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Migration, Gender and Home Economics in Rural North India

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Simi Mehta

Soumyadip Chattopadhyay

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Impact and Policy Research Review (IPRR) (e-ISSN: 2583-3464) is a biannual research journal managed and published by IMPRI Impact and Policy Research Institute, New Delhi. IPRR hosts written contributions on topics having concrete implications for progressive development, covering a well-grounded policy analysis, that is interdisciplinary or focused on particular disciplines, for example, Economics, Politics, Governance, Geography, Sociology, Gender and Ethnic Discrimination, Development Studies, Environmental Degradation, Anthropology, and International Relations, with an expectation that all work is accessible to readers across the social sciences.

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EDITORS' NOTE

Impact and Policy Research Review (IPRR)

IPRR Volume 2 Issue 1 (January - June 2023)

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Right from its inception in 2022, the IMPACT AND POLICY RESEARCH REVIEW (IPRR) has aimed to promote scientific research to broaden the understanding of the processes of development. In this issue, we continue our commitment to providing a platform for in-depth analysis, thoughtful perspectives, and engaging discussions on a wide range of topics. The diverse contributions from our authors span across five distinct sections: Insights, Policy Perspectives, Special Articles, Young Voices, and Book Reviews. Each section offers unique insights into the pressing issues of our time and fosters critical discussions within the global policy and research community.

The insights section presents concise, data-driven articles that offer fresh perspectives on current global trends and challenges. In a world characterized by rapid change, the need for informed policy decisions is more crucial than ever. Our Policy Perspectives section features articles that critically evaluate existing policies, propose innovative solutions, and discuss the implications of various policy options. These articles are essential reading for policymakers, scholars, and anyone interested in the intersection of policy and practice. The Special Article section showcases in-depth research and analysis on specific topics of significance. We are proud to feature the work of emerging scholars and young voices in our journal. We hope that the articles and reviews in this volume will inspire you to think critically, engage in discussions, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding international policy and research.

We thank the Journal Advisory Board and Editorial Review Committee for their enthusiastic support of the journal. We congratulate the authors for their insightful and well-researched articles. We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the reviewers, and editorial team for their dedicated efforts in bringing this issue to fruition. The IPRR Journal is committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic and policy-related discourse, and we are proud of the quality of work featured in this edition.

With Gratitude,
Editors,
Impact and Policy Research Review (IPRR)

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Documenting Global Best Practices of Monitoring and Evaluation Using Technological Tools

Radha R Ashrit¹ and Ishaan Sharma²

Abstract

This study delved into the realm of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) using technological tools, elucidating its significance and exploring innovative approaches. M&E emerged as a systematic process for assessing program efficacy and impact through data scrutiny, while also emphasizing the importance of documenting global best practices. These practices not only provide a roadmap for better decision-making but also foster transparency, accountability, knowledge sharing, and the creation of a robust knowledge base. While technology has revolutionized M&E, it comes with limitations such as accessibility, data security, technical expertise, cultural barriers, and bias. However, innovations like crowdsourcing, real-time reporting, mobile data collection, and outcome harvesting have reshaped the landscape. This study underscores the transformative potential of technological tools in refining M&E practices on a global scale.

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation, Documentation, Best practices, Tools

What is Monitoring and Evaluation?

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) constitute a comprehensive and methodical process of gathering, scrutinizing, and employing data to gauge the efficacy, efficiency, and impact of programs or projects. It entails constant and unbroken monitoring of progress towards preconceived objectives and the evaluation of the outcomes and ramifications of interventions.

As per the comprehensive handbook titled "*Monitoring and Evaluating for Results*" published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the concept of monitoring entails an ongoing process that serves the essential purpose of furnishing the management and key stakeholders involved in an ongoing initiative with timely insights regarding the advancement or potential deficiencies in attaining desired outcomes.

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Such interventions may encompass diverse endeavors such as projects, programs, or any form of assistance contributing to a desired outcome (UNDP, 2002). Moreover, as stated in the handbook, evaluation serves as a discerning endeavor aimed at methodically and impartially gauging advancement towards and the attainment of a desired result. It is crucial to note that evaluation is not confined to a singular occasion but rather encompasses a series of assessments varying in their extent and comprehensiveness conducted at various junctures in response to evolving requirements for evaluative understanding and growth during the endeavor to accomplish an outcome.

Importance of Documenting Global Best Practices of M&E

- **Establishing a Roadmap** - Compiling an extensive record of international exemplars in M&E offers organizations a well-defined path to pursue. Through an examination of effective strategies and methodologies, organizations can modify and apply them to suit their unique requirements, leading to the attainment of their objectives. This comprehensive documentation offers invaluable insights into the appropriate approaches for gauging advancement, pinpointing deficiencies, and assessing the program's influence. Furthermore, the documented exemplars serve as a yardstick against which organizations can measure their progress, guaranteeing that they stay aligned with the trajectory of triumphant initiatives on their path to accomplishment.
- **Promoting Transparency and Accountability** - Promoting transparency by documenting the exemplary methods employed in assessing development programs fosters trust between stakeholders and the implementing organization. Through the dissemination of details pertaining to the methodologies and strategies utilized in program evaluation, organizations can equip stakeholders with the necessary knowledge to make well-informed judgments regarding the efficacy of the program.
- **Enabling Knowledge Sharing** - The process of documenting internationally recognized methodologies for M&E fosters the exchange of knowledge among different organizations. Through the dissemination of their respective experiences, organizations can gain insights from one another, recognize shared challenges, and collaboratively devise effective remedies.
- **Better Decision Making** - Compiling comprehensive records of international M&E benchmarks facilitates decision-making based on substantiated evidence. Through the collection and scrutiny of data pertaining to program efficiency, institutions can judiciously determine resource distribution, enhance program efficacy, and formulate innovative approaches.
- **Building a Knowledge Base** - Compiling an extensive record of international exemplars in M&E endeavors contributes to the establishment of a reservoir of wisdom, thereby fostering enhancements in forthcoming development initiatives. By documenting the most effective approaches employed in past programs, a solid foundation is laid for future assessments, thereby promoting uniformity and guaranteeing precise measurement of advancements over

time. This meticulous documentation of exemplary techniques enables organizations to construct a repository of expertise, accessible to other entities grappling with comparable obstacles.

Brief Overview of Technological Tools in M&E

The use of technological tools in M&E has revolutionized the way data is collected, analyzed, and reported. With the advent of advanced technologies, organizations are now able to collect and analyze data in real-time, enabling more timely and informed decision-making.

Mobile data collection is a pivotal technological tool employed in M&E processes. It empowers the acquisition of data using portable devices like smartphones and tablets. This approach expedites and streamlines data collection by eliminating the reliance on paper-based forms and manual data entry. Consequently, it curtails errors and ensures the precision of the collected data. With mobile data collection, organizations can create tailored digital forms that cater to their specific M&E requirements. Furthermore, this technique provides a pliable and adaptable approach to data collection. It can be effectively employed in diverse settings, including remote and inaccessible areas, and can be customized to meet the needs of different stakeholders (Bruce and Koler, 2016).

Another technological tool utilized in M&E is geographic information system (GIS) mapping. This instrument facilitates the visualization and examination of data within a spatial context. It enables the identification of patterns and trends that may remain concealed when using traditional data analysis methods. GIS mapping serves as a potent means of displaying various types of data, such as program indicators, survey responses, and population statistics, on a map. Consequently, users can discern the geographical distribution of the data, thus enhancing their comprehension.

Furthermore, the integration of machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is increasingly prevalent in M&E processes, particularly for automating data analysis and prediction. These advanced technologies empower organizations to swiftly and accurately analyze vast volumes of data, recognize patterns, and make projections regarding program outcomes. Additionally, AI can effectively analyze unstructured data, including text, images, and video, which may pose challenges when analyzed manually. Real-time identification of emerging issues or trends can be achieved with the aid of AI, providing organizations with a valuable advantage.

Moreover, web-based platforms and dashboards are employed in M&E to grant stakeholders immediate access to real-time data and information. These platforms facilitate the swift and effortless sharing of data, allowing stakeholders to monitor progress, identify challenges, and make well-informed decisions promptly.

While not yet a prevailing phenomenon within the field of M&E, the utilization of 'big data' harbors immense potential. 'Big data' encompasses expansive datasets formed by individuals through platforms such as social media or even through the digital imprints we leave behind in our daily lives. These technological advancements are presently integrated into all aspects of evaluation practice, starting from the design phase, where technology enables the implementation of

more inclusive and collaborative planning and design methodologies. Furthermore, during the data collection stage, these technologies facilitate a broader spectrum of participant involvement and the acquisition of 'real-time' data. Ultimately, technology assumes a pivotal role in the reporting and dissemination of outcomes, allowing for more frequent reporting and the widespread dissemination of findings through channels like social media and SMS (Raftree and Bamberger, 2014)

Limitations of Technology in M&E

- **Accessibility** - Technological M&E tools may exclude certain groups of people who do not have access to technology, such as those living in remote or rural areas or those who cannot afford to purchase or access technological tools. It may also exclude individuals with disabilities who face accessibility barriers when using technology. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the documentation of best practices is available in various formats and accessible to all stakeholders.
- **Data Security and Privacy** - M&E using technological tools raises concerns about data security and privacy. The use of technological tools can increase the risk of data breaches, cyber-attacks, and unauthorized access to confidential information. Data breaches can lead to significant financial losses, reputational damage, and loss of trust in the M&E system. Hackers and other malicious actors may exploit vulnerabilities in technological tools and systems. Additionally, data protection laws and regulations must be adhered to when collecting, storing, and sharing data.
- **Technical Expertise** - Utilizing technological tools for M&E necessitates a profound understanding of technical proficiency. The presence of proficient personnel possessing the requisite technical acumen is crucial to the efficient utilization and upkeep of these tools. Furthermore, the swift trajectory of technological progress demands consistent enhancement of technical aptitude and awareness, enabling individuals and organizations to stay abreast of cutting-edge advancements in the domain.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Barriers** - M&E instruments have the potential to create hurdles influenced by cultural and linguistic dissimilarities, especially in less developed nations. Utilizing technological tools may necessitate a command of a particular language or cultural comprehension, resulting in the marginalization of specific communities. Additionally, variations in culture can influence the comprehension and execution of optimal methodologies, giving rise to misconceptions, misjudgments, and inadequate implementation of best practices.
- **Bias and Interpretation** - M&E also brings up apprehensions regarding partiality and elucidation. Technological advancements can furnish an abundance of information, but the elucidation of this data may be subjective and swayed by personal predispositions. Moreover, the comprehension of the

data can be subjective and impacted by the predispositions of those performing the analysis. This can culminate in misapprehension of the data and engender erroneous deductions and suggestions.

