

Empowering Disadvantaged Groups Through Socio Economic Development

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Abstract

Socio-economic disadvantaged groups basically are those groups that are lack behind the mainstreaming of society. Scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Minorities, and women constitute the disadvantaged groups. Socio-economic development and empowerment of disadvantaged groups is an imperative area that needs to be taken into consideration in order to lead the effective growth and development of the country. It is primarily concerned with bringing about improvement in the system of education, employment opportunities, lifestyle, income, skills development, and cultural factors. There are various schemes have been initiated to bring them into the mainstream of the society as well as the community. The main problems of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment are the major barriers within the course of their socio-economic development and empowerment. The Government has implemented various programs and schemes that facilitate education, employment opportunities, income generation, and overall sustenance of their living conditions. The processes of social and economic transformations are based on cultural and environmental factors. The main purpose of this research paper is to understand the socioeconomic development and empowerment of disadvantaged groups and various policies and schemes that work for disadvantaged groups.

Keywords: Disadvantaged Groups, Education, Employment Opportunities, Socio-economic development and empowerment, Social Exclusion.

Introduction

Development is a broader term by which things are in the process of improving. It can be defined in various contexts, social, political, biological, science and technology, language, and literature. In the context of socio-economic, development means improving people's lifestyles by improved education, income, skill development, and social transformation processes based on cultural and environmental factors. Therefore, it can be said that the social and economic development process. It can be measured by indicators such as gross domestic product, Life expectancy, literacy, and level of employment. Social development is a process, in which the transformation of social institutions in a manner, that improves the capacity of the society to meet the objectives. Economic development is the development of economic wealth and resources of the nations for the well-being of individuals. It is also said that it is programs, policies, or activities that make an improvement in the economic well-being and quality of life of the community. It means each community has its own opportunities, challenges, and priorities to live in a community and work for them.

Socioeconomic development and empowerment of individuals lead to progress and well-being in all spheres. It influences all the aspects of human existence within the country.

The main area that requires changes in the education system can be achieved through the establishment of educational Institutions where disadvantaged groups can study free education, It can help individuals obtain employment opportunities through the development of literacy skills, and the acquisition of education, and educational opportunities can also help individuals to generate income and sustain their living conditions Gross domestic Product is an important aspect of socio-economic development but it does not consider important aspects like leisure time, environmental quality, freedom, social justice, or gender equality. Another aspect is Per capita income does not indicate the level of income equality among individuals. These are the reasons that the concept of human development is made use of. It is focused on the overall quality of lives of individuals and the opportunities, and rights as they are from Chapter 4.1. (n.d.) socio-economic disadvantaged groups

Concept of Social Exclusion

Social Exclusion or Social Marginalisation is the social disadvantage and relegation to the sphere of society. It is used widely in Europe and was first used in France in the late 20th century. In other words, social exclusion is the process in which individuals are denied full access to various rights, opportunities, and resources that are normally available for the other groups, they are fundamental to social integration and observance of human rights within that particular group. It is related to terms person's social class, race, skin color, religious affiliation, ethnic origin, educational status, childhood relationships, living standards, political opinion, and appearance. It also includes disabled people, minorities, drug users, and institutional care leavers. Anyone who appears to deviate in any way from the perceived norms of a population comes in social exclusion. It can affect individuals or communities are prevented from participating fully in the economic, social, and political life of the society in which they live, it also affects the well-being of all people, including those with special needs. In India exclusion revolves around the societal interrelation and institutions that exclude, discriminate, isolate, and deprive some groups based on their identities like caste and authenticity. Historically, the caste system has regulated and controlled the social economic life of individuals within the country, the nature of exclusion revolving around the caste system particularly needs to be understood and conceptualized the organizational structure of the caste system is based on the division of people into the social group in which the civil, cultural, and economic rights of each individual caste are predetermined by birth and made hereditary. The caste system's most important feature is to provide a regularity mechanism to administer the social and economic organization through the instruments of social isolation and economic penalties. The caste system is strengthened with justification and support from philosophical elements within the Hindu religion (Thorat Maha Mallik and Venkatsen,2007)

Empowerment of Disadvantaged Groups of the Society

It is very necessary to empower Schedule Caste, Schedule Tribe, Minorities, OBCs, and Women in India to reduce the regional disparities and uplift the status of these communities. The Constitution of India makes various commitments under its many provisions for the empowerment as well as development of these groups. Towards fulfilling the commitment, the government of India has adopted a three-pronged strategy: 1. Social Empowerment; 2 Economic Empowerment; 3 Social Justice to ensure the removal of

disparities, elimination of exploitation, and suppression and to provide protection to these disadvantaged groups.

