

2020

36th IARIW General Conference

Paper Prepared for the 36th IARIW General Conference, Oslo, Norway, August 24-28, 2020

Inequality in Opportunities for Education and Employment: An Inquiry Concerning Disabled Children in India

Surajit Deb

1. Background and Objective:

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes disability as issues of public health, human rights and development priority (WHO 2015). It is a public health issue because people with disabilities face widespread barriers in accessing health, education, employment and rehabilitation. Disability is also a human rights issue because the disabled generally experience discrimination and are subjected to multiple violations of rights and dignities and finally, disability is a development priority because of its higher prevalence in lower-income countries. The World Health Survey (WHS) covering data across 59 countries derived the average disability prevalence rate in the adult population at 15.6% in 2004, which ranged from 11.8 percent in higher income countries to 18 percent in lower income countries (WHO-WB 2011). The aspects of disability prevalence and the analysis for socially including them have remained relatively under-researched in India, whereby some analysis on issues such as the prevalence, nature, deprivation and social rights can be found in Mitra and Sambamoorthi [2006], Jeffery and Singal [2008], Shenoy [2011], Adhlakha [2013], GOI [2015], Ghosh [2016], Hans and Kannabiran [2016]. It is important to note that the Indian official statistics continue to report disability rates that are lower than most other countries in the world. According to GOI [2017], disability as per the census 2011 data constituted about 2.21 percent of the total population, whereas World Bank [2007] claim that there is growing evidence that people with disabilities comprise between 4 and 8 percent of the Indian population. Further, there remains a major difference between the census estimate of disability prevalence and the World Health Survey data, which estimated the prevalence as high as 24.9% of the total population during 2002-2004. The narrative of such a low disability rate, where deprivation on account of literacy, health, work opportunities and livelihood still remains persistent, has given rise to the view that disabled population are somehow missing from the count in India.

Apparently, the issue of disability bears some crucial implications in the Indian context due to the manifestation of various forms of inequality that continue to exist in the country. By and large, disabled persons are further disabled through unequal treatment and denial of basic rights

by the broader society. Thus, they are poor in most of the times and without any education or employment and therefore become deprived of the basic livelihood opportunities. It must be mentioned that the agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasized on the importance of full participation of disabled persons besides their socio-economic advancements and accordingly included 7 targets representing disability. In this background, this paper examines the elements of inclusion of the disabled by examining the barriers that they face on acquiring education, employment and earnings in major states of India.

2. Methodology and Plan of Study:

The difficulties in respect of education, employment and livelihood support remains the major ones that bear the critical impact on the life opportunities of persons with disabilities. It is often indicated that disabled people often do not complete their primary and secondary education and therefore encounter the employment challenges. Further, it is also argued that the risk of falling under disability remains intense with rising poverty rates. Our analysis therefore explores on the disability prevalence and the extent to which they are excluded from learning, work opportunities or bear the poverty risks. We therefore provide a state-level examination of the literacy, work opportunity and poverty aspects for the disabled persons in various states of India. We construct comparative estimates of literacy rate, unemployment rate, and other meaningful ratios for the disabled and non-disabled population for the major states of India. Further, we provide results on the education, rehabilitation and training aspects of the disabled children by analyzing the learning outcomes data from the District Information System for Education (DISE) data of the National University of Education Planning and Administration, Government of India. Finally, we appraise the relevance of SDG's indicators framework in removing the disability barriers in the country

The rest of the paper proceeds in the following sequence. Section 2 provides results for the disability prevalence in India and across states on the rural-urban and male-female proportions from the recent 2011 census data. The literacy, employment and income barriers for the disabled persons are examined in section 3. Section 4 elaborates on the treatment of disability in the SDGs. In the concluding section, we mention the immediate gaps in India's disability data and policies in the light of the indicators framework provided by the United Nation's Statistical Commission.

3. Data Source:

The main source for disability prevalence in India is the decennial population censuses data that covers all types of households, viz., normal, institutional and houseless. It encompasses all types of disabilities and provides information by areas of residence (rural-urban), social groups, sex, age, literacy, types and work status. Besides census data, the National Sample Surveys (58th Round) also carried out surveys on the persons with disabilities referring to the period July-December, 2002. Finally, the DISE data of the National University of Education Planning and

Administration also provides data on the educational aspects of disabled children at the level of states in India. This paper mainly uses the census 2011 and recent DISE data to perform the analysis.

4. Policy Implications:

Given the barriers that disabled persons face on acquiring education, employment and earnings, it is often alleged that the class could be the largest marginalized group in India. Our results would provide useful insights as to why the disability-specific targets in the SDG are crucial for monitoring the country's progress on disability inclusion.