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Aspirational District Program:
Data-Driven Catalysis of Grassroots Socio-Economic Improvement

Saurabh Rishi¹, Urvashi Prasad², Shashank Shah, and Radha R. Ashrit³

Abstract

India's Prime Minister launched the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP) in January 2018. The program covers 112 districts across the country that have historically lagged on socio-economic parameters. This is the first time that a program of this size and scale has been launched by the government with the objective of accelerating progress through improved data-driven governance, robust monitoring, making development a mass movement, working as Team India (Centre and States), and collaborating with stakeholders outside the government. Instead of a large infusion of funds, the program's emphasis is on better governance for improving outcomes. Forty-nine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been identified under the ADP across 5 sectors. The results are for all to see. A comparison between the Aspirational Districts (ADs) and their counterparts by an independent UNDP Study undertaken in 2021 found that ADs have outperformed non-ADs. In January 2023, the Aspirational Blocks Program was launched to replicate the success of the ADP template across 500 relatively underdeveloped blocks in the country.

Keywords: Aspirational Districts; Governance; Real-time Monitoring

India has made tremendous progress on various socio-economic indicators. However, inter-state and intra-state disparities persist. Let us take the example of institutional deliveries. According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), 99.8% of the deliveries in Kerala were in institutional settings, compared to 76.2% in Bihar. Examples of such disparities within the same state include Haryana, where 74.6% of institutional deliveries take place in the district of Mewat while 96.67% of such

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deliveries take place in the nearby district of Gurgaon. It is precisely to address these disparities and to ensure that no one is left behind in the development process, India's Prime Minister launched the Aspirational Districts Program (ADP) in January 2018.

The program covers 112 districts across the country that have historically lagged on socio-economic parameters. This is the first time that a program of this size and scale has been launched by the government with the objective of accelerating progress through improved data-driven governance, robust monitoring, making development a mass movement, working as Team India (Centre and States), and collaborating with stakeholders outside the government. Instead of a large infusion of funds, the program's emphasis is on better governance for improving outcomes.

Data-driven governance and spurring competition among districts

The ADP focuses on socio-economic indicators that can improve the ease of living of citizens across five main sectors that have a direct bearing on the quality of life and economic productivity of citizens. These have been identified following extensive deliberations with government ministries and experts. These indicators have been used to construct a composite index for ranking the districts. Using these indicators, a composite index has been created for ranking the districts. A baseline ranking for all the districts was released by NITI Aayog in April 2018. Subsequently, the performance of the districts on all the identified parameters has been updated on a regular basis and is reflected on a dashboard. The ranks assigned to districts are based on the progress they make, instead of comparing them to the baseline. This helps to ensure that the ranks are not biased by historical achievements, or lack thereof.

This data is also made publicly available through the Champions of Change Dashboard which can be accessed through NITI Aayog's website. This is perhaps the first time that development data has been democratized at such a scale in a developing country. This real-time monitoring not only facilitates improvements in governance but also ensures transparency and promotes the use of the data by all stakeholders. Validation of the data is done through household surveys conducted by third parties. This helps ensure that authentic data is filled up by the districts.

Forty-nine Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been identified under the ADP across 5 sectors. These indicators have been further segregated into eighty-one data points. The indicators are a mix of input, process, output, and outcome indicators as summarised below:

- 1. Health and Nutrition:** With 30% of the overall weightage allotted, Health and Nutrition mainly focuses on antenatal care, postnatal care, the health of newborns, nutrition and growth of children, gender parity, contagious diseases, and health infrastructure.

2. Education: The Education sector accounts for 30% of the overall index focusing on learning outcomes, the transition rate from primary to upper primary and subsequently to secondary schooling; as well as infrastructural (toilet access for girls, drinking water, electricity supply) and institutional indicators (Right To Education [RTE] mandated pupil-teacher ratio and timely delivery of textbooks).

3. Agriculture and Water Resources: Agriculture is the backbone of India's economy, with more than 50% of the workforce engaged in cultivation and allied activities, this sector has been assigned a weightage of 20%. It focuses on outputs (yield, price realization, etc.), inputs (quality seed distribution and soil health cards), and institutional support (crop insurance and electronic markets); along with irrigation and animal husbandry (artificial vaccination and insemination).

4. Financial Inclusion and Skill Development: Together, these two sectors account for 10% of the overall index. Financial Inclusion focuses on the coverage of important Central Government Schemes (Atal Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, etc.), the reach of institutional banking (number of accounts opened under the Jan Dhan Yojana), and ease of institutional financing for small businesses (disbursement of Mudra loans). Skill Development indicates progress in the skilling of youth, employment, and the skilling of vulnerable/marginalized youth under Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), and other schemes.

5. Basic Infrastructure: With a weightage of 10%, this important sector focuses on the availability of individual household latrines, drinking water, electricity, housing for all, and road connectivity. Districts are also being tracked for the number of internet-connected Gram Panchayats and Panchayats with Common Service Centres.

Aspirational Districts Program Monitoring Framework

Theme	Indicators	Weightage (%)	No. of Indicators	No. of data points
Health & Nutrition	Pregnant women care, child care, health infrastructure	30	13	31
Education	Learning outcomes, transition rates, school infrastructure	30	8	14
Agriculture & Water Resources	Micro-irrigation, Inputs & Outputs, Animal Husbandry	20	10	12
Financial Inclusion & Skill Development	Financial Inclusion - Insurance, Pension, Loans	10	12	18
	Skill Development – Certified trained & employed			
Basic Infrastructure	Roads, water, electricity, sanitation, housing, internet	10	6	6
Total		100	49	81

Institutional mechanisms for working as Team India

In a country of India's scale and diversity, states and districts are best positioned to design customized policy interventions for addressing their own specific developmental challenges and goals. There is a wealth of evidence to show that devolving resources and responsibilities to lower levels of government can result in improved governance of public sector facilities, greater utilization of public services, and ultimately greater accomplishment of the desired socio-economic outcomes.

The Government of India has nominated an Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary-level Central Prabhari Officer (CPO) for each Aspirational District. Similarly, states have nominated a State Prabhari Officer (SPO) for each District. The Prabhari Officers are mentors to the respective districts. The focal points for ADP are the district collectors or magistrates who are the officials closest to the ground. Empowering them means that they do not always have to wait for authorities at higher levels to make decisions. They play a crucial role in implementing the program and monitoring the key performance indicators through the dashboard.

An important differentiator of this program is that, unlike usual government schemes, ADP does not entail a large infusion of funds into the districts. Instead, it focuses on better utilization of existing funds. Additionally, ADP promotes the convergence of funds from central and state schemes as well as the creative utilization of CSR and District Mineral Funds. The focus, therefore, is on using all possible sources of funds in a coordinated manner and avoiding duplication.

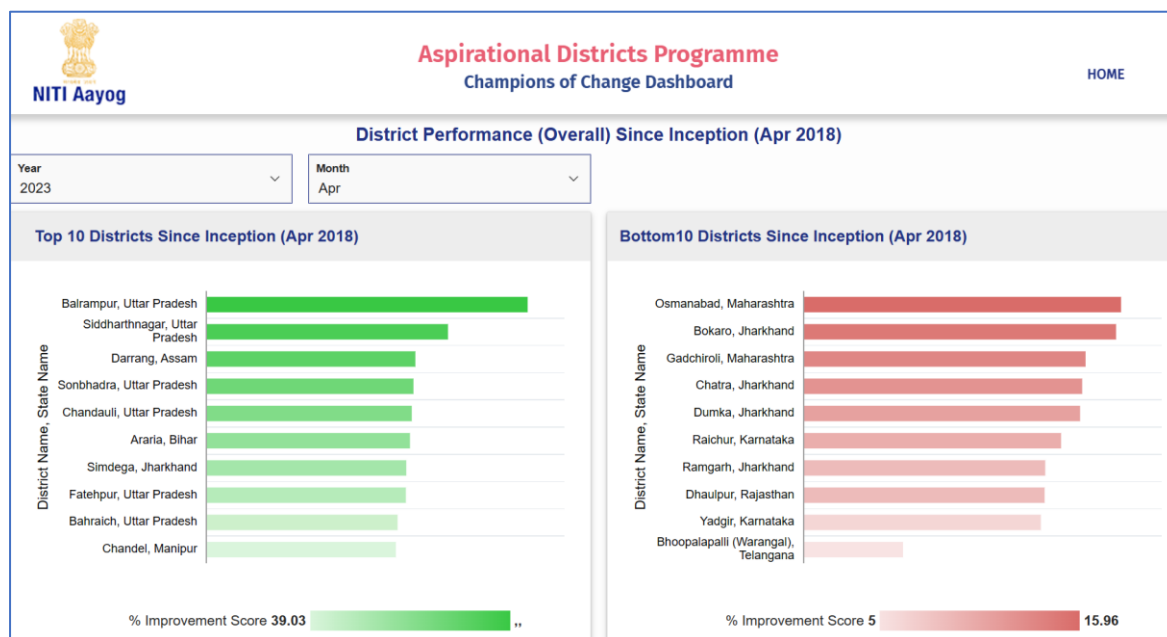
Making development a mass movement

The name of the program has been chosen carefully. Districts are called 'aspirational' instead of 'backward' so that they aspire to achieve the best possible performance in the state and eventually at the national level. The program seeks to make development a mass movement by infusing a sense of purpose in the district administration as well as in the citizens through real-time monitoring, sharing of best practices, and governance reforms. The program is not limited to government stakeholders. In fact, the ADP has facilitated extensive participation of civil society, corporates, and experts. These partnerships undoubtedly serve as a force multiplier and help to strengthen the program through innovative ideas.