Social Empowerment of STs, SCs, Minorities, Other Backward Classes, and Women

Education is the most effective instrument for the social economic empowerment of the disadvantaged group, and high priority continues to be accorded to improve the educational status of these groups. The following measures are important: (<https://www.nios.ac.in/lesson-25.pdf>)

SCs, STs, and OBCs

- With respect to elementary education various incentives in the form of eradicating tuition fees, free supply of books, mid-day meals, and scholarships are provided. A special focus has also been on ST students in Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Navodaya Vidyalaya, and the National talent search scheme.
- There are major scholarship programs, post matric scholarships are awarded to promote higher education beyond matriculation. Pre-matric scholarships are given to encourage children of scavengers and those engaged in manual work to pursue education, upgradation of merit schemes is aimed at extending remedial and special coaching. Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for SC students provides special incentives to pursue Higher studies and research
- Coaching facilities are provided to students preparing for various competitive examination
- Hostel facilities are provided to both girls and boys for pursuing education from the upper primary stage onwards

Women

The following major steps are been undertaken for the social empowerment of women.

- Many efforts are been made to ensure equal access to education for women and girls, eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, and increase enrolment and retention rates for girls to improve the quality of education to facilitate lifelong learning as well as the development of occupational, vocational, and technical skills of women
- A holistic approach to women's health which includes both nutrition and health services is being adopted and special attention is given to the needs of women and girls at all stages of the life cycle.
- In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face, focused attention is paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of the life cycle
- Elimination of all forms of violations against women physical and mental whether at the domestic or societal level, including those arising from customs, tradition, and accepted practices has been getting topmost priorities.

Economic Empowerment of SCs, STs, Other Backward Classes, and Women

Employment and income generation programs have been launched for the economic empowerment of socially disadvantaged groups. The following apex financial organizations have been set,

SCs, STs and OBCs

- The National Schedule Cast Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) provides financial and other support to beneficiaries for taking up various income-generating activities
- The National Safai karamchari Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) provides financial and other support to Safai karamchari for taking up various income-generating activities.
- The National Schedule Tribe Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC) supports various income and employment-generating activities through Loans, Marketing support and Training, and so on.
- The Schedule Cast Development Corporations (SCDCs) finance employment-oriented schemes that cover agriculture and allied activities including minor irrigation, small-scale industry, transport, and Trade and service sectors
- The Schedule Tribes Development Corporations (STDCs) function as channelizing agencies and extend financial and other assistance to beneficiaries. The tribal cooperative marketing development federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED) provides marketing assistance to STs for the collection of minor Forest produce and surplus agricultural produce.

Women

- Since compromise most of the population is below the poverty line, poverty eradication programs are specifically addressed to their needs and problems.
- In the view of critical role of women in the agriculture and allied sectors as producers, concentrated efforts are being made to ensure that benefits of training, extension, and various programs reach them in proportion to their numbers.
- Comprehensive support in terms of labor legislation, social security, and other support services is provided to women to enable them to participate in various industrial sectors, especially electronics, information technology, agro-industries, and textile and food processing.
- The provision of support services for women like child care facilities, including crutches at workplaces and educational industries, and homes for the aged and disabled are being improved to create an enabling environment and to ensure their full cooperation in social, political, and economic life.

Social Justice

The constitution of India guarantees protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Some protective measures legislation has also been made. The Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955, the Schedule caste and Schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, and the Schedule Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forests Rights) Act 2006 are playing an important role. For the Women, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, etc.

Measure Policies and Programs for the Development of Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Groups

The implementation of measure policy to improve the status of socio-economic disadvantaged groups has the main objective of bringing them into the mainstream of society. There are major policies and programs that have promoted the socioeconomic development of disadvantaged groups have been mentioned as follows;

A) Education For All

Under the leadership of UNESCO, many countries met at Zomtien (Thailand) in 1990 and decided to provide Education for all by 2000. In 1992, nine highly popular countries namely India, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Mexico, Bangladesh, Brazil, and Egypt congregated in Delhi to reinforce their commitment toward Education for all. For the last two decades India, with the help of international agencies, has adopted various measures towards achieving the goal of Education for all. The following are the most significant.

