

Abstract

This paper compares the latest estimates of poverty (1999–2000) made by the Planning Commission with earlier estimates of the 1980s and 1990s, focusing on the methodology and database used for estimation. It extensively reviews the attempts by Angus Deaton (2003a, b, and c), Sundaram and Tendulkar (2001; 2003a, d), Sen-Himanshu (2004a, b) and Surjit Bhalla (2003) in this regard. The paper traces the comparable poverty estimates for the 1980s and 1990s in their levels and change and uses the extent of poverty reduction implicit in these estimates to assess the magnitude of poverty reduction in the two decades. These are placed in the wider debate on the impact of the economic reform programmes on the incidence of poverty in the Indian context.