The results are for all to see. A comparison between the Aspirational Districts and their counterparts by an independent UNDP study undertaken in 2021 found that Aspirational Districts have outperformed non-aspirational Districts. Across the sectors of health and nutrition, and financial inclusion, the study found that 5.8% more pregnant women with severe anemia are treated, 4.5% more pregnant women register for antenatal care within their first trimester, 9.6% more home deliveries are attended by a skilled birth attendant, 4.8% more children diagnosed with diarrhea are treated. Under financial inclusion indicators, the study found that 406, 847, and 1,580 more accounts were opened per 1 lakh population under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantra Suraksha Bima Yojana and

Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana, respectively.

Several districts have improved their performance significantly from the baseline. Balrampur in Uttar Pradesh has improved by nearly 63% (at the overall level) since the inception of the program in April 2018. Ranks are also available theme-wise. For instance, in the area of health and nutrition, Ranchi in Jharkhand is the district that has shown the highest improvement (66%) since baseline.



The launch of the ADP signals a significant reimagining of government and governance in India. By ensuring that no Indian is left behind, this initiative has provided greater momentum for meeting India’s commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals and realizing Prime Minister Modi’s vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.

In January 2023, the Aspirational Blocks Program was launched to replicate the success of the ADP template across 500 relatively underdeveloped blocks in the country. Focusing on blocks enables a greater than proportionate share of development to reach the vulnerable and marginalized sections by providing access to social and economic infrastructure. By making the block an administrative and monitoring unit, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach being applied to every part of the country, is avoided. Instead, tailored approaches can be adopted by the block administration to catalyze improvements in various socio-economic parameters in the region. Decision-making is also brought closer to the grassroots through this approach.

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**COVID-19 and Healthcare in India:
*Call for Building up System Level Resilience***

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Abstract

COVID-19 has posed unprecedented challenges for the health sector. The long-standing weaknesses of the Indian healthcare system stand exposed. The article briefly discusses the vulnerabilities of the healthcare system in India and the ways to address them. It calls for using the present challenge as an opportunity to learn and resolve to reorganize the healthcare system with built-in resilience at the micro, meso, and macro levels. This will augment the system's capacity to deliver everyday benefits and positive health outcomes in times of crisis, yielding the 'resilience dividend'. It emphasizes that there is a need to implement the learning from the pandemic and take steps to adapt and transform the Indian healthcare system.

Keywords: COVID-19; Health; Public Health; Healthcare; Resilience

Humanity is waking up to the call for disaster preparedness. There is an increasing awareness that resilience needs to be built into health systems. Sudden disease outbreaks and catastrophes can cause substantial human suffering and economic losses. If health systems are ill-equipped to deal with such situations, the affected populations can be very vulnerable.

Until very recently, the world was confronted with the challenge posed by the spread of the novel SARS Cov-2 caused COVID-19, a cardiopulmonary disease with a more than 2% mortality rate. The pandemic is far from over. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on January 30, 2020. The same day India reported its first confirmed case. Since then, 19,268 deaths out of 6,53,896 confirmed cases were reported as of July 5, 2020 (08:00 IST). The economic and socio-psychological effects of the crisis have been profound. For the health sector in India, it has posed unprecedented challenges, and its long-standing weaknesses stand exposed.

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There is a need to reorganize the Indian healthcare system with built-in resilience at the micro, meso, and macro levels. This will augment the system's capacity to deliver everyday benefits and positive health outcomes in times of crisis, yielding the 'resilience dividend'.³ Building a resilient health system has also been recognized as an ethical imperative.⁴

Health system resilience is defined as the capacity of health actors, institutions, and populations to prepare for and effectively respond to crises; maintain core functions when a crisis hits; and, informed by lessons learned during the crisis, reorganize if conditions require it. According to Kruk et al., resilient healthcare systems are 'aware, diverse, self-regulating, integrated and adaptive.

The Report of the Commission on Global Health Risk Framework for Future identifies six actions to build resilient public health systems: revising public health law/policy framework, strengthening public health infrastructure, building partnerships, using research evidence to inform decisions, engaging and communicating with communities and establishing a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre (PHEOC).

Building up a Resilient Healthcare System in India

Building resilience is context-dependent and iterative, needing advanced assessments of system capacities and weaknesses, investments in vulnerable components of the system before a crisis, reinforcements during the emergency, and a review of performance after a crisis. The following actions are needed to address vulnerabilities in the Indian healthcare system and make it resilient:

1. Revising public health law/policy framework

The Constitution of India enlists public health under the State List. Only a few Indian states have been able to introduce effective public health legislation. Attempts to enact a comprehensive national act covering all aspects of public health in the form of the National Health Bill- 2009 have remained unsuccessful. For dealing with infectious disease outbreaks, the colonial Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897 (EDA) has been repeatedly used by the states, down to the recent COVID-19 outbreak. The Public Health (Prevention, Control, and Management of Epidemics, Bio-terrorism, and Disasters) Bill drafted in 2017 is pending.

For want of a comprehensive law, allied laws have also been used to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak. The Indian government has taken recourse to the Disaster Management Act by declaring COVID-19 as a notified disaster. It has been pointed out that, "There is no clarity in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that would be adopted by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), where the situation is not classified as a 'disaster' but as an 'outbreak' or a 'potential outbreak'.

It is unclear how the different ministries would be mobilized by MoHFW, in the case of an imminent outbreak that is yet to be declared an emergency. The enabling provisions to take control measures across all relevant ministries, in case of an outbreak to mobilize different authorities under the multiple laws governed by different ministries, need to be identified.” There is a need for a comprehensive national law covering various aspects of health system governance.

2. Increase budget outlay for public health:

As per the National Health Profile-2019 (NHP-2019), India’s public expenditure on health now stands at 1.28 percent of the GDP, which is way lower than the average expenditure by countries categorized as the “poorest”. It is even lower than other Southeast Asian countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Indonesia, and Thailand.

3. Strengthen the public health workforce and infrastructure

a. Public health workforce

The NHP-2019 report states that there is only one allopathic government doctor for every 10,926 people in India. WHO recommends a doctor-population ratio of 1:1000 while the current doctor-population ratio in India is only 0.62:1000. The Rural Health Statistics 2018-19 reveal that the sub-centers and Primary Health Centers (PHCs) are short by 10,916 Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANMs) and 98,063 male health workers. It has been suggested that the ASHA workers get fixed remuneration rather than paltry incentives.

The workforce crisis should be met quantity-wise, but is important to address qualitative gaps like inadequate training, inequitable deployment of the healthcare workforce, and low morale in healthcare service delivery. It is high time that India develops and executes a concrete workforce-strengthening strategy. Using data from NHP-2019, it has been reported that there are 0.55 beds per 1000 population available in India. Twelve states lie below the national level figure. Bihar has just 0.11 beds available per 1000 population. Even the country’s capital Delhi has 1.05 beds per 1000 population.

The role of primary health care is central to achieving health and well-being for all. During disease outbreaks, it is considered to be both- the ‘radar screen’ to pick up the initial cases and the delivery system to execute an effective response strategy.⁶ In India, the Primary Health-care Centers (PHCs) lack health resources- both human and material even for effective day-to-day functioning. There is a resolve to establish 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) by upgrading the existing PHCs and Sub-centers.

It is to be seen if the problems of a shortage of skilled and committed workforce, poor infrastructure, and implementation bottlenecks can be overcome. Regarding the attempt to work towards the attainment of universal health coverage (UHC) through the Ayushman Bharat Programme (2018), there are concerns that it will promote secondary and tertiary healthcare at the expense of primary healthcare.

b. Surveillance and information systems

The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is the nodal agency in the country for disease control and surveillance. The Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) was launched in 2004 with the objective of strengthening and maintaining a decentralized laboratory-based IT-enabled disease surveillance system for epidemic-prone diseases to monitor disease trends and detect and respond to outbreaks in early rising phases. Weekly reports are released by the IDSP based on data from Surveillance units at the district (DSU) and state (SSU) levels. Although the reporting of outbreaks by the states has increased quantity-wise, there is a need to improve the quality of outbreak reporting and investigations. Besides, there is a serious shortage of trained workforce.

c. Laboratory capacity

Diagnostic capability is the key to disease control; more so during disease outbreaks. The National Institute of Virology, Pune is the designated nodal laboratory, also coordinating the testing of samples for COVID-19. As of June 30, a total of 764 government and 292 private laboratories were operational for coronavirus testing. Beginning with a low level of testing, India has slowly come far. Nevertheless, laboratory capacity is still inadequate and there is a need to expand it.

4. Building partnerships

Partnering with other public, private, and non-profit organizations is critical to healthcare. One of the biggest challenges in the current pandemic times has been partnering with the private sector. Private healthcare is unaffordable for the majority of the population.

5. Engaging with communities

Community engagement is crucial for healthcare systems. It is all the more important for outbreak preparedness and response. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an effort to adopt the Participatory Disease Surveillance (PDS) framework by introducing the Aarogya Setu.¹⁵ However, caution needs to be exercised to address participation from digitally isolated populations, ensure the reliability of data, and consider ethical concerns such as maintaining individual privacy.

6. Establishing a Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC)

Global inter-connectedness of the world has raised the importance of PHEICs manifold. The need for a PHEOC has been recognized internationally to strengthen health systems worldwide to rapidly detect and effectively respond to PHEICs. In 2012, WHO established the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre Network (EOC-NET) to identify and promote best practices and standards for EOCs and provide support to EOC capacity building in the Member States.

