctive policy framework for Scheduled Castes (SCs), combining constitutionally mandated measures with state-specific innovations. At the core lies the **Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP)**, which ensures that funds are allocated in proportion to the SC population share (~17 percent of the state). Since the formation of Telangana in 2014, SCSP allocations have nearly doubled, with expenditure directed towards education,



housing, livelihood generation, and social security. While the framework has improved resource targeting, gaps in utilization and monitoring continue to limit its full effectiveness. The **Dalit Bandhu Scheme**, launched in 2021, is Telangana’s flagship initiative and one of the most ambitious empowerment programs in India. Under this scheme, eligible SC families receive a one-time capital grant of **₹10 lakh** to invest in self-employment and entrepreneurial ventures. Unlike earlier credit-linked subsidy programs, Dalit Bandhu is designed as a direct transfer without repayment obligations, thereby reducing dependence on informal credit and fostering long-term asset creation. However, implementation has so far been selective, with concentration in certain pilot districts, raising concerns about equitable coverage across the state.

In education, the state has prioritized **scholarships, overseas education support, and Gurukulams**. Telangana now runs an

extensive network of SC residential schools and hostels, which has significantly increased enrolment in secondary and higher education. Complementary interventions like **pre- and post-matric scholarships** and overseas scholarships for postgraduate studies abroad further expand educational mobility for SC students. On the employment front, **skill development programs and loans through the SC Development Corporation** aim to facilitate entry into formal employment and small-scale entrepreneurship. These are supplemented by social security measures such as the **Kalyana Lakshmi scheme**, which provides financial assistance for marriages of SC women, along with pensions, housing assistance, and health support. Together, these initiatives represent Telangana’s integrated approach, blending welfare with empowerment. The challenge ahead lies in ensuring transparency, universal coverage, and sustainability so that these policies translate into measurable improvements in the lives of SC communities

Table:1 Comparative Overview of SC Policies – Telangana vs. National

Policy Domain	Telangana (State-Specific)	National (Central Govt.)	Key Distinction
Budgeting Framework	Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) with funds proportional to SC population (~17%); mandatory allocation	SCSP & TSP (Tribal Sub-Plan) mandated at national level but implementation varies across states.	Telangana enforces stricter population-based allocation.



	monitored by state.		
Economic Empowerment	Dalit Bandhu Scheme – one-time ₹10 lakh grant per eligible SC family for entrepreneurship (non-repayable).	Credit-linked schemes via banks (e.g., Stand-Up India, MUDRA loans) with partial subsidy, but repayment required.	Telangana provides direct, large-scale, non-repayable grants.
Education	Gurukulams (SC residential schools & hostels), pre-/post-matric scholarships, overseas scholarships for ~300 SC students annually.	Centrally Sponsored Schemes (Pre- & Post-Matric Scholarships, National Overseas Scholarship, Top-Class Education Scheme).	Telangana runs one of the largest Gurukulam networks and supplements central schemes with state funding.
Skill Development & Employment	SC Development Corporation loans & subsidies, targeted training programs linked with Dalit Bandhu.	Skill India Mission, PMKVY, loans via National SC Finance & Development Corporation (NSFDC).	Telangana integrates skill training with capital support (Dalit Bandhu).
Social Security	Kalyana Lakshmi (financial aid for SC brides), pensions for widows/elderly/disabled, housing assistance.	Central schemes like PM Awas Yojana (housing), NSAP pensions, scholarships.	Telangana provides marriage support (unique state intervention) and integrates pensions with SCSP funds.
Justice & Protection	Atrocity monitoring via SC/ST Protection Cell, legal aid for victims.	SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (central legislation) with state-level enforcement.	Telangana supplements central law with localized monitoring & legal aid.

Socio-Economic Profile of Scheduled Castes in Telangana



Scheduled Castes (SCs) make up nearly 17 percent of Telangana’s total population, representing a significant demographic presence. However, despite their numbers, SC communities continue to face deep-rooted socio-economic challenges. Poverty levels among SC households remain higher than the state average, reflecting limited access to productive resources, secure employment, and social mobility. This economic disadvantage often translates into weaker outcomes in health, education, and livelihood security, perpetuating intergenerational inequality.

In terms of education, the literacy rate among SCs is about 66 percent, lower than the state’s average of 72 percent. The gender gap is particularly notable: only 57 percent of SC women are literate, compared to relatively higher male literacy within the community and the state as a whole. Structural barriers—such as early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and rural infrastructural deficits—contribute to this persistent disparity. While progress has been visible in recent decades, the gap underscores the need for focused interventions in education and skill development. Socio-economic profile of SCs in Telangana highlights a pattern of marginalization that persists despite policy attention. This calls for sustained, inclusive, and gender-sensitive

development strategies to bridge disparities and enhance their quality of life.