Universalization of Elementary Education

The National Policy on Education 1986 mentioned that Free and compulsory education should be provided to all children up to the age of 14. 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. Recently the Indian parliament enacted the Free and Compulsory Education Act, of 2009 (Right to Education, 2009). As a result of these efforts made by central and state governments, almost 95% of the country's Rural population now has Primary school within 1 km and about 85% have upper primary school within 3 km. This has resulted in:

- Steady growth of enrolment of children of 6 to 14 years of age in Primary and Upper primary school has increased
- Significant improvement has taken place in the enrolment of girls, Schedule caste, and Schedule tribe

Significant increase in the number of primary and upper primary schools. The central and state governments over a period, evolve in strategy to reduce dropout rates and improve levels of achievement in schools. The steps that have been taken in this direction are as follows:

- Creating Parental awareness and community mobilization.
- Involvement of community and Panchayati Raj institution.
- Economic incentives such as free education, free books, and free uniform
- Improvement in the content and process of schooling.
- National program of Nutritional support to primary education (i.e., Mid-day meal scheme)

The following programs specifically aimed at the Universalisation of elementary education:

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan

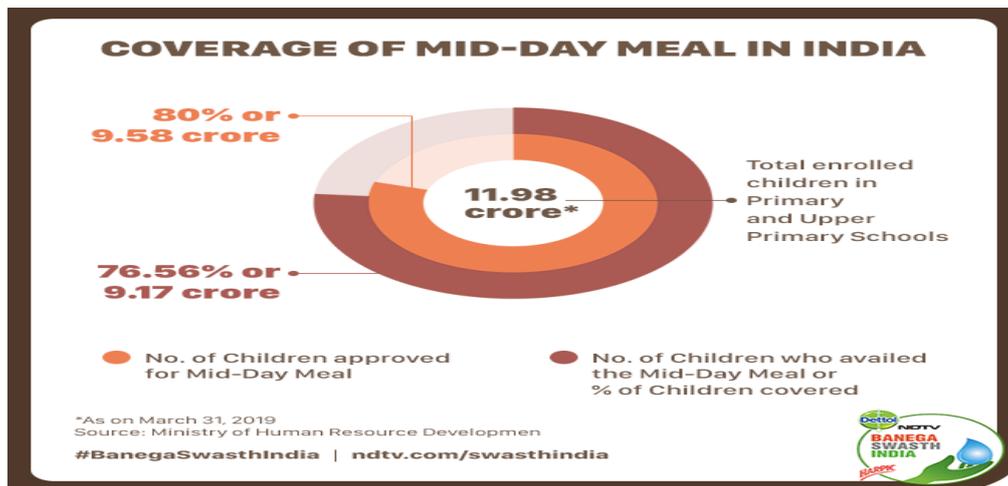
Sarva Siksha Abhiyan is the program for achieving the goal of universalization of elementary education was launched in 2001. The goals of Sarv Siksha Abhiyan are as follows:

- Enrolments of all 6 to 14 age groups of children in school/Education guarantee scheme center/Bridge course by 2005.
- Bridge all the gender and social category gaps at the primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education by 2010.
- Universal retention by 2010.
- Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.

National Program of Nutritional Support to Primary Education or Mid-day Meal Scheme

This program was started and continues to attain the goal of universalization of elementary education. The following objectives of the Mid-day meal scheme are:

- Improving the Nutritional status of children in classes 1 to 5 in government, local bodies and government-added schools, education guarantee scheme centers', and Alternative and innovative education centers, encouraging poor children by helping disadvantaged sections to attain school more regularly and helping them to concentrate on classroom activities.
- Providing nutritional support to children in the primary stage in drought-affected areas during summer vacation.