A PHEOC integrates traditional public health services into an emergency management model. It supports and is a component of existing national disaster management authorities or entities. It must be part of a comprehensive program of public health emergency preparedness, planning, and capacity building. India is one of the member states and is also participating in the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSa) which was launched in 2014 by WHO, US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other partners. However, the efforts in the direction of implementing the GHSa need to be further strengthened.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, and subsequent recurrent waves have made the importance of healthcare more explicit than ever. Further, the pandemic has taught the importance of preparedness to be woven within the healthcare system. It is important to carry out honest self-assessments, make realistic plans, identify gaps in implementation, and fix them. To conclude, there is a need to treat the pandemic as a wake-up call and resolve to understand the vulnerabilities of the healthcare system in India, implement the learning from the pandemic, and take definite steps to adapt and transform the system to make it resilient.

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Policy Perspectives

The State of the Indian Statistical System *Evolution and Challenges*

Arjun Kumar¹

Abstract

The system of official economic statistics in India has undergone myriad changes since Independence. There have been various developments in its administrative structures and changing levels of focus on different economic sectors. The types of datasets available for these sectors have been ever-evolving and undergo dynamic changes owing to real-time measurement and analysis using ICT.

Using this sector-wise classification of Agriculture, Industries, and Services, and also including the unorganized and informal sectors, the paper explores India's structure of economic statistics. While the paper draws attention to recent datasets and rounds of surveys, the focus is also on the evolution of the system of official economic statistics in India. The paper highlights issues with the credibility and utility of the available data, in light of a declining GDP growth which also gives rise to more serious questions on the reliability of the country's data architecture and system of economic statistics. It also discusses structural changes such as those of the MoSPI and NSC.

The system of official economic statistics in India now faces the challenge of adapting to Information and Communication Technology. The paper thus emphasizes the role of strengthening real-time and Management Information Systems data to enable evidence-based policymaking and planning and realize the vision of 'New India' and a US\$ 5 trillion economy.

Keywords: Statistics, NSS, Census, Survey, New India

Background and Motivation

As the Indian economy has grown since its independence, it has experienced decades of sectoral changes, evolving reform processes, and technological advances. In turn, it has become one of the major fastest-growing developing economies in the world and is poised to become further strengthened in the 21st century as it has strong macroeconomic fundamentals and a unique 'India' brand in the era of *globalization*.

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One of the contributors to the strong economic fundamentals in India has been its robust official statistical architecture, which responds to the dynamics of the country's governance and planning structures, socio-economic, technological, and other reform processes. Understandably, the system of official economic statistics in India has undergone myriad changes. There have been various developments in its administrative structures and changing levels of focus on different economic sectors.

At present, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the nodal ministry of the Government of India (GoI) concerned with aspects of coverage and quality of statistics that are regularly released. The surveys conducted by the Ministry are based on scientific sampling methods. Its Five-Year Vision Plan for 2019-2024 has urged the National Statistical System to be geared toward meeting the demands of society and policymakers through the reliability, comprehension capacity, and accessibility of digital data. It has highlighted that to reach the goal of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25, real-time monitoring and improved metrics of various parameters of the economy are needed (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2019). This further becomes relevant in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) era. Aligning with the Agenda 2030 suggestion to the member states to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) has come up with guidelines for the national statisticians to enable them to monitor progress made in the implementation of the SDGs based on data produced by national statistical systems.

For ensuring evidence-based policymaking, the Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics provide practical guidance on advancing consistency, coherence, and reconciliation of statistical information through the application of the methodology of integrated economic statistics using the System of National Accounts 2008 as the overarching conceptual framework (Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, UNDESA, 2013).

In India, sectoral-level data has been gathered through multiple sources such as the Agricultural and Livestock Censuses, which capture data on the agricultural sector. For the Industries sector, the Annual Survey of Industries and the Directorate of Industries in states are the two major sources of industry data. Since economic liberalization in India, there has been an increased focus on the Services sector and the development of a well-organized mechanism to cover it. This sector is covered by National Sample Surveys, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs' MCA-21 Database, Goods and Services Tax (GST), and others. The unorganized and informal sectors of the economy also find coverage in the National Sample Survey (NSS) Rounds on Employment and Enterprises. The Census of India, the Economic Census, Price Indices, and NSS Rounds on Consumption Expenditure, Enterprises, and Employment, among others, are major sources of economic statistics as well. We also have new arrays of data for the formal sector in the form of Banking, Employers' Provident Fund Organisation, Direct Tax, GST, Property Tax, and others, as well as various administrative and program data in the form of Management Information Systems (MIS) and Dashboards. The types of datasets available for various economic sectors

have been ever-evolving and undergo dynamic changes owing to real-time measurement and analysis using Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This paper adopts the sectoral framework to understand and trace the contours of official economic statistics in India. The sector-wise analysis would assess the classification of the three broad industry structures i.e., primary or agriculture, secondary or industries, and tertiary or services, along with the unorganized and organized sectors. This paper explores India's structure of economic statistics and examines the challenges and possibilities to suggest possible ways forward from this sectoral analysis.

While the paper draws attention to recent datasets and rounds of surveys, the focus is also on the evolution of the system of official economic statistics in India. The paper highlights issues with the credibility and utility of the available data, in light of a declining rate of growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which also gives rise to more serious questions on the reliability of the country's data architecture and system of economic statistics. It also discusses the structure, issues, and changes in MoSPI, NSSO, and the National Statistical Commission (NSC).

This paper is divided into five sections. The introductory section is followed by the sectoral overview of the sources of economic statistics in India. Section Three traces the contours of official sectoral economic statistics and in doing so it discusses the Indian Statistical System and vision documents for New India on statistics and data for a "new economy". Section Four highlights some impediments in producing authentic data and ensuring reliable information. The paper finally concludes with a discussion on the ways forward to address the critical gaps in India's statistical system to ensure a streamlined collection, calculation, and monitoring of data that will ultimately address the national priorities for the benefit of its citizens.

Sources of Official Economic Statistics in India: A Sectoral Overview

Official Economic Statistics

Here, we talk about the structure of economic statistics in India. One part lies with government bodies like MoSPI and Ministries such as Labour, Annual Survey of Industries, etc., and the other with entities who reproduce the data, both of government such as NITI Aayog and RBI as well as private, such as ISEC, IndiaStat and others.

Table 1: Official Economic Statistics, Selected

Area	Data Source	Source Organisation
National Income and Accounts	https://mospi.gov.in/web/mospi/reports-publications/-/reports/view/templateFive/901?q=RPCAT	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)
Taxation	https://www.gst.gov.in/	Goods and Services Tax (GST)

	https://www.incometaxindia.gov.in/pages/about-us/central-board-of-direct-taxation.aspx	Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT)
Monetary, Banking and Finance	https://dbie.rbi.org.in/DBIE/dbie.rbi?site=statistics	Reserve Bank of India
Prices	http://labourbureaunew.gov.in/	Labour Bureau
	https://eaindustry.nic.in/	Office of the Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade
Budget and Public Finance	https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/	Union Budget, Ministry of Finance
	https://dea.gov.in/	Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance
Businesses	https://mospi.gov.in/web/mospi/economic-census-ec-	MoSPI
Insurance	https://www.irdai.gov.in/	Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)
Demography	Census: https://censusindia.gov.in/	Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs
	Socio-Economic Caste Census: https://secc.gov.in/welcome	Ministry of Rural Development
	Aadhaar: https://uidai.gov.in/	Unique Identification Authority of India
Labor, Employment and Wages	http://mospi.nic.in/94-labour-and-employment-statistics National Sample Survey: Employment and Unemployment: http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/nss_report_554_31jan14.pdf Periodic Labour Force Survey: http://mospi.nic.in/Periodic-Labour-Surveys	MoSPI
Consumption Expenditure, Debt and Investment	All India Debt and Investment Survey: http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/	National Sample Survey Office, MoSPI

	lt/files/publication_reports/nss_577.pdf Consumer Expenditure Survey: http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Report_no558_rou68_30june14.pdf	
Migration and Mobility	https://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/migrations.aspx	Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India
Infrastructure	https://www.pppinindia.gov.in/infrastructureindia/home	DEA
Government Schemes and Programs	https://digitalindia.gov.in/ https://www.mygov.in/ https://data.gov.in/	

Source: Compiled by authors

National Income and Accounts: It is compiled by CSO and details of the methodology are outlined in documents released (MoSPI, 2015; UN, 2008; MoSPI, 2019g). National Accounts Statistics: Sources and Methods 2012 describes the sources and methods of estimation of macroeconomic aggregates, domestic product, consumption expenditure, saving, capital formation, capital stock, accounts of the public sector and consolidated accounts of the nation, which are presented in the Central Statistical Office (CSO)'s annual publication 'National Accounts Statistics' (NAS). MoSPI has released an updated Methodology for Compilation of the Gross State Value Added (GSVA) in the New Base (2011-12) in 2019.

The CSO releases National Accounts Statistics each year with many faces of national accounts by economic sectors/activities, further accounts classifications, and details of any changes. The latest available National Accounts Statistics is for the year 2019 (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/publication/national-accounts-statistics-2019>). These accounts are also available for quarterly estimates, however, the yearly one is most used for reporting and analysis. The latest base year series used is 2011-12, which was 2004-05 earlier.

At the sub-national and district level, CSO suggests the methodology for state DES to calculate and estimate the same. However, DES mostly reports yearly GVA and rarely goes into further details or inquiry in practice.

We do not have any estimates at the local levels, especially for cities. However, during the changes in the base year, CSO does give rural and urban classifications and also outlines a method for the same. Nonetheless, no estimation can be found officially using the same. Currently, India has 4302 cities, around 4000 census towns (not incorporated by law), 2.4 Lakh Gram Panchayats and 6.4 Lakh villages.

An Input-Output transaction table is also a part of MoSPI's data provisions. Methods and data for the same are provided. Further discussions² on Input-Output and social accounting in India also exist.