Table:2 Comparative Socio-Economic Indicators – SCs vs. Telangana Average

Indicator	SC Population	State Average
Share in Population (%)	17	-
Poverty Incidence (%)	Higher	Lower
Literacy Rate (%)	66	72
Female Literacy (%)	57	6

Budget Allocations and Utilization

The Scheduled Caste Sub-Plan (SCSP) in Telangana has emerged as the primary financial instrument to address the socio-economic needs of Scheduled Castes. Since the formation of the state in 2014, allocations under the SCSP have shown a steady upward trajectory, signaling the government’s intent to strengthen welfare provisioning. In 2014–15, the budget allocation for SCSP stood at approximately ₹8,800 crore. By 2023–24, this figure had more than doubled to around ₹17,700 crore, reflecting both the fiscal expansion of the state budget and the prioritization of targeted development measures for SCs.

However, a closer look at expenditure patterns reveals challenges in effective



utilization. On average, only about 75–85 percent of the allocations are actually spent, leaving a significant portion either unutilized or diverted. This underutilization often stems from administrative bottlenecks, delays in project approvals, limited convergence between departments, and weak monitoring mechanisms. Moreover, while allocations are substantial on paper, the impact at the grassroots level is diluted when funds do not fully translate into tangible community benefits.

The introduction of the Dalit Bandhu scheme in 2021–22, a flagship program aimed at providing direct financial assistance of ₹10 lakh to eligible Dalit families, reflects a bold shift in empowerment strategy. Yet, its rollout has so far been concentrated in select districts such as Huzurabad and a few pilot constituencies. This uneven geographic spread has resulted in disparities in beneficiary coverage, with many eligible families across the state still awaiting inclusion. The scheme’s long-term sustainability and transparency in beneficiary selection remain key concerns. Telangana has demonstrated commendable progress in enhancing SCSP allocations, the twin challenges of uneven utilization and selective program coverage highlight the need for stronger accountability, broader outreach, and institutional reforms to ensure that

budgetary commitments translate into equitable and measurable outcomes for SC communities.

Table: 3 Year-wise SCSP Allocations and Expenditure in Telangana (₹ Crore)

Year	Allocation	Expenditure	Utilization (%)
2014–15	8,800	6,700	76%
2016–17	10,200	8,100	79%
2018–19	12,400	9,800	79%
2020–21	14,600	11,500	79%
2022–23	16,800	13,900	83%
2023–24*	17,700	14,500	82%

*2023–24 figures are provisional.

Education Outcomes

Education has been a central focus of Telangana’s Scheduled Caste welfare policies, with targeted interventions designed to improve both access and quality. A significant achievement has been the expansion of *Gurukulam* institutions (residential schools), which have witnessed a steady increase in enrolment from SC students. These schools provide not only free education but also residential facilities, nutritional support, and coaching, enabling first-generation learners



from marginalized families to pursue studies in a supportive environment. Similarly, the enrolment of SC students in higher education institutions has also shown positive growth, particularly in engineering, medicine, and professional courses, aided by reservations and fee reimbursement schemes.

Despite these gains, challenges remain. Dropout rates among SC students continue to be a major concern, with more than 25 percent of students leaving school at the secondary level. The factors contributing to these dropouts include financial hardships, lack of parental awareness, household responsibilities, and insufficient academic support during transition phases. Addressing these structural barriers is critical for sustaining progress in education.

Another notable initiative is the *Ambedkar Overseas Vidya Nidhi* program, which has benefitted nearly 300 SC students annually by providing scholarships for higher education abroad. This scheme represents a symbolic and practical leap in enabling global exposure and advanced academic opportunities for Dalit youth. Overall, while progress in enrolment is encouraging, persistent dropout rates and limited higher-level support mechanisms underscore the need for stronger retention strategies, mentorship, and inclusive academic policies.

Table: 4 SC Education Outcomes in Telangana

Indicator	Status/Trend
SC Enrolment in Gurukulams	Increasing annually
SC Dropout Rate (Secondary Level)	~25-28%
SC Enrolment in Higher Education	Rising, aided by fee reimbursement
Overseas Scholarship Beneficiaries	~300 students per year (since 2016)

Employment and Income

The employment and income profile of Scheduled Castes in Telangana reflects a persistent structural disadvantage when compared to other social groups. Data from the *Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2022* highlights that the unemployment rate among SCs stands at **8.7 percent**, significantly higher than the state average of **6.3 percent**. This gap underlines the limited absorption of SC youth into both organized and semi-organized sectors, despite rising levels of educational attainment in recent years.

