Empowerment Of Vulnerable And Marginalization Communities By Societal Transforming India: Policy Initiatives For Viksit Bharat@2047

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Abstract

Tribes in India are one of the most excluded and disadvantaged sections of Indian society since centuries and this exclusion continues, although with a relatively lesser degree compared to the earlier periods. However, their suffering continued to increase in the last decade. More particularly, post 2007 global financial crisis had a serious impact on India's growth. This in turn resulted in a slow growth. Since then, India is registering low levels of growth compared to the pre-crisis period. These developments on growth front had serious implications for ordinary Indian citizens. Falling growth, dwindling investments, rising fiscal deficit, international pressures to keep the macro fundamentals in the right balance had pushed the successive governments at the centre to cut down their expenditure. This resulted in cuts in social sector spending, with the cuts on expenditure ranging from education to sanitation, MNREGA to subsidies. These cuts would have serious ramifications for the marginalized sections of the society in general and tribes in particular. Thanks to the proactive policies of successive governments at the centre and the states respectively. The Indian Constitution also has laid down various protective as well as ameliorative measures to develop the vulnerable communities. These measures have been in the form of assuring their political representation as well as their representation in services through reservation. In order to advise on matters pertaining to the development scheduled tribes, compulsory Tribe Advisory councils have been formed in the states where tribal's live both in scheduled areas and outside. Changes have been made in the forest policy, guaranteeing the tribal's certain rights on forest produce. In this connection present review paper discusses empowerment of Vulnerable and Marginalization Communities by Societal Transforming India Policy Initiatives and framework execute on present government

Key Words: Disadvantage, Exclusion, Growth, Marginalization, Policy, Transformation and Vulnerable

1) Introduction:

The Long term credit should be provided to enable the tribal to free himself from the strangle hold of the usurious moneylenders and the tribal's repaying capacity should be raised by improving their economic conditions. The institutional credit should forth come in an adequate measure and the procedure should be simplified to attract the tribal's to take advantage of the credit facilities provided by the institution. But the crux of the problem still remains as there has been a relatively less sympathetic approach towards educating the tribal's, which is an important tool for their empowerment. This forms the rationale of the present study. A tribe is viewed, historically or developmentally, as a social group existing before the development of, or outside of, states. Many people used the term "tribal society" to refer to societies organized largely on the basis of social, especially familial, descent groups. The word Tribe etymologically derived from old French *tribu* or directly from Latin *tribus*". Tribe is a contested term due to its roots in colonialism. The word has no shared referent, whether in political form, kinship relations or shared culture. Some argue that it conveys a negative connotation of a timeless unchanging past. To avoid

these implications, some have chosen to use the terms "ethnic group", or nation instead. India has the second largest concentration of tribal population, after that of the African continent. Tribal's are generally called as 'Adivasis' implying 'Original Inhabitants' of the land. There are about 360 tribal groups speaking more than 100 languages and dialects in India. They have been specified as Scheduled Tribes (STs) in accordance with the Presidential Orders issued since 1950. The Scheduled Tribes population of the country, according to 2011 Census was 104,281,034 and constitutes 8.6 per cent to the total India population. The areas inhabited by the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Country are termed as 'Scheduled Areas'. These are popularly known as 'Agency Areas' since the Colonial times. These areas are specially defined in Para 6 of the Part 'C' of the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Although the genesis of the concept of Scheduled Areas was traced back to the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874, in the Pre-Independence period, the Scheduled Areas were retained to assist the tribal's in enjoying their customary rights without exploitation and to develop and protect the tribal's and their environments. Accordingly as per the provisions of the Scheduled Areas, Part – A States Order of 1950 and the amended Scheduled Areas, Part – B States Order of 1950 certain tribal areas in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Bihar, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh was declared as Scheduled Areas. The Indian Constitution assigns special status to the Scheduled Tribes (STs). Traditionally referred to as *adivasis*, *vanbasis*, *tribes*, or *tribals*, STs constitute about 8% of the Indian population. There are 573 Scheduled Tribes living in different parts of the country, having their own languages different from the one mostly spoken in the State where they live. There are more than 270 such languages in India (Suresh Vadranam and Jayaprada Sahoo, 2024).

According to the 2011 census, the tribal population in India is 74.6 million. The largest number of tribes is in undivided Madhya Pradesh (16.40 million), followed by Odisha (7 million) and Jharkhand (6.6 million). There were 16 million ST children (10.87 million of 6-11 years and 5.12 million of 11-14 years) as of March 2001, out of the total population in India of about 193 million the age group of 6 to14 years. Education of ST children is considered important, not only because of the Constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities.

2) Indian Constitution and Right to Education:

In India the right to free and compulsory education was retained in Article 45 of Part IV of the Constitution that incorporates the Directive Principles of the State Policy, thus making a distinction from the Fundamental Rights. The most relevant interpretation of Article 21 from education point of view was the Supreme Court's Unnikrishnan Judgment (1993). This ruled that Article 45 of the Directive Principles of State Policy must be read in harmonious conjunction with Article 21 Court since; right to life and personal liberty loses its meaning if a child is deprived of elementary education (Unnikrishnan Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh, 1993, Supreme Court of India, 217), However, though this article 21A has provided renewed opportunity to reduce the increasing inequality in education at the elementary level and achieve the goals of justice – social, economic and political, it has yet to acquire the state of other fundamental rights.

3) The Right to Education Bill:

• State shall ensure a school in every child's neighbourhood. Every school shall conform to conform to certain minimum standards defined in the Bill.

• Government schools shall provide free education to all admitted children. Private schools shall admit at least 25% of children from weaker sections: no fee shall be charged to these children screening test at the time of admission and capitation fees are prohibited for all children.