Taxation: The information on direct, indirect (Goods and Services Tax (GST), <https://www.gst.gov.in/>) and other taxes are given by respective boards such as Central Board of Direct Taxes (<https://www.incometaxindia.gov.in/pages/about-us/central-board-of-direct-taxation.aspx>) under the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Budget and Public Finance: Similarly, the MoF also presents the Union Budget (<https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/>) each year along with the Economic Survey in Parliament. It has statistics on revenue, borrowing, payment, expenditure, outlays, deficits and so on. These are also available at the website of the Department of Economic Affairs, MoF (<https://dea.gov.in/data-statistics>) as follows:

External Debt
Public Finance Statistics
Central Government Borrowings
National Summary Data_
Monthly Economic Report
Overseas Direct Investment ODI
Debt Statistics Middle Office
QEDS_

Monetary, Banking and Finance: The RBI Database on Indian Economy and Handbook of Statistics on Indian Economy give data in this area. The information is given in four parts: Annual Series, Quarterly/Monthly Series, Series with less than Monthly Frequency and Major Growth Rates and Ratios. The areas covered are National Income and Employment, Output and Prices, Money and Banking, Financial Markets, Public Finance, Trade and Balance of Payments, Currency and Coinage, Socioeconomic Indicators, External Sector, Exchange Rates, Macroeconomic Aggregates, Wholesale and Consumer Price Indices, among others.

Prices: All-India item-wise Consumer Prices Indices (Industrial Workers, Agricultural and Rural Laborers) and Retail Price Indices are given by the Labor Bureau (<http://labourbureau.gov.in/>). Wholesale Price Index is given by the Office of Economic Adviser, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (<https://eaindustry.nic.in/>).

Businesses: Corporate, Industry, Enterprises: The data in this area comes from myriad sources such as the Economic Census, Enterprise Surveys, Ministry of MSMEs (which provides Udyog Aadhaar for identification), GST (registrations, returns and collection), databases of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs and the Registrar of Companies, Directorate of Industries, PAN and TAN databases, among others.

²http://ngil.cstep.in/uploads/default/files/publications/stuff/WorkingPaper_Compilation_of_InputOutput_Table_Final_CSTEP.pdf

The Economic Census has been carried out since 1977, (1980, 1990, 1998, 2005, 2013 and 2019) with its scope specifying multiple exclusions. The NSS Enterprise Surveys also exclude sectors such as the Primary Sector, Construction and Government enterprises. This makes it important to assess how and where the informal sector is being included in the country's data collection machinery and where to look for data on the same.

Additional resources are available from the Development Commissioner, Ministry of Micro Medium and Small Enterprises³ and Ease of Doing Business from NITI Aayog⁴.

Foreign Trade and Investments: Export-Import Bank of India (Exim Bank) - <https://www.eximbankindia.in/> - provides data of relevance.

Insurance: Data is given by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority <https://www.irdai.gov.in/>

Demography: The Census (<https://censusindia.gov.in/>), Socioeconomic Caste Census (<https://secc.gov.in/welcome>) and the Aadhaar database (<https://uidai.gov.in/>) are perhaps the three most pertinent sources of data in this area.

Labor, Employment and Wages: The important sources of labor market information at enterprise levels are: the Economic Census, the Census of Small-Scale Industries (SSI), the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), the Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET), the Commission for Agricultural Cost and Prices (CACP) and the NSSO (through EUS and PLFS). Apart from these major sources, various sub-national agencies, departments of governments, and international agencies such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the Labor Bureau also provide sector and region-specific information relating to labor markets. Data from the Employee Exchange, Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) also becomes of note.

Housing and Land: Data is found in House Listings and Housing Census, NSS Rounds on Housing and Amenities and Slum Settlements, National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) and is also embedded in other survey data. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and other government schemes maintain housing program-related data.

Official estimates for property prices in the market are obtained from the RESIDEX, prepared by the National Housing Bank (NHB) (<https://residex.nhbonline.org.in/>) and the Housing Price Index of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Estimates from institutional and private sources are also available from real estate companies and institutions such as Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO), National Buildings Organisation (NBO), National Buildings Construction Corporation (NBCC), Construction Industry Development Council

³http://www.dcmsme.gov.in/ito_msme/censuses.htm

⁴https://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/document_publication/EoDB_Single.pdf

(CIDC), CREDAI, NAREDCO, JLL, CBRE, Knight Frank, Cushman & Wakefield, Propequity, KPMG, McKinsey Global Institute, Colliers, HDIL, ET Intelligence group and so on. Furthermore, Nestoria. in, housing.com, commonfloor.com, 99acres.com, makaan.com and many others provide online portals for real estate and housing. However, all these collect information for a handful of large cities and a limited number of projects in India, and, hence, lack robustness.

Circle rates are obtained from the Registration and Stamps, Dept. of the Department of Revenue for all the states and cities. Municipal Valuation Committees/local bodies decide these rates for different localities, such as colonies, wards, zones, etc. Circle rates consist of land and construction costs by type of settlements, colonies, location, etc. (Kundu & Kumar, 2019).

Social Statistics: There are myriad datasets for health and education. Notably, they include the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), Health Management Information Systems, District Level Household and Facility Survey and the Sample Registration System. Certain NSS rounds also cover Social Consumption (Health and Education) and Sanitation and Housing Conditions, among others. Further, education is covered by the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) and the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER).

Supplementary data also come from sources such as the India Human Development Survey (IHDS).

Environment, Forest and Natural Resources Statistics: Apart from the CSO, various ministries and departments of Central and State Governments collect information related to Environment Statistics and the same is published in various publications namely, Forestry Statistics, The State of Forest Report, Inventory of Forest Resources of India, State of Environment, etc. by organizations within the Ministry of Environment and Forests; Agriculture Statistics at a Glance and Fisheries Statistics by the Ministry of Agriculture; Water Statistics by Ministry of Water Resources, etc.

2.2 Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Agriculture and Allied Activities

Table 2: Sources of Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Agriculture

	Data Source	Source Organization	Years
1	Agriculture Census	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare	1970-71
2	Livestock Census	Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying	Quinquennially since 1919 (20 th Census launched in October 2018)
3	Economic Census	Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation	1977, 1980, 1990, 1998, 2005, 2013, 2019

4	National Sample Survey: Assessment of Agricultural Households	National Sample Survey Office, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation	59 th Round (2003) 70 th Round (2013)
5	National Sample Survey: Land and Livestock Holdings	National Sample Survey Office, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation	8 th Round (1954-55) 16 th Round (1961-62) 26 th Round (1971-72) 37 th Round (1982) 48 th Round (1992) 59 th Round (2003) 70 th Round (2013)
6	Annual Reports	Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture	

Source: Compiled by authors

The Agriculture Census has been conducted at five-year intervals since 1970-71 to collect data on structural aspects of operational holdings in the country. It is carried out in three phases - Collection of data on primary characteristics like number and area of holdings by social groups, gender, etc. (Phase I), Collection of detailed data on land use, irrigation status, etc. (Phase II) and Input Survey collecting data on the pattern of input use (Phase III). Similarly, the Livestock Census since 1919, quinquennially carries out a complete enumeration of livestock, poultry (and others, along with their sex composition, age, distribution, utility-wise distribution, etc.), machinery and implements, among others.

National Sample Surveys also emerged pertaining to the Agriculture Sector, namely, the Survey of Land and Livestock Holdings (since 1954) and the Situation Assessment Survey (2003 and 2013), which collect information on various aspects of farming and other socio-economic characteristics of agricultural households, as well as household and livestock ownership.

There also exists a plethora of ancillary agrarian data (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/4-agricultural-statistics>, http://agricoop.nic.in/sites/default/files/pocketbook_0.pdf, <https://eands.dacnet.nic.in/>) on the consumption of inputs, cultivation costs and income, cropping pattern and yields, among others.

Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Industry

Table 3: Sources of Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Industry

Data Source	Source Organization	Years
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1	Economic Census	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	1977, 1980, 1990, 1998, 2005, 2013, 2019
2	Annual Survey of Industries	National Sample Survey Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	Since 1960
3	National Sample Survey: Enterprise Surveys	National Sample Survey Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	15 surveys from 33 rd Round (1978-79) to 73 rd Round (2015-16)
4	Index of Industrial Production	Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	
5	Mining and Mineral Statistics	Mining and Mineral Statistics Division, Indian Bureau of Mines	

Source: Compiled by authors

The Annual Survey of Industries was launched in 1960 by replacing both, the Census of Manufacturing Industries (CMI) and the Sample Survey of Manufacturing Industries (SSMI). It is limited to the registered manufacturing and repairing units only (since 1998-99). Its frame is based on the lists of registered factories or units maintained by the Chief Inspector of Factories (CIF) in each State and those maintained by the licensing authorities in respect of *bidi* and cigar establishments.

The units or factories in the ASI frame are grouped into Census and sample sectors. While the factories in the Census sector are surveyed on a complete enumeration basis, a representative sample from the sample sector is considered for survey in any survey year.

The important aspects of the sampling design of ASI, 1999-2000 are as under:

- All registered manufacturing and repairing units in the frame are grouped into two basic strata namely, the Census sector and the sample sector. The units in the census stratum are surveyed on a complete enumeration basis.
- The census sector comprises the following:
 - All manufacturing and repairing units in the frame in the five States and Union Territories of Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura and Andaman and Nicobar Islands; and
 - For the remaining States and Union Territories: All manufacturing and repairing units employing 200 or more workers.
- In each of the States and Union Territories other than the five States and Union Territories specified above, the complete list of units in the sample sector is stratified into different strata with each stratum consisting of all manufacturing and repairing units belonging to a particular industry 4-digit code of National Industrial Classification, 1998.

- A sample of suitable size from each stratum is drawn circularly systematically with equal probability and in the form of two independent sub-samples after arranging the units according to district and number of workers.
- Of the total number of 1,74,167 units in the frame, the gross allotment of units considered for the survey (which includes non-operating factories appearing in the frame) at the country level is 35,391 of which 9,570 are the Census sector units.

Started in the 33rd Round (1978-79) of the National Sample Survey, Enterprise Surveys serve as follow-up surveys to the Economic Census (since 1977). They give data on, among other things, Value Added, Enterprises by Type and Ownership, and Workers. This survey excludes the Primary Sector, Construction and Government Enterprises. (Additional information is available at resources such as <http://mospi.nic.in/industrial-statistics> and <http://mospi.nic.in/24-industrial-statistics>.)

Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Services

Table 4: Source of Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Services

	Data Source	Source Organization	Years
1	Economic Census	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation	1977, 1980, 1990, 1998, 2005, 2013, 2019
2	National Sample Survey: Enterprise Surveys	National Sample Survey Office	15 surveys from the 33 rd Round (1978-79) to the 73 rd Round (2015-16)
3	National Sample Survey: Service Sector Enterprises	National Sample Survey Office	63 rd Round (2006-07) 74 th Round (2016-17)

Source: Compiled by authors

The survey on Service Sector Enterprises has been carried out in the 63rd (2006-07) and 74th (2016-17) Rounds of the National Sample Survey and the latter is deemed to be a prelude to a proposed Annual Survey on Service Sector Enterprises (ASSSE). (Additional information is available at resources such as <http://mospi.nic.in/25-services-sector-statistics>).

Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Unorganized/Informal Sector

Table 5: Sources of Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Unorganised/Informal Sector

	Data Source	Source Organization
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1	Report on Conditions of Work and Promotion of Livelihoods in the Unorganized Sector	National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector
2	Growth Pole Programme for Unorganized Sector Enterprise Development	
3	Reports on Financing of Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector and Creation of a National Fund for the Unorganized Sector (NAFUS)	
4	Reports on Definitional and Statistical Issues relating to Informal Economy	
5	Skill Formation and Employment Assurance in the Unorganized Sector	
6	Reports on Social Security	
7	Special Programme for Marginal and Small Farmers	
8	National Policy on Urban Street Vendors	
9	A Report on Technology Upgradation for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector	
10	The Challenge of Employment in India - An Informal Economy Perspective (Vol-I)	
11	The Challenge of Employment in India - An Informal Economy Perspective (Vol-II)	
12	National Sample Survey: Informal Non-Agricultural Enterprises	National Sample Survey Office, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation

Source: Compiled by authors

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) and NSSO have produced the above reports. In addition, certain rounds of the NSS Enterprise Surveys focus on the Unorganized Manufacturing and Services sectors, but no report focusing on the unorganized and informal sectors is very recent. More recent rounds of the National Sample Surveys on Employment and Unemployment capture the informal sector under the enterprise types Proprietary and Partnership. This definition lends itself to an overestimation in the number of workers as well as enterprises in the country's informal sector.

Economic Statistics: Other Official Statistics, Administrative Data and Non-Official Sources

Such other data is captured in many ways, such as Program and Administrative data from Management Information Systems and Dashboards of Central and State Government Schemes and Ministries. A variety of business and economic databases exist, private or otherwise, with the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), EPW Research Foundation, and World Bank Open Data being a few of them.

It is important to note that much of the data produced at the national level is also generated by the Directorates of Economics and Statistics at the state level, by applying their own frame for location.

Tracing the Contours of Official Sectoral Economic Statistics

Tracing the Contours: Indian Statistical System

(1) Structure of MoSPI

The Indian Statistical System (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/indian-statistical-system>) presently functions within the overall administrative framework of the country. By and large, the flow of statistical information emanates from the States to the Centre except in cases where the State-level operations are an integral part of Centrally sponsored schemes or data are collected through National Sample Surveys. The Central Statistical Organization (CSO) in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is the nodal agency for the planned development of the statistical system in the country and for bringing about coordination in statistical activities among statistical agencies in the Government of India and State Directorates of Economics and Statistics. The coordination and flow of information between the MoSPI and the statistical systems of the states is given in the Annexure. The National Sample Survey (NSS), initiated in the year 1950, is a nationwide, large-scale, continuous survey operation conducted in the form of successive rounds. It was established to fill up data gaps for socio-economic planning and policymaking through sample surveys. To get rid of the inordinate delays in the release of survey results, all aspects of survey work were brought under a single umbrella by setting up the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) in 1970. Since its creation, the NSSO has been functioning under the overall direction of a Governing Council with autonomy in the matter of collection, processing and publication of survey data, thus ensuring freedom from political and bureaucratic interference.

The NSSO carries out Household and Enterprise Surveys, undertakes the fieldwork for the Annual Survey of Industries, provides technical guidance to the States in respect of the Crop Estimation Surveys besides assessing the quality of primary work done by the State Agencies in area enumeration and yield estimation, prepares the urban frames useful for selection of urban blocks for the surveys and collects price data for rural retail prices as well as selected items consumed by the urban non-manual employees required for the preparation of consumer price indices for agricultural laborers and urban non-manual employees, respectively.

National Statistical Commission (NSC)

Based on the recommendations of the C. Rangarajan Commission, the National Statistical Commission (NSC) was set up to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters (MoSPI, 2001). It was established as an interim measure, and not as a permanent National Commission on Statistics to serve as a nodal and empowered body for all core statistical activities of the country, to evolve, monitor and enforce statistical priorities and standards and ensure statistical coordination among the different agencies involved. During 2002, many debates were sparked over the same raising various concerns (Dasgupta, 2002; MoSPI, 2001; MoSPI, Rangarajan, 2001; Rath, 2002; 2009; Vidwans, 2002).

Therefore, in the absence of any legislative framework, the NSC has faced challenges in implementing its recommendations. In light of this, the present government has prepared the Draft National Statistical Commission (NSC) Bill 2019 to adhere to the Rangarajan Commission's recommendations in totality. The Bill primarily envisages encouraging Government agencies to proactively bring forth issues on the national statistical system for discussion in the Commission (MoSPI, 2019).

The MoSPI is also seeking Comments/ Suggestions on the Draft National Statistical Commission (NSC) Bill 2019 (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/nscbill/nscbilld.pdf>).

The period since its establishment and the Draft NSC Bill 2019 has witnessed conflicts between the NSC and the Office of the Chief Statistician of India (CSI) - who apart from being the secretary to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is also the Secretary to the NSC. This led to the decline in the credibility of the Indian statistical system exaggerated by a divided leadership, that led to several reform proposals being stuck in limbo. The peak of this conflagration came with the resignation of two of its members, citing undue government influence in the publication of an NSSO report on jobs (2018c; MoSPI, 2019b; NSC, 2018).

Reports of the NSC Committees (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/reports-committees>) are Legislative measures on statistical matters, Unorganized Sector Statistics, Statistics of Agriculture and allied Sectors, Periodic Labor Force Survey, Statistical Audit of All India Index of Industrial Production, Price Statistics, Data Management.

Request for Comments and Suggestions on the Report of Committees constituted by NSC (http://www.mospi.gov.in/nsc_draft_reports) in the public domain are: Report of Committee on Financial Sector Statistics, Report of Committee on Real Sector Statistics, Report of Committee on Online Reporting System, Report of Committee on Analytics, Report of Committee on Fiscal Statistics. NSC brings out an Action Taken Report each year (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/action-taken-report>) and Annual Reports (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/annual-report>).

Draft National Policy on Official Statistics, 2018

MoSPI also invited Comments on Draft Policy: National Policy on Official Statistics in 2018 MoSPI (2018c) and there is news that this policy can be announced soon (http://mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/announcements/draft_policy_17may18.pdf).

Central Statistical Organisation (CSO)

To coordinate statistical activities of the different ministries of the Government of India and the State Governments and the evolving of statistical standards, the CSO was established in May 1951. The responsibilities of CSO include the preparation of National Accounts; conducting Annual Surveys of Industries, Economic Censuses and their Follow-up Enterprise Surveys; constructing Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and consumer price indices for urban non-manual employees; compiling Social Sector Statistics; imparting training in official statistics; formulating a Five Year Plan program relating to the development of statistics in the States and Union Territories; disseminating various statistical information including that relating to social and environment statistics; undertaking a periodic revision of National Industrial Classification, and others. The CSO is also responsible for periodically conducting the Conference of Central and State Statistical Organisations.

One of the major responsibilities of the CSO is to act as the nodal agency for the planned development of the statistical system of the country. The CSO is entrusted with the responsibility not only to coordinate the statistical activities of the Government of India and State Directorates of Economics and Statistics (DEs) but also to lay down and maintain norms and standards in the field of statistics. Though the CSO has no legal authority to enforce standards and coordination, the work is done through institutional arrangements like interdepartmental meetings of Working Groups, Technical Advisory Committee on various subjects, Standing Committee, etc. in the case of Central Ministries.

National Statistical Organisation (NSO)

The NSC operates through the NSO, which is the official agency for implementing policy decisions of the NSC. It has been formed by a merger of the NSSO and CSO (Magazine, 2019a). It functions as the single full-fledged Department of MoSPI headed by a Director-General and is responsible for conducting large-scale sample surveys in diverse fields on an All-India basis. Primarily, data are collected through nationwide household surveys on various socio-economic subjects and, Annual Survey of Industries (ASI), among others. Besides these surveys, NSO collects data on rural and urban prices and plays a significant role in the improvement of crop statistics through supervision of the area enumeration and crop estimation surveys of the State agencies. It also maintains a frame of urban area units for use in sample surveys in urban areas.

Tracing the Contours: Official Sectoral Economic Statistics

(2) India's Economic Performance

Sectorally, agriculture has become a subsistence economy with a burden of heavy dependence on population and rain gods (low irrigation coverage), low prices of produce (supply chain & finance deficiencies), the rising cost of the input (market support) and dismal and disappointing sad news. The manufacturing growth rate has been flat for some time, despite the Make in India mission, although growth has peaked out and thus bottomed out. The service sector continues to expand and continues to be a major source of growth. The unorganized sector which accounts for about 45% of the GDP, has been badly hit by demonetization and GST. The non-agriculture component of this sector contributes to 31% of the GDP. The unorganized sector employs 80-90% of the Indian workforce. However, definitional issues and higher formalization are reported on the account of GST, ESIC, EPFO, etc. Compliance is the silver lining (Mehta & Kumar, 2019) despite high levels of unemployment as reported by PLFS, 2019, which has been a characteristic of the last decade as well termed jobless growth.

