

Edited by

Sukhadeo Thorat | Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal

Bridging the SOCIAL GAP

Perspectives
on Dalit
Empowerment



Bridging the Social Gap

PERSPECTIVES ON DALIT EMPOWERMENT

EDITED BY

SUKHADEO THORAT

NIDHI SADANA SABHARWAL



www.sagepublications.com
Los Angeles • London • New Delhi • Singapore • Washington DC

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First published in 2014 by



SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd

B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area

Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044, India

www.sagepub.in

SAGE Publications Inc

2455 Teller Road

Thousand Oaks, California 91320, USA

SAGE Publications Ltd

1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road

London EC1Y 1SP, United Kingdom

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd

3 Church Street

#10-04 Samsung Hub

Singapore 049483

Published by Vivek Mehra for SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, Phototypeset in 10.5/12.5pt Aldine401 BT by Diligent Typesetter, Delhi and printed at Saurabh Printers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Available

ISBN: 978-81-321-1311-9 (HB)

The SAGE Team: Shambhu Sahu, Alekha Chandra Jena, Nand Kumar Jha and Dally Verghese

Bridging the Social Gap

To those who struggle to bring change at the grass-roots level

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	Antenatal Care
BMI	Body Mass Index
CMR	Child Mortality Rate
CSSM	Child Survival and Safe Motherhood
CPRs	Common Property Resources
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GMHPs	Government Maternal Health Programmes
HCR	Head Count Ratio
HDI	Human Development Index/Human Deprivation/Poverty Index
HDRs	Human Development Reports
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MPCE	Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure
NFHSs	National Family Health Surveys
NHDR	National Human Development Report
NIEPA	National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration
NSS	National Sample Survey
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OBCs	Other Backward Classes
PCR	Protection of Civil Rights
PCTE	Per Capita Total (Household Consumer) Expenditure
PHC	Primary Health Centre
PNC	Post Natal Care
POA	Prevention of Atrocities
PPS	Probability Proportion to Size
PSUs	Public Sector Undertakings
RCH	Reproductive and Child Health
SAR	School Attendance Rate
SCs	Scheduled Castes
SEA	Self-Employed in Agriculture
SENA	Self-Employed in Non-Agriculture
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SCP	Special Component Plan
SRS	Sample Registration System
STs	Scheduled Tribes
UIP	Universal Immunisation Programme
U-5MR	Under Five Mortality Rate
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UTs	Union Territories

PREFACE

This study was initially conceived as an alternative report on Human Development to be designated as a Dalit Development Report. However, the completion took more time. To disaggregate the human development indicators by caste and ethnic groups of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the rest is a difficult exercise. Difficulties arise primarily because of the lack of group-wise data, although the same data are available at the aggregate level. Therefore, the researchers had to find out and use alternative variables. This was particularly the case for the indicators which are required to construct Human Development and Human Poverty indices. Equally important challenge is the conceptual framework to study issues related to the excluded and indigenous groups of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

This book has attempted three things: (a) it has developed a conceptual framework to study the causes of low human development of excluded and indigenous groups and estimated the inter-groups disparities in Human Development Index and Human Poverty Index; (b) it constructed the Human Development Index and Human Poverty Index at aggregate level, and disaggregated by groups; and (c) it presents the situation of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in comparison with others, with regard to each individual indicators. With respect to these three aspects, the book does make a contribution, although some of the data are somewhat dated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the authors for undertaking special efforts to collect the data and analyse them for the groups. We thank Martin Macwan, the member of the Governing Board and the former Chairman of Indian Institute of Dalit Studies for providing supplementary funding for the project. Thanks to Swiss Development Agency, New Delhi, for supporting this project.

We thank Tathagata Mandal for editing the draft report and helping with proofs. We thank Narendra Kumar for formatting and designing. Finally, we thank SAGE Publications for publishing this book on a priority basis.