• School Management Committees (SMC) mostly composed of parents will ménage government schools. Teachers will be assigned to a particular school; there will be no transfers followed by Odisha (7 million) and Jharkhand (6.6 million). There were 16 million

ST children (10.87 million of 6-11 years and 5.12 million of 11-14 years) as of March 2001, out of the total population in India of about 193 million the age group of 6 to14 years. Education of ST children is considered important, not only because of the Constitutional obligation but also as a crucial input for total development of tribal communities.

4) Conceptual Definitions on Policy:

A policy is a principle to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. A policy is a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. Policy or policy study may also refer to the process of making important organizational decisions, including the identification of different alternatives such as programs or spending priorities, and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they will them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Regarding the expression "weaker sections of society" the Supreme Court has directed the Central Government to lay down appropriate guidelines.

5) Study Objectives:

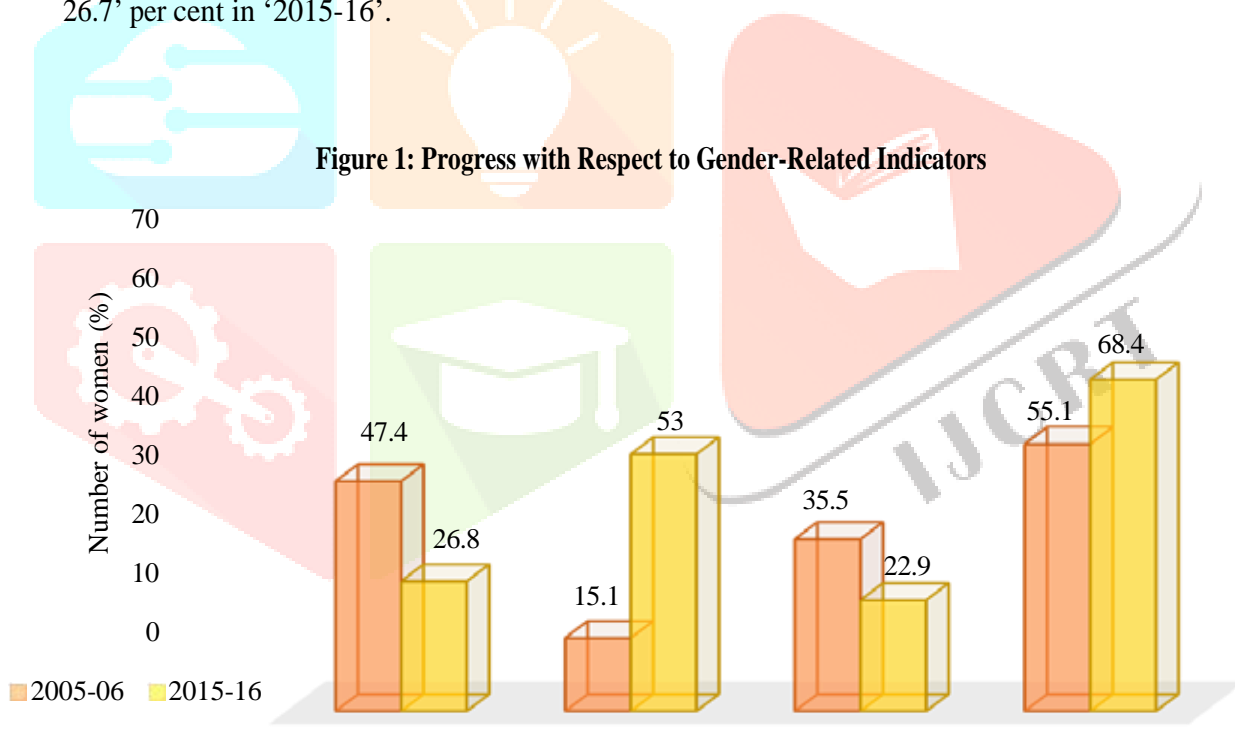To create an enabling environment, sans institutional and structural barriers;

To enhance the female labour force participation rate to at least 30 per cent by 2022-23;

To accelerate the socio-economic development of SCs, STs, OBCs, *safai karamcharis* as well as DNTs, NTs and SNTs through focused affirmative action so as to bring them on par with the rest of the population as far as key human development indicators are concerned; and

To bridge the gap between minority communities and the rest of the population with respect to various socio-economic and human development indicators through affirmative action.

6) Gender Status:

- As highlighted in the Economic Survey 2018, a number of indicators that reflect the position of women in Indian society have moved in the right direction. Out of 17 indicators pertaining to women's agency, attitudes and outcomes, 14 have improved over time. On seven of them, the improvement is at least on par with countries at similar levels of development as India.

- However, a declining female labour force participation rate (LFPR) despite increasing levels of education and declining fertility rates has emerged as a worrying trend.

- The current female LFPR is 23.7 per cent (26.7 per cent in rural areas and 16.2 per cent in urban areas). The declining trend is particularly strong in rural areas, where it has gone down from 49.7 per cent in '2004-05 to 26.7' per cent in '2015-16'.

Figure 1: Progress with Respect to Gender-Related Indicators

Sources: National Family Health Survey Rounds 3 and 4

Women aged 20- 24 years married before 18 years Women having a bank or savings account that they use themselves Women who's Body Mass Index is below normal Women who are literate. At the all India level, women are confined mainly to the large, informal sector. It is estimated that if women did as much formal work as men, India would experience an additional 1.4 per cent GDP growth. On average, 66 per cent of women's work in India is unpaid, compared to 12 per cent of men's. The government has taken some important initiatives to promote gender equality and welfare. These include the 'Beti Bachao', 'Beti Padhao' campaign, the 'Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017', 'Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana', 'POSHAN Abhiyaan' and the 'Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana'.