Tracing the Origin of Sectoral Official Economic Statistics

1910s	<u>1919</u> : Livestock Census		
			1920s
1930s			
			1940s
1950s	<u>1950</u> : National Sample Survey Organization founded <u>1951</u> : Central Statistics Office founded <u>1954</u> : Land and Livestock Holdings Survey started <u>1955</u> : Employment and Unemployment Survey started		
		<u>1960</u> : Annual Survey of Industries was launched by merging Census of Manufacturing Industries and Sample Survey of Manufacturing Industries	1960s
1970s	<u>1970</u> : Agriculture Census <u>1971</u> : All India Debt and Investment Survey <u>1977</u> : Economic Census <u>1978</u> : NSS Enterprise Survey		
			1980s
1990s	<u>1999</u> : Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation was formed by merging Department of Statistics and		

	Department of Programme Implementation		
		<u>2003</u> : Situation Assessment Survey <u>2004</u> : National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector <u>2005</u> : National Statistical Commission <u>2006</u> : NSS: Service Sector Enterprises	2000s
2010s	<u>2015</u> : NITI Aayog, Digital India <u>2017</u> : Periodic Labor Force Survey <u>2018</u> : Draft National Policy on Official Statistics <u>2019</u> : MoSPI Vision 2024, Draft NSC Bill		
		<u>2020</u> : NITI Aayog National Data and Analytics Platform: Vision Document	2020
<i>New Survey/Census/Program</i> <i>Organizational Change</i> <i>New Document</i>			

Figure 1: Tracing the Contours: A Timeline
 (Source: Compiled by Authors)

Figure 1 outlines the origins of sectoral official economic statistics in India. While the 1950s witnessed the origin of major organizational and key statistics, the Annual Survey of Industries was started in the 1960s by incorporating the Census and surveys being held earlier. The 1970s had a more professional approach towards sectoral statistics, and the Agricultural Census, NSS All India Debt and Investment Surveys, Economic Census, and NSS Enterprise Surveys were launched. In the 1990s, MoSPI was formed by merging the Department of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The decade 2000s (with Situation Assessment Surveys of Agriculture, coming up of National Statistics Commission, NSS of Service Sector Enterprises, National Commission for Enterprises in Unorganized Sector) and 2010s (with Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS) and many digital, technological and process improvements show more maturity and seriousness towards the sectoral economic statistics and structures.

Latest estimates and information from Sectoral Official Economic Statistics

As mentioned before, the National Accounts Statistics as given by CSO is available latest for the year 2019 at the base year 2011-12 series (<http://www.mospi.gov.in/publication/national-accounts-statistics-2019>).

Recently, it has also been reported to the Parliament that the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics (ACNAS) has recommended to the MoSPI to consider 2020-21 as the next base year of National Accounts given the structural reforms.

The latest estimates for Industry by ASI are available for 2017-18. The Sixth Economic Census is the latest available (2013). The latest Agricultural Census is for the year 2015-16. The latest estimates for enterprises are for the year 2015-16 and for services - 2016-17 from the NSS rounds (MoSPI, 2018a; MoSPI, 2018b; MoSPI, 2019a; MoSPI, 2019c; MoSPI, 2019e; MoSPI, 2019f; MoSPI, 2020a; MoSPI, 2020b) Real-time data for many companies (MCA), industries (Registrar of Industries & Chief Inspectors of Factories (CIFs)), Micro, Medium and Small Enterprises (MSMEs, registered), PAN, taxpayers, GST enrolled businesses, bank accounts, Mudra loans, EPFO, ESIC, PFRDA, etc are available at the sources mentioned before.

Tracing the Contours: Vision for New India: Statistics and Data

MoSPI: Five- Year Vision 2019-2024

The Vision 2024 for the National Statistical System is spearheaded by MoSPI (MoSPI, 2019d;

http://www.mospi.gov.in/sites/default/files/main_menu/parliament_matters/Vision_2024_of_MoSPI.pdf) on the highlighted fact that the official statistics are a public good and are an essential part of the development architecture of India. It extensively uses digital technology to provide holistic and coherent data on a real-time basis and is committed to reforming the existing institutional, organizational and technical challenges for policy and stronger dissemination practices for the public. Some of the areas highlighted in the reform process are the integration of administrative datasets from the various government institutions and agencies; the creation of a common database of registries across beneficiary schemes at the national level to inform the policymakers of the exact number of beneficiaries, which would help in better implementation of government schemes and empower the people to make better decisions, and; strengthening of data dissemination in a timely and user-friendly manner as well as monitoring of large infrastructure projects.

Some of the transformational strategies to achieve the above reforms are: strengthening the institutional framework of the National Statistical System for data-driven interventions for measuring the progress of the goal to achieve a USD 5 Trillion Economy by 2024 with enhanced ease of living; the backdrop of Industry 4.0; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Digital India program; strengthening technological and physical infrastructure and; effective management of human capital. Implementation of the objectives for achieving Vision 2024 requires mobilization of institutional, legal and policy, IT, human capital, research and development and enhanced user engagement strategies. Towards this, the government has adopted the UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics to

promote professional ethics in the production and dissemination of official statistics in the country. A National Quality Assurance Framework was announced in 2018 by MoSPI, which was based on the UN Quality Assurance Framework. It also follows the UN Guidelines on Integrated Economic Statistics in response to the need for a consistent framework for measuring national economic activities. The approach for transformation in MoSPI would be broadly in line with the UN Economic Commission for Europe's (UN ECE) High-Level group for the Modernization of Official Statistics. This will help strengthen and establish an agile institutional framework in MoSPI that will operationalize the generic Statistical Business Process Model in statistical operations and services.

Over the next five years, MoSPI will implement wide-ranging reforms of statistical products & processes to realize its vision by the following themes:

Theme I: Strengthening statistical infrastructure for real-time monitoring of the economy

Theme II: Integrating data and registries, existing in silos in various Ministries, into the National Statistical System through an Integrated Information Portal by developing data-sharing protocols and use of technology

Theme III: Strengthening the monitoring of large infrastructure projects

These will be achieved in a time-bound manner by 3 transformational strategies:

Strategy I: Strengthening Institutional Framework

Strategy II: Strengthening Technological and Physical Infrastructure

Strategy III: Effective Human Capital Management

Harnessing technological innovations like big data analytics and artificial intelligence to develop a National Integrated Information Portal is under process, which will be a repository of all official statistics and homogenized metadata. This is an important constituent of Vision 2024, intending to achieve the targets in a strict time-bound manner.

The expected outcomes of the revamped statistical system are:

- Improved Statistical products and processes that are relevant, accurate, reliable, timely, accessible, coherent and comparable at local, sub-national and international levels.
- Better data integration with minimum redundancies
- Multidisciplinary statistical product
- Partnership and intense collaborations among stakeholders
- Improved user - produces discussion and dissemination forum

NITI Aayog: National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP) Vision Document, January 2020

Proposed to be released in 2021, the Vision Document for the National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP), 2020 by NITI Aayog (NITI Aayog, 2020) is a flagship initiative that lays down the aim of democratizing access to public government data through a world-class user experience, by standardizing data, providing flexible analytics and ensuring ease of accessibility.

Mentioning the challenges of incoherence and lack of user-centric publishing of data, the document outlines an approach that includes standardization of data across multiple Government sources, providing flexible analytics, and making it easily accessible in formats conducive for research, innovation, policymaking, and public consumption. The aim is to draw inspiration from the best platforms around the world; build on the success of existing Indian data platforms (e.g. www.data.gov.in and DISHA - <https://rural.nic.in/disha>); pursue a user-centric approach to providing access to data, and; provide access to data from multiple sectors in one place. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will be developed to keep data updated. The governance structure lists:

- a High-Powered Steering Committee under the chairmanship of Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog to provide direction, oversee progress, guide on data sources, and address various inter-ministerial issues on collating data.
- a Technical Advisory Group consisting of sector and technology experts to provide expert consultation on the development of the platform, management of data, and alignment of the platform for user needs.
- a Project Management Unit to coordinate with different stakeholders and manage various facets of NDAP, and,
- A technology vendor will be engaged in the development and operation of the NDAP.

As stated in the Union Budget 2020-21 speech,

“There is a growing need for the Indian Statistical system to meet the challenges of real-time monitoring of our increasingly complex economy. Data must have strong credibility. The proposed new National Policy on Official Statistics would use the latest technology including AI. It would lay down a road-map towards modernized data collection, integrated information portal and timely dissemination of information.”

Official Sectoral Economic Statistics: Analysis and Discussion

Analysis

The lack of timely, credible and reliable data has time and again led to debates and counter-debates from the government and scholarly community alike. Some of the recent contestations have arisen due to discrepancies in the empirical evidence linking microeconomics with the macroeconomic realities and to consider institutions and governance as important components of this analysis of statistical systems. Since the data of different economic sectors are collected in different years, there exists no centralized system for harmonization of the data. An integrated, decentralized information system populated with granular data will enable data to be carried flexibly wherever required, queried, and analyzed in business contexts at all levels of governance for a deeper insight (Barman, 2016; Barman, 2018; Barman, 2020; Bhattacharya, 2019; Bhattacharya, 2020; Chandrasekhar, 2019; Dasgupta, 2002; Himanshu, 2019; Magazine, 2019a; MoSPI, 2015; Nagraj, 2015; Sen, 2020; Singh, 2019; Bhalla, 2019a; Bhalla, 2019b; Teltumbde, 2017). Further, discrepancies in the GDP data have questioned India's quest for growth and development and taking the great leap forward in economic growth in the world (Anant, 2016; Debroy, 2019; Business Today, 2019; CSO, 2015; EPW, 2016b; EPW Engage, 2019; Nagraj, 2017a; PTI, 2016; Rajakumar & Shetty, 2016; Subramaniam & Josh, 2019; Teltumbde, 2017; Times of India, 2019; Verma, 2016; Waghmare, 2018).

Even for the macroeconomic indicators from the RBI's trends and progress of banking in India and flow funds accounts and national accounts, critiques and discrepancies have been highlighted in the literature (Rao, 2017; Rao, 2018).