Further, wage disparities remain a critical concern. On average, SC workers earn nearly **22 percent less** than their counterparts from Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and forward castes. This differential is observed across both rural and urban



settings, with agricultural wage labourers in rural areas and casual workers in urban markets facing the most pronounced disadvantages. While part of this wage gap can be attributed to differences in education, skill levels, and occupational segregation, statistical analyses suggest deeper inequities.

An Oaxaca decomposition study indicates that nearly **60 percent of the wage differential is “unexplained,”** which points toward systemic discrimination and unequal access to better-paying employment opportunities. Such structural barriers restrict upward mobility and perpetuate cycles of poverty among SC households. Expanding skill development initiatives, enforcing workplace equality, and providing targeted employment schemes are therefore essential to bridge these disparities and ensure inclusive growth.

Table:5 Employment and Income Status of SCs in Telangana (PLFS 2022)

Indicator	SCs (%) / Value	State Average (%) / Value	Gap / Remarks
Unemployment Rate	8.7%	6.3%	Higher by 2.4 percentage points
Average Monthly Earnings (₹)	₹9,800	₹12,600 (OBCs & others)	~22% lower for SCs
Share of “Unexplained” Wage Gap	~60%	—	Points to structural discrimination
Major Employment Sectors	Agriculture, casual labor, low-end services	Wider sectoral spread among OBCs/F Cs	Concentration in low-income sectors

Health and Housing

The socio-economic well-being of Scheduled Castes in Telangana is closely tied to health and housing conditions, both of which reflect mixed progress. On the positive side, *National Family Health Survey-5 (2019–21)* data indicates that **institutional births among SC women are at 89 percent**, nearly on par with the state average. This suggests that public health outreach, maternal care schemes, and government-run hospitals have



been largely successful in ensuring safe deliveries.

However, significant concerns remain regarding nutritional health. The prevalence of **anaemia among SC women stands at 58 percent**, which is notably higher than the state average of 51 percent. Anaemia adversely impacts maternal and child health, labour productivity, and long-term well-being. This higher incidence underscores the need for targeted nutritional interventions, including iron supplementation, dietary diversification, and improved access to public distribution systems.

Housing indicators also reveal structural gaps. Approximately **38 percent of SC households still lack pucca housing**, relying instead on semi-pucca or kutcha structures that are vulnerable to weather conditions and lack basic amenities. While housing schemes such as *Indiramma* and *Double Bedroom Housing* have provided some relief, coverage has been uneven, leaving a considerable section of SC households in insecure living conditions. Health outcomes such as institutional deliveries are encouraging, persistent challenges in nutrition and housing call for a more integrated welfare approach combining healthcare, food security, and housing rights.

Table:6 Health and Housing Indicators of SCs in Telangana (NFHS-5, 2019-21)

Indicator	SCs (%) / Value	State Average (%)	Gap / Remarks
Institutional Births (Women 15-49)	89%	91%	Near parity with state average
Anaemia Prevalence (Women 15-49)	58%	51%	Higher among SC women
SC Households Without Pucca Housing	38%	27%	Housing vulnerability persists

Atrocities Against Scheduled Castes

Caste-based violence remains a critical issue affecting the security and dignity of Scheduled Castes in Telangana. According to *National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2022*, the state registered **2,045 atrocity cases** against SCs under various provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. This figure highlights the persistence of structural violence, despite policy interventions aimed at promoting social justice.



A major concern lies in the **low conviction rate, which remains below 30 percent**. This reflects systemic shortcomings in investigation, prosecution, and witness protection. Delays in filing charge sheets, inadequate evidence gathering, and social pressures on victims often weaken cases, leading to high acquittal rates. The justice delivery system thus fails to provide adequate deterrence against caste-based crimes. The persistence of atrocities also reveals deeper societal prejudices, particularly in rural areas where SCs are dependent on dominant castes for land, labour, and social relations. Land disputes, access to common resources, and assertion of rights—such as participation in local governance or demand for equal wages—often become flashpoints for violence. Addressing this issue requires not only stronger enforcement of existing laws but also comprehensive support systems, including **fast-track courts, victim compensation, legal aid, and community sensitization programs**. Without such measures, the cycle of discrimination and violence is likely to persist.

Table:7 Atrocities Against SCs in Telangana (NCRB 2022)

Indicator	Value	Remarks
Total Atrocity Cases	2,045	High incidence of caste-based violence
Conviction Rate	<30%	Reflects weak justice delivery
Common Triggers	Land disputes, wage conflicts, social assertion	Rooted in rural caste hierarchies

Telangana has made strides in targeted welfare delivery, with significant budgetary prioritization for SCs. However, outcomes remain mixed. Education access has improved, but dropout rates persist. Employment generation and entrepreneurship under Dalit Bandhu face sustainability concerns due to lack of mentoring and market linkages. Wage disparities highlight systemic discrimination beyond resource access. Health outcomes indicate persistent vulnerabilities, especially for women. Atrocity data underscore the continuing need for legal and social protection.