- Constraints of workplace distance, inflexibility in work in. The absence of opportunities for part-time work and challenges surrounding re-entry into the workforce further worsen the situation. Women's work comprises mostly of invisible/unpaid working hours, lack of availability of crèches, safety etc., deter women from participating in economic activities

6.1) Way Forward:

> Ensure gender-sensitive thinking for legislation and policies keeping in view the challenges faced by women including different life stages (single women, married women, young mothers and women re-entering the workforce after a break);

> Levels of education (illiterate, school educated, vocationally trained, college graduates, professionals);

> Geographic inequities (rural, urban, towns, peri-urban areas, remote locations) and marginalization (SC/ST, OBCs etc.);

> Special need groups such as single mothers, widows, homeless women and women with disabilities, among others;

> Strengthen legal frameworks to eliminate discrimination against women and promote gender equity;

> Craft legislations for women engaged in the unorganized sector to ensure at least a minimum set of gender-sensitive provisions such as access to privacy, minimum wages, maternity benefits, leave and grievance redressal;

> Ensure mechanisms for implementation of mandatory laws like the Maternity Benefit Act and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, including for workers in the informal sector;

> Create liberal laws/guidelines that encourage women to re-enter the workforce after a break;

> Develop and implement Equal Opportunity Policies:

> Establish a set of norms (for job advertisements and selection guidelines, availability of crèche at workplace, grievance redressal, flexi hours, part-time work, maternity benefits etc.) for both the government and private sectors;

> Persuade the private sector, autonomous organizations and others to voluntarily inscribe a statement in job advertisements to the effect:

> *'We are an equal opportunity organization and are fully committed to women's inclusion in our workforce'*, pending a formal policy. This can be accomplished in partnership with organisations like the Confederation of Indian Industry that have developed equal opportunity guidelines; and

> Reward villages/districts with an equal child sex ratio through information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns.

6.2) Generate Gender-Disaggregated Data and Rank States on Key Indicators:

> Establish a dedicated unit within the 'Ministry of Women and Child Development';

> The unit should focus on data gathering, conducting regular reviews with other ministries on explicitly defined gender targets (e.g. under the *POSHAN Abhiyaan*, reduce anaemia rates among adolescent girls and women in the 15-49 years age group by at least one-third by 2022-23), ensuring optimum budgetary resources for women's welfare and evaluating the effectiveness of gender-based budgeting.

> In setting up this unit, lessons could be leveraged from similar institutional arrangements in countries like Rwanda (Gender Monitoring Office) and Finland (Gender Equality Unit).

> State government should establish similar units at the state level.

> Improve data systems to generate gender- disaggregated data through the use of technology, geo locating information and generating maps in real time.

> Rank states on a set of reliable and comparable indicators that reflect changes in the status of women at the national and sub-national levels over time.

> Encourage Women's Participation in Industry and Enterprise

> Develop sector/industry specific targets for women's employment and incentivize their implementation by firms.

Figure 2: Examples of indicators that could be used for developing the gender-based index and ranking states

Create policies and guidelines, on priority, to enhance access to credit by women entrepreneurs; provide

Child Sex Ratio	Percentage of Anaemic Women	Percentage of Girls Completing Secondary Schooling	Maternal Mortality Rate	Female Labour Force Participation Rate
Percentage of Girls who are Graduates	Percentage of Women Voters at All Levels	Incidence of Crimes Against Women	Enrolment Rate of Girls at the Primary School Level	Percentage of Women owning Land, Livestock & Housing

facilitated credit access pathways for single women, women's self help groups/guilds/co-operatives, handicapped women, and SC/ST women.

➢ Consider incentivizing sectors/companies that have over 30 per cent women workers by providing tax benefits.

➢ Improve asset ownership and economic security

➢ Prioritize groups of women farmers seeking to lease land, water bodies, etc., at the village *panchayat* level.

➢ Encourage joint registration with spouses/ sole registration of land in the name of the
woman through registration fee and stamp duty concessions through special drives/awareness campaigns.

➢ Recognize and secure women's rights over common property resources like irrigation systems, fishing grounds, forests and water.

➢ Create enabling conditions for women engaged in agriculture

➢ Ensure 50 per cent membership of women farmers in Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs).Consider creating a separate budget to bear the registration/processing fee for the registration of women FPOs.

➢ Specially focus on skill development among women, particularly for activities such as soil conservation, social forestry, dairy
development, horticulture, organic farming, and livestock rearing (including animal husbandry, poultry, fisheries).

➢ Target agricultural extension services to women farmers as well, not just males.

➢ Enhance women's skills and leveraging ability

➢ Consider extending the Post Graduate Indira Gandhi Scholarship for Single Girl Child scheme to families with two girl children.

➢ Provide relatively higher financial incentives for girls' education until Class XII to curb the higher dropout rate among girls and raise the average age at marriage by keeping girls in schools.

➢ Promote skill development among women in non-traditional work such as electronic technicians, electricians, plumbers, taxi drivers etc.

➢ Organize women into professional groups/ guilds to improve their bargaining power.

➢ Use platforms like Digital India (i) to create apps for the guilds (ii) for marketing and branding purposes and (iii) to establish linkages with corporate, markets and consumers.

➢ Ensure mobility, security and safety for all women

➢ Provide affordable housing, residential hostels and gender friendly facilities in upcoming towns and big cities.

➢ Improve rural connectivity and public transport systems.Ensure gender-sensitive, rights-based and time-bound trials as well as disposal of cases pertaining to violence against women.

➢ Strengthen the standard operating protocols for tackling crimes against women, including new forms of violence such as cybercrimes.