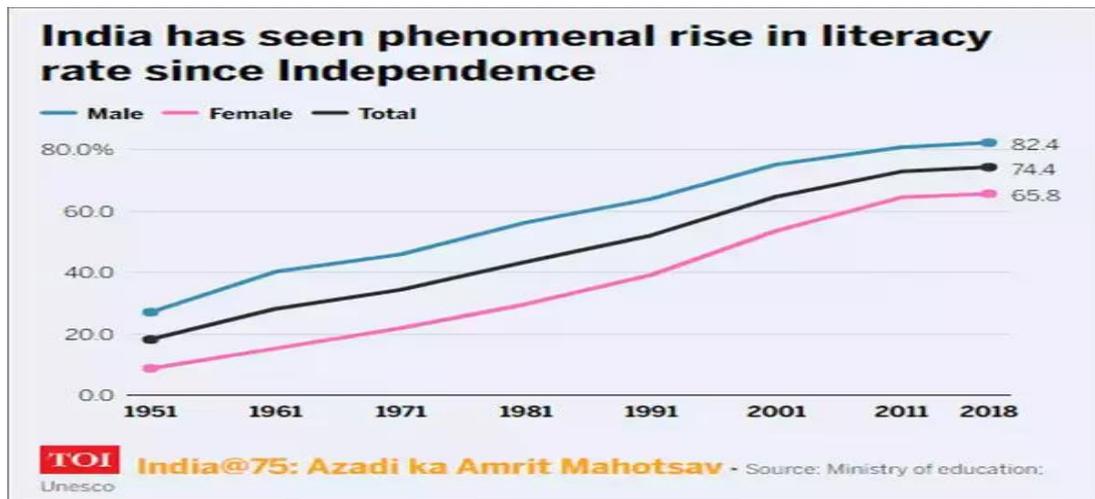
Source: Ministry of Human Resources Development

As the above figure shows the total enrolment of children in primary and upper primary schools is 11.98 crore, in which the no. of children who availed of the midday meal or percentage of children covered is 76.56% or 9.17 crore from the total no. of approved children for midday meal 80% or 9.58 crore. It means approximately more than half the children availed the midday meal so it shows the increase in enrolled no. of children.

B) National Literacy Mission

The National Literacy Mission was launched in 1988. It aims at imparting functional literacy to adult non-literate within the age group of 15 to 35 years in the countries. The main program of NLM was the total literacy campaign, its objective was to impart basic literacy to adult non-literates. Post-literacy program was launched to develop the literacy skills of neo-literates. The continuing education program was initiated to make provision for facilities like a rural library, headroom room for the neo-literates, and other sections of the community. Through Jan Shiksha Sansthan, vocational training was provided to neo-literates and other disadvantaged sections of society. National Literacy Mission Scheme based on to achieve these objectives:

- Achieving self-reliance in literacy and numeracy.
- Becoming aware of the causes of their deprivation and moving towards the betterment of their condition through organization and participation in the process of development.
- Acquire the skills to improve the status of the economy and well-being.
- Imbibing the values of national integration, conserving women's equality, and also observing the family norms, etc.



Source: Times of India

As the above graph shows the literacy rate has risen since independence, in 1951 Only 20% total population was literate but it increased in decades as shown to reach 74.4% in year of 2018, with male literacy measured at 82.4% and female literacy rate at 65.8% still it was lagging the male. Over the past 40 Year's Indian literacy rate has substantially increased. The National Survey of India produced a report India's literacy rate in 2022 was 77.7%.

C) Health for all

The family planning program was initiated in 1951. It is aimed at enhancing individual health as well as wealth. In remote areas and rural areas, the government is formulating measures to provide healthcare facilities to all citizens of India, the main emphasis has been put on areas of primary healthcare, immunization, family planning, and nutritional support programs. To reduce inequality, the government of India launched a program known as the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and launched many programs related to the health of women and children like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSK), Balika Samridhi Yojna and Kishore Shakti Yojana (KSY). With the success of NRHM, the Government of India has launched a similar program for urban areas called the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM). Other national health programs include National Vector-borne Diseases Control Program (NVBDCP), National Filaria Control Program, the National Leprosy Eradication Program, the Revised National TB Control Program, the National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Program, National Mental Health Program, the National Aids Control Program, National Cancer Control Mission, Universal Immunization Program, National Program for Prevention and control of deafness, Pilot Program on Prevention and Control of Diabetes, CVC and stroke, National Tobacco Control Program and National Program for Control of Blindness.