INTRODUCTION

Sukhadeo Thorat and Nidhi Sadana Sabharwal

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

The preparation of Human Development Reports (HDRs) has brought about a significant shift in the notion of human development, insofar as now the emphasis is placed on 'outcomes of development' in terms of expansion of income and achievement in the quality of well-being of the people. This perspective recognises that though high per capita income is a prerequisite for human development, a rise in income alone may not necessarily guarantee that people receive what they need the most for their development. Therefore, the focus is centred not only on the generation of higher income but simultaneously how it has improved the quality of people's lives. In order to articulate this shift in perspective, Mahbub-ul-Haq observed:

For long, the recurrent question was how much was a nation producing? Increasingly, the question now being asked is, 'how are its people faring?' Income is only one of the options—and an extremely important one—but it is not the sum total of human life. Health, education, physical environment and freedom may be just as important. (Mahbub-ul-Haq, 1995)

Within this perspective, the emphasis is on the expansion of the capacities of people—their capability to lead a healthy and creative life; to be well-nourished, secured, well-informed, educated, free and treated as equals. With this shift, human development has begun to be measured in terms of new evaluative criteria which are related to three essential elements of human life—longevity, knowledge and decent standard of living. These three elements are estimated using human development index (HDI) and human deprivation/poverty index (HPI).

In the course of this development, however, the notion of human development itself has been further widened in terms of its dimensions. Among other conceptual issues which have engaged researchers in the course of widening the dimensions of the concept of human development are those which relate to group inequalities, particularly inequality in human development across groups and its causes. It has been recognised that a common shortcoming in the measure of human development is its failure to capture the distributional dimensions in human development. The latter represent averages that conceal wide disparities in overall population. Therefore, efforts are made to make the analysis of human development more distribution-sensitive. The incorporation of the distributive

aspects necessitated, first, a disaggregation of HDI and HPI by various groups such as class, ethnicity, religion, caste and other disadvantaged groups, and secondly, analysis of causal factors associated with a lower level of human development among certain disadvantaged groups.

Among other factors, the deprivation of marginalised groups like women, and ethnic, social, religious and other minorities generally occurs through the process of exclusion and discrimination. Efforts are, thus, directed towards understanding the societal interrelations and the institutions of exclusion, the prevalent forms of exclusion and discrimination, and their consequences on deprivation of these groups.

Limited instances of disaggregating indicators of human development by social groups are to be found in the HDRs of some countries. The countries which have disaggregated the individual indicators of HDI by groups are Malaysia, Gabon, Nepal, the United States, Canada, Guatemala and India. In Malaysia, for instance, the HDI has been worked out separately for the Chinese, the Indian and the Malaya ethnic groups. Similar exercises have been initiated in the United States for the African-Americans, native Americans and American whites (Halis Akder, 1994). In Nepal too, HDI has been worked out for the low-caste and the high-caste groups.

The attempts made to develop the concepts and methodologies to assess the impact of social exclusion on human deprivation are, however, limited in number. The efforts to develop the indicators of exclusion and to capture them in indices are even fewer. The HDRs of 2000 and 2004 prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) made some headway with respect to dimensions of exclusion as well as indicators of exclusion.

At the conceptual level, the HDR 2000 brought to the fore a close link between equal human rights and human development, and emphasised the role of equal opportunity and choices as one of the pillars of human development. Exclusion and discrimination lead to restriction and denial of human rights. It is recognised that the deprivation of disadvantaged groups works through the societal process of exclusion which involves differential treatment and unequal access which in turn hinders human development. Therefore, liberation from discrimination becomes a necessary pre-condition for human development. The HDR 2004 extended the focus to cultural liberty and asserted that cultural liberty is central to the advancement of the capabilities of people. In the context of minorities in multi-ethnic states and indigenous people, it recognised two forms of cultural exclusions, namely (a) living mode exclusion which denies recognition to and accommodation of a lifestyle that a particular group would choose to have, and (b) participation exclusion which involves denial of social, political and economic opportunities for development to lower-caste groups who are discriminated against. Living mode exclusion often overlaps and intertwines with social, economic and political exclusion by fostering discrimination and disadvantages in terms of access to resources, employment, housing, schooling and political representation.

INDIA'S HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT AND SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Following the release of HDRs, the Indian government also initiated the preparation of the National Human Development Report (NHDR) and similar reports for individual states. The first NHDR was prepared in 2001 and so far about 14 State Human Development Reports (SHDRs) have been prepared by the individual states.

Given the iniquitous and hierarchal character of Indian society and exclusion-linked deprivation of a large section of excluded groups and groups which are discriminated against, namely the Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), which constitute more than half of India's population and have specific constitutional provisions, legal safeguards and reservation policies, the NHDRs and SHDRs specifically deal with dimensions of human development in relation to these disadvantaged groups. Hitherto, such exercises have been confined to the disaggregation of the individual indicators of human development and human poverty in a selective manner, without estimating the composite index of human development or human poverty of the social groups. The indicators used to disaggregate data by social groups vary from state to state. The Indian NHDR 2001 disaggregated consumption expenditure, access to toilet facilities, safe drinking water, electricity and literacy levels at the all-India level and observed that the attainment levels for SCs and STs seemed to be lower than for the others (non-SCs/STs) (Planning Commission, 2002: 11).