➢ Introduce training (including refresher training) on women-specific issues and laws for all ranks and categories of police personnel, health practitioners, protection officers, legal service authorities, and judicial authorities as well as other stakeholders who interact with survivors of violence, especially in remote areas.

7) Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Other Tribal Groups and Minorities:

7.1) Program Objectives:

To accelerate the socio-economic development of SCs, STs, OBCs, *safai karamcharis* as well as DNTs, NTs and SNTs through focused affirmative action so as to bring them on par with the rest of the population as far as key human development indicators are concerned.

7.2) Existing Condition:

High incidence of poverty and low educational attainment are the two major challenges faced by weaker sections in India. Other challenges include high levels of malnutrition and limited opportunities for meaningful economic engagement.

Among the weaker sections, *safari karmacharis* constitute one of the most deprived groups. Other groups that require special attention include the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) among the STs as well as performing artists and those engaged in begging among the DNTs, NTs and SNTs.

Research on SCs and STs suggests that historical inequities among the different segments of India's workforce have diminished over the last three decades. The gaps have narrowed most markedly for the youngest cohorts in the workforce, especially in the domain of education. However, there is still a long way to go before the inequities are bridged completely.

Table 3: Incidence of Poverty across Social Groups

Social Group (%)	Rural			Urban		
	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12	2004-05	2009-10	2011-12
SCs	53.53	42.26	31.5	40.56	34.11	21.70
STs	62.28	47.37	45.3	35.52	30.38	24.10
OBCs	39.80	31.9	22.60	30.60	24.30	15.40
Others	41.79	33.8	15.5	25.68	20.09	8.10

Source: Planning Commission

Table: 4: Literacy Rate among Social Groups

Social Group (%)	1981	1991	2001	2011
SCs	21.38	37.41	54.69	66.07
STs	21.38	37.41	54.69	66.07
Others	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99

Source: Census Data

7.3) Challenges

Problems of isolation, exclusion and occupation- al subjugation are major obstacles to main- streaming these social groups in the socio-economic development of the country.

Governance including lack of inter-ministerial convergence and suboptimal targeting of beneficiaries is another major issue.

Resources are distributed thinly among a large number of schemes, especially under the scheduled caste sub-plan (SCSP) and tribal sub- plan (TSP), instead of among a few targeted schemes.

There is limited awareness about the schemes resulting in leakages and denial of benefits.

Mainstreaming these groups has also been hampered by the inability to incorporate specific cultural and social requirements of SC/ST groups while designing interventions.

7.4) Way Forward

Institutional and programmatic strengthening

Undertake a baseline survey and target remote and tribal habitations for implementation of various development programmes. Design schemes that are tailored to and narrowly focus on the challenges and needs of specific communities.

Institutionalize social audits for assessing the impact of these schemes on the basis of quantifiable benefits to targeted households.

Establish the National Institute for Tribal Research.

Earmark funds under all developmental programmes for DNTs, SNTs and NTs.

Put in place mechanisms to regularly monitor the implementation of legislations like the *Panchayat* (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act and Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

Set up a permanent commission for NTs, DNTs and SNTs along the lines of the National Commission for SCs and STs.

7.5) Education

Establish residential schools in uncovered blocks/districts with facilities for vocational training.

Define and ensure adherence to quality parameters for existing and new residential schools.

Increase the number of scholarships provided under the prematric, post-matric, National Fellowship and National Overseas Scholarship schemes for SCs, STs and OBCs.

7.6) Economic empowerment

Expand the Stand-Up India scheme to include uncovered social groups like OBCs, DNTs, NTs and SNTs.

Extend venture capital funds and credit guarantee schemes for covering STs, OBCs, DNTs, NTs and SNTs.

Cover a larger number of beneficiaries under various finance and development schemes with an annual increase of 10 per cent every year.

Provide concessional loans for promoting entrepreneurship among OBCs by doubling the number of beneficiaries covered under the National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation by 2022-23.

Encourage indigenous tribal medicine alongside other systems to create additional livelihood opportunities.

Establish contact points with potential employers along with pre-job training sessions for youth.

7.7) Miscellaneous

Ensure universal coverage of DNT, SNT and NT populations for BPL and *Aadhaar* cards. Prepare a Vulnerability Index and Vulnerability Intervention Index for PVTGs based on the methodology suggested by the National Institute of Rural Development and *Panchayati Raj*, Hyderabad. These indices will be useful for assessing the socio-economic disparities between PVTGs and other social groups and designing policy interventions accordingly.Extend habitat rights to PVTGs within the FRA framework, as has been done for the Baiga Tribe of Dindori District, Madhya Pradesh.

Provide project-based funding under special central assistance (SCA) to SCSP and to TSP, especially in *gram panchayats*/blocks where the population of SCs/STs is more than 25 per cent.

Prioritize vulnerable groups like tribal children under the National Nutrition Mission through tag-tracking and additional home visits for underweight children conducted by frontline workers.

Empower marginalized communities by promoting community-owned radio stations.

Promote habitations along the lines of Samasthapuram in Tamil Nadu where people belonging to all communities live together.

8) Minorities:

8.1) Objective: To bridge the gap between minority communities and the rest of the population with respect to various socio-economic and human development indicators through affirmative action.

8.2) Current Situation: As per Census 2011, of the total population of 121 crore, Hindus constitute 79.8 per cent, Muslims 14.2 per cent, Christians 2.3 per cent, Sikhs 1.7 per cent, Buddhists 0.7 per cent and Jains 0.4 per cent. While improvements have been made on several fronts, religious minorities lag behind on certain indicators pertaining to educational attainment, gender equality and workforce participation.