D) Educational Development of Socio-Disadvantaged Groups

In the five-year plan, the initiation of schemes focused on the educational development of disadvantaged groups. These include the opening of ashram schools, pre- and post-matric scholarships, free textbooks and uniforms, hostels for girls and boys, book bank schemes, gradation of merit in aid to voluntary organizations, and social development programs for SC girls, belonging to low literacy areas. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has also ensured the educational development of disadvantaged groups through various schemes. National Scheme for Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE) has provided

financial assistance to families of girls for secondary education. Inclusive Education for disabled children Secondary School Education (IEDSSE) has provided inclusive education at secondary school education. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) has provided education to disadvantaged groups Balika from SC, ST, and OBCs girls. The Eklavya Model of Residential Schools (EMRS), this scheme aims to provide quality education to children of scheduled caste in remote areas and flag flung areas. The Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC), scheme provides special schools, toilets, additional classrooms, and drinking water facilities as well as additional teacher facilities. Mid-Day Meal Scheme, the mid-day-meal scheme provides a hot cooked meal to children of primary and upper primary classes in government, government-aided, and local bodies.

E) Employment Opportunities

In the field of labor and employment, the Ministry of Labour is implementing special training and rehabilitation programs for SCs to provide training in the upgradation of skills and this can lead to their employability opportunities. The scheme of coaching cum guidance centers for SCs and STs was implemented through 22 centers in various states and UTs to provide occupational information as well as individual guidance. They implement confidence-building programs for the benefit of job seekers, belonging to SCs and STs communities. To enable the recruitment Of SCs and ST candidates against reserved vies in various Central Government Ministries. Departments the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET) launched another scheme, i.e., the Special Coaching Scheme in 1973 for job seekers, belonging to SC and ST communities registered with employment exchanges to enable them to appear in competitive examinations and selection tests, conducted for recruitment in Group C and equivalent posts.

Disadvantaged Groups mostly possess a low level of literacy skills or no literacy skills at all, due to this fact, they are unable to acquire reputed jobs and mostly they engage in minority jobs. which are domestic helpers, construction workers, cooks, drivers, cleaners, and so on. They can work as carpenters, repair workers, painters, electricians, plumbers, welders, gardeners, and so on.

In rural areas agriculture and farming are the main occupations of the individuals. Men as well as women are involved in these sectors. In the present existence, these individuals have acquired adequate knowledge regarding the use of modern and innovative methods and techniques to enhance production.

F) Women and Child Development

The Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India, came into existence as a separate Ministry with effect from 30th January 2006. The Ministry was constituted with the prime intention of addressing gaps in state action for women and children to promote inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral convergence to create gender-equitable and child-centred legislation, policies, and programs. The Vision and Mission are to empower women to live with dignity and contribute as equal partners in the development of an environment free from violence and discrimination. To nurture children with full opportunities for growth and development in a safe and protective environment. The Mission is to promote social and economic empowerment of women through cross-cutting policies and programs, mainstreaming gender concerns, creating awareness about their rights, and facilitating institutional and legislative support to enable them to realize their human rights and develop their full

potential. Ensure care development and protection of children through cross-cutting policies and programs, spreading awareness about their rights, and facilitating access to learning, nutrition, and institutional and legislative support for enabling them to grow and develop their full potential.

The ministry formulates plans, policies, and programmers, and legislation guides and coordinates the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations working in the field of women and child development. Ministry implements certain innovative programs for women and children. These programs cover welfare and support services, training for employment and income generation, awareness generation, and gender sensitization. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) provides services comprising nutrition, immunization health checkup, and monitoring of various sectoral programs. Protection of women from domestic violence Act.

Conclusion:

The major socially disadvantaged groups constitute Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, Minorities and Women. These groups live in urban as well as rural areas. Many initiations of schemes and programs run by the government have the main aim of their upliftment. Different programs run like the Midday Meal Scheme, Supply of Books, free dresses, etc. Schools of SCs, STs such as Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, and special treatment in Navodaya Vidyalaya, National Talent Search Schemes, and last not least Scholarships are also provided, NSFDC, NSKFDC, NSTFDC, SCDC, and STDC have been opened to make provision of financial assistance to SCs and STs.

Various schemes worked for the empowerment of women who belong to disadvantaged groups with inadequate conditions. They have not been able to obtain sufficient access to education, health care, and other productive resources, and they remain Marginalized, poor, and socially excluded on a large scale. Children who belong to disadvantaged groups experience different complicated situations such as child labour, and are even subjected to mistreatment and exploitation. It is essential to provide solutions to these problems of poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. Assisting individuals to generate a source of income, enabling them to understand the importance of education, and making more provisions for other resources that generate welfare of individuals including Civic amenities, infrastructure, proper hygiene and sanitation, clean drinking water, and proper nutrition. These initiations and various schemes help individuals to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner.

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