Similar methods to assess the attainment levels of social groups by employing selective indicators have been followed by a number of SHDRs. Most of the SHDRs employ indicators of literacy and only a few states supplement the literacy level by using poverty ratio, land ownership and health indicators. For instance, the SHDRs of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam and Punjab provide attainment rates for literacy among SCs, STs and others (the Himachal Pradesh SHDR also reports the enrolment ratio by social groups). Among these states, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu also indicate the poverty level by social groups. The SHDRs of Madhya Pradesh, Sikkim and West Bengal further disaggregate land ownership and share of land and beneficiary of land reform by social groups. Some states like Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal include work participation rate, unemployment rate, sex ratio and urbanisation rate by social groups. The Punjab SHDR provides disaggregated results by social groups for literacy rate, employment pattern which includes employment under reservation, and child mortality rates.

The data provided in SHDRs related to SCs and STs is selective and limited in terms of the choice of indicators. Nevertheless, it clearly shows that any simple disaggregation by social groups for education (like literacy rate, enrolment ratios,

etc.), healthcare (child mortality), access to resources (land ownership, employment rate) and urbanisation, among other indicators, reveal that SCs and STs lag quite far behind the other sections of Indian society.

This review indicates that despite the group-focus or approach in the development policies of central and state governments (in terms of due recognition of their specific problems, provision of legal safeguards, reservation and various other affirmative action policies, with stipulated objectives to reduce gaps in human development and human poverty between them and other sections of the Indian population), SHDRs generally avoid dealing with issues of inter-social group disparity in human development and human poverty in a focused manner, namely either by using a coherent set of indicators of human development (for example, life expectancy, literacy rate, enrolment ratio and some measures of access to resources), and human poverty (for example, illiteracy, dropout rate and lack of access to safe drinking water, public health services and electricity) or through estimation of a composite index of human development and human poverty by social groups. In addition, there is inadequate discourse on conceptualising caste- and ethnicity-based exclusion and discrimination, and its linkages with human deprivation faced by disadvantaged groups. Similarly, there has been no attempt to develop indicators which capture exclusion, discrimination and impact variables. In this context, the observations of Madhya Pradesh SHDR are relevant as it recognised the need to address such an issue.

There is a need to look inward, within the country to identify groups that fare poorly in human development as against spatially, in terms of how districts fare or sectors fare. Deprivation in India has an obvious face of exclusion, the SCs due to social exclusion, and the STs due to geographical and cultural exclusion. The SCs suffer from deprivation on account of the residual power of a discriminatory caste system which though made illegal, continues to sway as a social force, whereas the STs see their predicament as victims of the state which denies them property rights to their habitat. An SC and ST development index needs to be developed by professionals to capture their deprivations so as to goad the state policy to address them. A broad attainment index, does not effectively address the roots of these very important deprivations in the Indian context. The process of democracy is at work to draw these people in the mainstream and seek to address their specific concerns. How well this is being done needs to be assessed through the development of SC/ST development index. (Madhya Pradesh State Human Development Report, 2002: 9)

APPROACH OF THE PRESENT BOOK

This book focuses on the issues of inter-social group inequalities in human development and exclusion-linked human deprivation of socially disadvantaged groups in Indian society. It attempts to address four interrelated issues which are mentioned below.

First, drawing from the prevailing theoretical literature, it conceptualises exclusion-linked deprivation of socially disadvantaged groups in Indian society; and elaborates the concept and meaning of social exclusion, in general, and of caste, untouchability and ethnicity-based exclusion, in particular. Second, it presents the status of disadvantaged groups, namely SCs and STs, and captures the inter-social group inequalities with respect to attainment in human development and human poverty by constructing HDI and HPI and also by analysing the individual indicators of well-being. Third, it analyses the economic factors associated with high level of deprivation among socially disadvantaged groups in terms of lower access to resources, employment, education and social needs. Fourth, it examines the role of caste discrimination in economic, civil, social and political spheres which involves denial of or selective restrictions on the right to development or equal opportunities for socially disadvantaged groups.

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