Table 5: Literacy rate among minority communities

Community (%)	Census 2011			Census 2001		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
National	80.87	64.63	72.98	75.3	53.7	64.8
Hindus	81.69	64.34	73.27	76.2	53.2	65.1
Muslims	74.73	62.03	68.53	67.6	50.1	59.1
Christians	87.69	81.40	84.53	84.4	76.2	80.3
Sikhs	80.02	70.30	75.39	75.2	63.1	69.4
Buddhist	88.31	74.04	81.28	83.1	61.7	72.7
Jains	96.78	92.91	94.88	-	-	-

Source: Census 2001 and Census 2011

8.3) Challenges

Data on development indicators for minorities is not generated at regular intervals.

Some minority communities are also included under SCs, STs and OBCs, which could result in the duplication of schemes for the same set of beneficiaries.

Awareness levels and demand for programmes being implemented for the benefit of minorities are limited.

8.4) Way Forward

Institutional restructuring

Vest the primary responsibility for a number of schemes currently being implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) with the relevant line ministries. MoMA should be involved with the finalization of physical and financial targets by the line ministries.

Increase the emphasis of the MoMA on data collection and analysis, identifying gap areas, online monitoring of the PM's 15-Point Programme, evaluating the impact of various schemes and popularizing schemes in local languages using social media.

Education

Enhance pre-metric scholarships, post-metric scholarships, merit-cum-means scholarships, *Maulana Azad* National Fellowships and National Overseas Scholarships with a 15 per cent increase annually from 2019 20.

Increase the number of scholarships for girls from minority communities by 10 per cent every year.

Ensure that girls who pass out from *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas* can continue their education after completing Class 8. Provide access to public transport in the form of buses and cycles or vouchers for meeting private transport costs to raise enrolment rates among girls from vulnerable communities.

Train at least 100,000 minority women under the *Nai Roshni* scheme every year.

Economic empowerment

Identify the poorest among the minority communities through the Socio-Economic Caste Census data for proper targeting of various schemes.

By 2022-23, provide integrated education and livelihood programmes to 100,000 beneficiaries under the *Nai Manzil* programme.

Train at least 350,000 beneficiaries during the 5-year period under *Seekho Aur Kamao*.

Achieve a 15 per cent increase per annum in loans to vulnerable sections through the use of alternative channels like regional rural banks.

Put out job advertisements in Urdu and local language newspapers as well as through other locally appropriate channels.

9) Senior Citizens, Persons with Disability and Transgender Persons:

9.1) Senior Citizens

Objective of the program

➢ To ensure a life of dignity, social security and safety for senior citizens, enabling them to actively participate in economic development and the nation building process.

Current Situation

As per Census 2011,[1] India had 10.38 crore senior citizens (60 years and above). Of this, 3.8 crore were above the age of 80 years. The share of the elderly in the population increased from 5.6 per cent in 1961 to 8.6 per cent in 2011. It is expected to increase to 20 per cent of the population by 2050. Senior citizens face several challenges. They are prone to chronic illness. However, access to institutional support and specialized medical care is skewed, with most of these concentrated in urban areas and out of reach for the large number of the elderly who live in rural areas.

The government has taken steps to provide various tax benefits to senior citizens including raising the basic exemption limit from INR 2.5 lakh to INR. 3 lakh, increasing the deduction for health insurance from INR 15,000 to INR 50,000 as well as raising the deduction for bank interest from INR 10,000 to INR 50,000. The *Pradhan Mantri Vaya Vandana Yojana* has also been launched to provide a maximum pension of INR 10,000 per month with an investment of INR 15 lakh.

Challenges

➢ Poverty and lack of income security makes it difficult to meet even basic needs like food, housing, healthcare, etc., for a large number of senior citizens.

➢ There has been a rapid emergence of nuclear families and ageing parents living away from their children.

➢ There is a shortage of well-trained personnel for delivering care giving and other services for senior citizens.

Way Forward

➢ Given the changing demographics and socio- economic needs, revise the National Policy for Older Persons. The policy should cover housing, income security, pension, and access to healthcare. It should also emphasize the concept of 'ageing in place' or 'ageing in own home'.

➢ Bring schemes pertaining to senior citizens under the restructured Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and Senior Citizens. An integrated implementation and monitoring plan should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and the plan should be reviewed periodically by an inter-ministerial committee headed by the Secretary.

➢ Bring the necessary amendments to the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Older Persons Act, 2007, currently under consideration by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE).

➢ Consider establishing an old age home in every district by 2020 and ensure adherence to minimum quality standards.

➢ Expand the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly to all districts following a comprehensive evaluation of the scheme.[2]

➢ Prioritize supply of aids and assistive devices for senior citizens below the poverty line.

➢ Ensure a barrier-free environment in all public buildings, parks, etc., for the elderly.

➢ Strengthen the National Institute of Social Defence and Regional Resource Training Centres to meet the rising demand for quality caregivers.

9.2) PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Objective of the Program:

➢ To create opportunities for and empower persons with disabilities (PwDs) to realize their potential and live a productive and dignified life.