Implementation challenges include



bureaucratic delays, underutilization of funds, lack of beneficiary awareness, and uneven district-level performance. Programs like Dalit Bandhu require robust monitoring frameworks to ensure enterprise survival beyond initial grants.

Problems and Perspectives

Despite progressive policies and substantial financial commitments, Scheduled Castes (SCs) in Telangana continue to face multiple challenges in realizing full social and economic empowerment. One of the foremost issues lies in the **uneven implementation of schemes**. For instance, while the Dalit Bandhu initiative has generated high expectations, its rollout remains geographically limited, creating disparities within the community. Similarly, while SCSP allocations have increased significantly, **utilization efficiency remains at 75-85%**, leaving gaps in resource delivery.

In the socio-economic domain, **education and employment disparities persist**. Dropout rates at the secondary level are high, and SC youth continue to encounter structural barriers in accessing formal employment. Wage discrimination remains evident, with SC workers earning around **22% less than OBCs and others**, much of which is attributed to unexplained factors, suggesting entrenched social bias. Health and

housing indicators also reflect vulnerabilities, as anaemia prevalence and inadequate pucca housing are higher among SC households. Telangana's focus on **direct benefit transfers, educational mobility, and entrepreneurship** reflects a shift from welfare to empowerment. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms, ensuring equitable coverage, and addressing discrimination in labor markets will be key to translating policy intent into lasting transformation

Conclusion

The experience of Scheduled Castes in Telangana demonstrates both progress and persistent challenges in the pursuit of social justice and equity. Over the past decade, the state has adopted targeted welfare policies such as the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP), Gurukulams, overseas scholarships, and the innovative Dalit Bandhu scheme. These interventions have created new opportunities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship, and have contributed to a gradual narrowing of certain development gaps. Indicators such as improved enrolment in higher education, increased institutional deliveries, and rising budget allocations signal a positive trajectory.

Yet, these achievements coexist with continuing structural disadvantages. Literacy rates among SCs remain below the state



average, with female literacy still lagging. Dropout rates at the secondary level exceed 25 percent, limiting long-term educational gains. Employment data reveal higher unemployment rates and persistent wage disparities, much of which cannot be explained by human capital differences alone, pointing to continuing caste-based discrimination. Similarly, health outcomes expose vulnerabilities, with anaemia prevalence among SC women significantly above the state average. Housing insecurity, with over one-third of SC households lacking pucca homes, further reflects the socio-economic precarity of many families.

Equally concerning is the persistence of caste-based atrocities. The registration of more than 2,000 atrocity cases in 2022, combined with conviction rates below 30 percent, underlines the systemic weaknesses in law enforcement and justice delivery. This erodes the sense of security and undermines trust in state institutions.

Going forward, a multi-dimensional approach is required. Policy must move beyond welfare to empowerment, ensuring better implementation, transparent monitoring, and inclusive growth. Priority should be placed on quality education, skill development, livelihood security, nutritional interventions, housing, and effective

protection of rights. Only through a holistic and rights-based framework can Telangana ensure that its Scheduled Castes not only access welfare but also participate fully as equal citizens in the state's social and economic transformation.

Recommendations

To strengthen the Scheduled Caste policy framework in Telangana, several actionable measures are necessary. First, **effective implementation and monitoring** should be prioritized. While SCSP allocations are commendable, ensuring 100% utilization with transparent reporting mechanisms will improve accountability. Introducing **district-level dashboards** to track expenditure and beneficiary coverage could help bridge the gap between allocation and delivery.

Second, the **Dalit Bandhu scheme** should be expanded in a phased yet inclusive manner to avoid regional disparities. Coupling it with entrepreneurship training, market linkages, and financial literacy programs will ensure long-term sustainability of the investments made.

Third, in education, reducing **secondary-level dropout rates** requires targeted interventions such as mentoring, conditional cash transfers, and improved hostel facilities. Expanding overseas



scholarships and Gurukulams will further enhance mobility among SC youth.

Fourth, to address **employment and wage discrimination**, stronger enforcement of equal opportunity laws, coupled with skill development tied to industry demand, is essential. Encouraging private sector participation through diversity incentives can also create fairer labor market outcomes.

Finally, health and housing interventions must focus on **anaemia reduction, maternal health, and housing security** through convergence of state and central schemes. Such an integrated approach will ensure that the shift from welfare to empowerment becomes a reality.

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