Current Situation:

According to Census 2011, India had 2.68 crore PwDs constituting approximately 2.21 per cent of the total population. India enacted the first legislation for PwDs in 1995, which has been replaced by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The Act is harmonized with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, and lists 21 categories of disabilities. India also formulated its first National Policy for PwDs in 2006. PwDs face several challenges.[3] According to the Census 2011, 27 per cent of disabled children between the ages of 5-19 had never attended an educational institution. Only 50 per cent of the

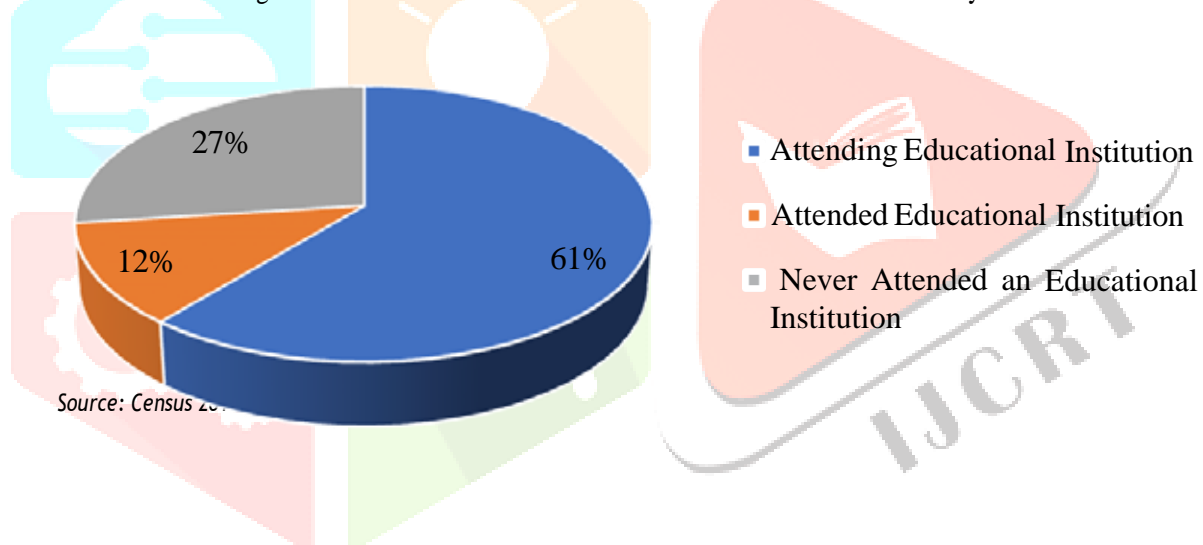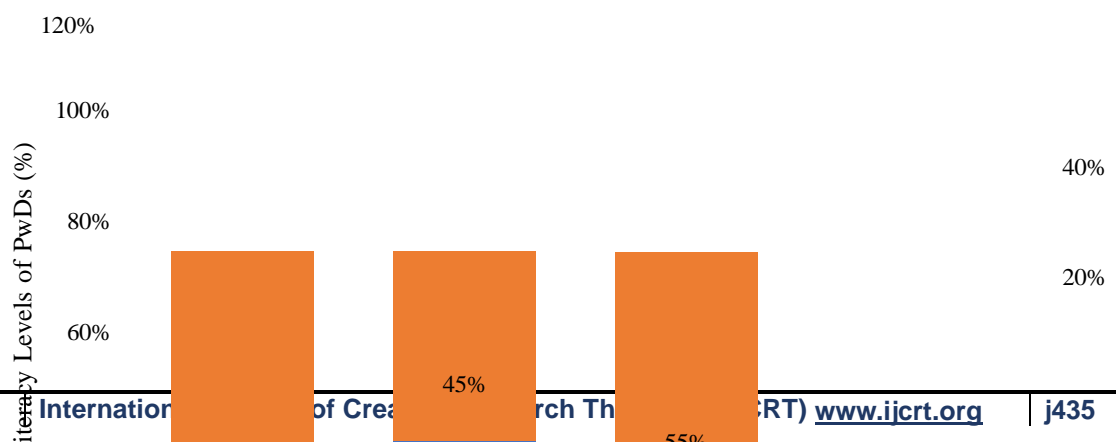Figure: 6. School attendance of children with disabilities between 5-19 years

- Attending Educational Institution
- Attended Educational Institution
- Never Attended an Educational Institution

27%

12%

61%

Source: Census 2011

Figure: 7 Literacy status of PwDs

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0%

Men   Women   Total

Source: Census 2011

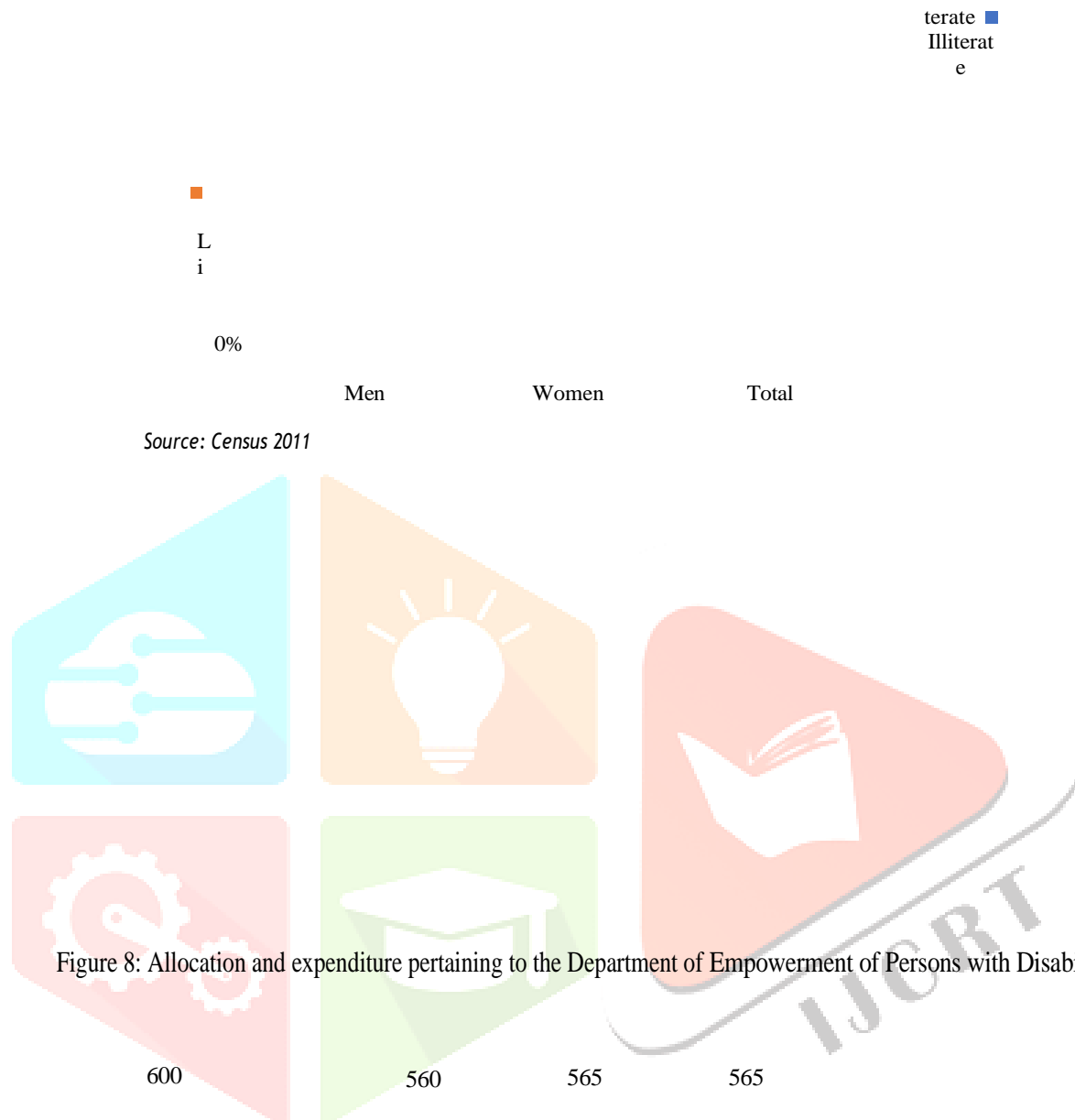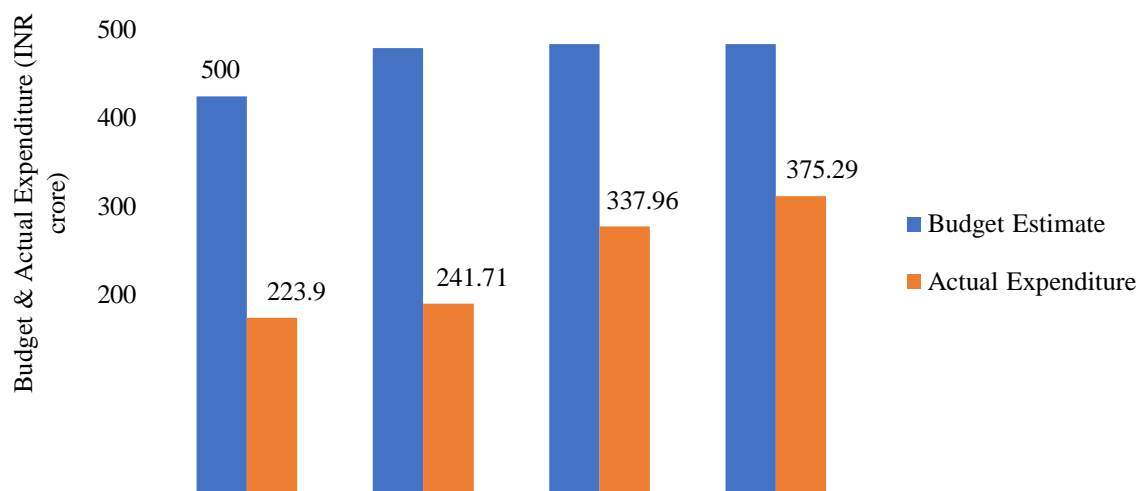Figure 8: Allocation and expenditure pertaining to the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities

600   560   565   565

100

0

2012-13   2013-14   2014-15   2015-16

Source: Government of India budget documents

disabled population in the 15-59 years category was working.

They also tend to be stigmatized and discriminated against and lag behind others with respect to access to basic infrastructure and opportunities for economic participation.

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwDs) has the overall responsibility for implementing several schemes; however, utilization of funds has been a challenge.

Challenges:

➢ Accurate identification of the disabled population in India has been a major problem. People tend to hide their disability to avoid facing social stigma.

➢ Beyond Census statistics, there is a lack of appropriately disaggregated data for PwDs generated at regular intervals.[4] In India, the last survey on disability was carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation in 2002.

➢ Disability related issues require multi-sectoral action, which has been difficult to achieve in practice.

➢ The National Institutes (NIs), Composite Regional Centres (CRCs), District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRCs) and the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) need special attention to ensure adequacy of resources and infrastructure as well as effective monitoring of schemes.

Way Forward:

Generate data on PwDs

➢ Disaggregate data by sex, age and socio- economic status in order to identify reliable and regular trends for informed policymaking. Feed data collected into an electronic database for PwDs at the national level and link with the Unique Disability Identity Card.

Bolster the institutional architecture and policy framework

➢ Reorient the DEPwD to focus on data collection, identifying gaps and evaluating the impact of various schemes, instead of focusing on the implementation of a large number of schemes with small budget allocations.

➢ Bring programmes focused on improving specific issues related to PwDs under the purview of the relevant line ministries.

➢ Earmark at least 5 per cent of the total budget of social sector ministries for schemes for PwDs.

➢ Education

➢ Include courses in disability etiquette and success stories on PwDs in the mainstream curriculum to change attitudes towards PwDs.

➢ Provide special education training in teacher training courses.

➢ Enhance scholarships/fellowships to students with disabilities.

➢ Make schools more inclusive by addressing the barriers related to the physical environment (e.g. accessible toilets), admission procedures as well as curriculum design.

➢ Ensure that schools have at least one section of every class accessible under the Universal Design Guidelines.

➢ Foster partnerships between the Ministry of Human Resource Development and MoSJE to promote

synergies among inclusive and special schools in the government and private sectors.

➢ Develop indicators for rating schools on inclusivity.

  ➢ Include disabled friendly sports, cultural and technical programmes in schools and colleges.

  ➢ Healthcare

  ➢ Provide aids and assistive devices to at least 3 lakh beneficiaries every year.

  ➢ Conduct cochlear implant and corrective surgeries for 5000 children annually.

  ➢ Establish 20 state spinal injury centres.

  ➢ Set up early diagnostic and intervention centres at the district level to screen children and identify special needs or requirements for assistive devices at an early age.

  ➢ Employment and income generation

  ➢ Integrate the skill development scheme with schemes of the National Trust (e.g., Disha), to address the needs of the intellectually disabled.

  ➢ Establish dedicated training centres for PwDs to meet the requirements of the private sector.

  ➢ Integrate initiatives of various ministries to provide skill training, soft loans and entrepreneurship opportunities to PwDs.

  ➢ Institutional strengthening

  ➢ Upgrade NIs into centres of excellence.

  ➢ Establish 50 CRCs in states having a population of more than 6 crore.

  ➢ Provide comprehensive rehabilitation services to 50 lakh PwDs through the NIs and CRCs.

  ➢ Enrol 17,000 rehabilitation personnel in various long-term courses offered by NIs and CRCs every year.

2. Accessibility and inclusivity

➢ Make the Accessible India Campaign a mass movement with the involvement of citizens and civil society. Conduct awareness programmes in collab- orations with DDRCs, CRCs and Vocational Rehabilitation Centres (VRCs).

➢ Incorporate universal design and accessibility standards in engineering, architecture and computer science studies.

➢ Introduce the requirement of an accessibility certificate for all future commercial enterprises above a specified size in order to be awarded a completion certificate.

➢ Extend the DDRC schemes to all districts.

➢ Construct residential homes for disabled adults whose parents are no longer alive.

➢ Adopt a life-cycle approach for community- based rehabilitation in mission mode. (Jayaprada Sahoo and Suresh Vadranam 2024).

9.3) Transgender Persons:

Objective of the Program:

  ➢ To ensure a life of dignity, social security and safety for transgender persons, enabling them to actively participate in economic development and the nation building process.

Current Situation:

As per Census 2011, India had 4.87 lakh transgender persons. The transgender community is among one of the most marginalized communities in the country. Extreme social exclusion diminishes their self-esteem and is a violation of their human rights. An Expert Committee constituted under the direction of the Honorable Supreme Court recommended several measures to ameliorate their problems. Following that, the "Scheme for Transgender Persons" was launched.

Challenges

➢ Parliament is yet to pass the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2016.

➢ Accurate identification of transgender persons is a major challenge.

➢ The implementation of the "Scheme for Transgender Persons" is suboptimal.

Way Forward:

➢ Provide for identification of transgender persons in all government and non-government records by introducing a separate column to include the third gender.

➢ Sensitize communities towards the challenges and needs of transgender persons.

➢ Create a forum for the active participation of transgender persons at all levels of governance.

➢ Put in place institutional mechanisms to effectively implement programmes for transgender persons.

➢ Determine the number of transgender persons and map their socio-economic status to design customized policy interventions. This enumeration and mapping can be carried out by the MoSJE along with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

➢ Mandate the provision of housing and community services to accommodate at least 50 per cent of transgender persons.

➢ Formulate and implement a scheme for establishing residential schools in all districts for transgender persons.

➢ Design a scheme for providing skill and employability training to transgender persons to integrate them with mainstream society.

➢ Launch a centrally sponsored scheme to provide pension to transgender persons above 60 years.

➢ Ensure *Aadhaar* and Direct Benefit Transfer based implementation and monitoring of social security programmes.

➢ Consider creating a fund at the national level for supporting states that have mapped out the needs of and designed the necessary policy interventions for various vulnerable sections
of society including persons with disabilities, senior citizens and transgender persons in line with the relevant legislations (Suresh Vadranam and Manikandan, E. 2024).

Conclusion"

    "Government of India is steadfast in its dedication to the development of "Tribal groups". "Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, has envisioned and executed various initiatives" while anticipating the significant "challenges of developing and preserving the cultural heritage" of "over 705 distinct tribal communities" across the country. "Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India", is utilizing a comprehensive "data-driven digital governance model" to engage with the diverse "Tribal population", addressing important "sectors such as education, health, livelihood, and water and village development". This initiative aims for "holistic development" by enhancing the living standards of these "marginalized communities" through "programs like Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), Vandhan Vikas Kendra, and scholarship schemes". These programs are transforming the lives of millions of "Tribal individuals". The "integration of electronic authentication, digital payments, the Public Financial Management System (PFMS), and Expenditure, Advance, and Transfer (EAT)" has enhanced "accountability and transparency" within the system by "monitoring" the complete utilization of "fund flows for asset creation" or "cash transfers to tribal beneficiaries", ensuring that every "expenditure on tribal welfare" is effectively utilized and that the implementing agencies are held accountable. These efforts would guarantee a decent existence for tribal groups and fulfil the objective of our "Honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi": "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas". The empowerment of the "Tribal Community", positioned at the base of the societal hierarchy, will undoubtedly revolutionize "India". The initiatives of the "Indian government" for "Tribal empowerment" have substantially improved the "socio-economic and cultural fabric" of these people. "Indian government" seeks to provide essential support to "Tribal people" through these programs, aiming to close the "development gap" and enhance their "socio-economic situations".

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