The recent and aforementioned debacle on the employment data architecture has brought India's problem of huge unemployment to the forefront (Basu, 2019; Himanshu, 2019; Kapoor, 2017; Kapoor, 2018; Kapoor, 2019; Mehta & Kumar, 2019a; Mehta & Kumar, 2019c; Mehta & Awasthi, 2019b; Mehta et al., 2020; Bhalla, 2019a; Bhalla, 2019b). It is only in the absence of proper data that targeted and precise policy measures cannot be curated to tackle unemployment in the country.

A more worrying story now emerges for the NSS Consumption Expenditure data which is used for assessing poverty and inequality, for which the report of the recent round held in 2018 has not been released yet. (Himanshu, 2019; Mazumdar et al, 2017; Mehta & Kumar, 2019b; Bhalla, 2019a; Bhalla, 2019b). There have also been arguments, especially by Bhalla (2019a&b) that the NSS estimates suffer from serious methodological issues on account of under-estimation. Bhalla terms the results of NSS as 'a statistical embarrassment' and 'truly bizarre'.

A similar debate has also arisen over the Aadhaar data and processes (EPW, 2016a; Mathews, 2016; Prakash, 2016; UIDAI, 2016). Interestingly, both sides of the debate have been raised, and this necessitates a resolution through in-depth research and evidence presented in the form of white papers.

In the agriculture and allied sectors, the lack of a proper database acts as an impediment to the implementation and success of all related policies and schemes

on the ground (Mehta & Kumar, 2017; Shetty et al., 1968). Even in the latest scheme PM-KISAN where direct benefit transfer support is given to the farmers, the lack of any database or register is largely affecting the implementation and monitoring process.

Even the industry sector is beset with challenges of discrepancies and methodological issues in manufacturing. Dynamic changes (Industry 4.0 & Future of work) and reconfiguration have been highlighted in the backdrop of the Make in India mission (Bedi & Banerjee, 2007; Mehta & Awasthi, 2019b; Nagraj, 2017b; Nagraj et al., 2018).

The service sector, which has become the core of the economy, encompasses many dynamic sectors and has been under larger focus since the last decade (Nagraj, 2009; Nagraj, 2015). Further, service sector estimates are now also based on the dynamic MCA frame for larger compliance and methodological improvements. The MCA has made it mandatory for every company to update their location by geotagging.

The definitional issues for the unorganized sector are creating measurement issues, especially with technological upgradation and capacity of the authorities to bring them into formal sectors, which has been also underlined as the silver lining, this can be ascertained through PAN, GST, EPFO, ESIC, PFRDA, among others (Borgohain, 2017; Mazumdar, 2008; Nagraj, 2016; NSC, 2012, NCEUS, 2008). Nonetheless, the conditions and social security of this sector remain the major challenge.

There is no proper national-level registry for people involved in informal jobs or sectors, such as vegetable vendors, construction workers, rickshaw pullers, auto-rickshaw drivers, temporary staff and so on, and there is an urgent need for these registries to be instituted and updated, using latest digital technologies and innovations, along with a dynamic unemployment registry to provide direct economic (universal basic income), health (universal coverage) and other necessary contingency protection and security support (Mehta & Kumar, 2020c). Similarly, there is an urgent need to maintain a dynamic registry for the migrants to prepare a database, supplemented with their skill sets and job requirement details for greater usage (Mehta & Kumar, 2020d).

Other official statistics including sanitation, education, health, and housing as well as administrative statistics and Management Information Systems (MIS) also have a plethora of discrepancies arising from official sources, highlighting leakages, non-transparency and credibility issues (Kumar, 2014; Kumar, 2015; Kumar, 2016; Kundu & Kumar, 2017; Mehta & Kumar, 2019c; Mehta et al., 2020; Singh & George, 2017).

All this reflects the inefficient and inept system of statistics management and calls for immediate redressal. Although this has been incorporated in the vision documents, the execution and progress towards these need to be demonstrated with collective confidence.

It must be noted that the Program Implementation part of MoSPI is regressive. It is still dependent upon the 20-point program of the year 2006, over which each year the progress is made. Therefore, with changing times and agenda precision, it

is important to review the program objectives, to provide fresh insights into the achievements and also provide a way forward to address the gaps.

It is the first time that we are gearing up for a digital census - both the Population Census and Economic Census (already under process), and the National Population Register (NPR) will decide the actual frame. The importance of NPR cannot be underrated. While NPR was used for the first time in 2010, the issue has become so contentious over the past 4-5 months, it becomes doubtful whether the citizens would provide accurate and voluntary information or not, or it will simply become a lengthy and futile exercise to produce a good database,

Linking of the Census and NPR raises technical and operational questions, for instance, in 2011, the NPR tagged to the house-listing schedule had serious coverage issues, with about 60 million people missing, and this coupled with the fact that the NPR data is certainly not required for targeting purposes raises the question of its utility, since it is collected at enormous physical and financial costs when Aadhaar-based biometric identification numbers with higher coverage are already available (Kumar & Mohanan, 2020).

Discussion

From the above discussion, it is clear that there are several sources of data in India, among which the major ones are MoSPI's CSO, NSO, Economic Census, Agriculture Census, ASI, and others. It needs to be mentioned here that the methodology of estimation of national accounts is almost a decade old, and in the absence of updated data, the sub-national accounts are being hindered due to the non-incorporation of the latest data. In such a situation, the absence of clarity of the statistics hinders the work of the researchers and remains futile for even the DES, which otherwise could have enabled them to arrive at robust and insightful state or district estimates. Based on the relevant updated methodology for estimation by the CSO, which the DES takes time to comprehend, the latter tends to come up with consolidated data after several years, for instance, the data on the beneficiaries of any government scheme, data on migration (released after 10 years), among others. This leads to a loss in utility and purpose since under the prevailing situation several updates on the existing data have already taken place. As a result, there emerges a vicious circle of delay in data production and the consequent addition of backlogs of the latest data. In this age of digital information, the private sector is much better equipped and is racing ahead of the public sector in generating data. This has further strengthened the state versus market debate. This type of bureaucratic complexity is unique to India and is unseen in any developed or emerging economy. China, for example, invites a global audience when it releases and presents the country's quarterly and annual estimates. Such an exercise infuses credibility and consistency in data, ushering in trust among the people, as a smooth program implementation is entirely dependent upon it. In the absence of such a mechanism in India, appropriate planning for government work cannot be done and hence ambitious projects often evaporate into thin air. This has lately brought the entire system of statistics - from the government to the grassroots - under a lot of criticism.

Therefore, it is important to have annual white papers produced by each district, and competition must be instilled among the districts on which district produces the best and first data. For this, more financial empowerment of the MoSPI is needed, which will cater to the various challenges in terms of data production and re-instill the sense of it being a trustworthy, professional, and credible institution in the minds of the people.

As India traversed from the five-year plans of the erstwhile Planning Commission to the short-, medium- and long-term vision reports of the NITI Aayog, one thing remained unchanged, i.e., dependency on the decadal Census data for its various plan measures. As we move towards New India with a US\$ 5 trillion economy, it becomes important to incorporate, report, and disseminate data for their proper utilization, application and furtherance of research and development. In the age of Randomized Control Trials (RCTs) and experimental methods for evidence-based policymaking, monitoring and evaluation, as well as evidence-based research, suffer in the absence of adequate data, periodic monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. As a result, the situation of the availability and coherence of financial and fiscal data becomes more complex and cumbersome.

The Indian Statistical System is faced with real-time and complex challenges. For instance, for the first time, the Census would be recorded on handheld devices. MoSPI has been using these devices for all its surveys for some time now. However several experts have raised doubts on the estimates and credibility of data produced through such exercises. It has been mentioned that not every government report must be accepted, as sometimes institutions fail to produce a credible report. Sometimes it must be recognized that the statistical institution of a country can fail the most basic of 'smell' tests and is in dire need of reforms (Bhalla, 2019). As mentioned above, there are no sectors left untouched by questions on the credibility of their data. However, these experts have been shown to switch positions and arguments on the credibility debate of the statistics, thereby presenting serious concerns about the integrity of the data in front of the whole world.

Despite the criticisms, there can be no denying that the official economic statistics continue to remain the most valued, appropriate, rich and reliable for informed research and policymaking.

When criticized for the declining growth of the economy, the government has on several occasions produced counter-facts from other sources of non-traditional indicators/statistics like the MUDRA, Foreign Direct Investment, Jan Dhan Yojana, GST, etc. Through these indicators, it has been shown that the number of beneficiaries who actually benefited from the flagship schemes have increased, and hence have contributed to the growth of the country. Therefore, all available and comparative data sources must be incorporated while making any argument or perspective.

Due to a perceived lag in decadal Census data and the periodicity accrued due to it, a credibility crisis of data was also experienced in the mid-to-late 1990s. As a result, the interim reform mechanism for statistics came with the establishment of the NSC in the year 2000. Although the Census remains the most credible and rich source of information for almost all experts, its reading, understanding, analysis, and reporting presents changes as per convenience.

Instead of organizing hackathons and competitions to crack big data, etc., the focus must be on making the statistical architecture more open and credible. This is because official data is used primarily by researchers and policymakers, and hence a sense of trust and confidence must be built between the two so that experts/specialists committed to the cause of harnessing official data for the greater good are effectively utilized by the government. This must not be done by simply outsourcing the survey requirements to some other government agency, but instead, new dedicated private professional organizations must be handheld to develop their potential at par with international standards to cater to the new economy in India and abroad. Only then, India would lead by example, or become the “*Vishwa Guru*”. The Urban Frame Survey, Village Frame, etc. must be upgraded for real-time information and made more dynamic, as they are used time and again. There must be a convergence of the programs and schemes of the ministries, and space application centers for better coordination of geo-tagging of data, data visualization and optimum resource utilization, so that the statisticians, economists and policymakers can comprehend the Spatial Economics for producing professional data and planned smart development.

The coming of the era of Industry 4.0, AI, blockchain and the gig economy has further pushed for the need for new forms of data. In the business-as-usual scenario, it will be difficult to adapt to the needs of the changing methodology, and hence there is a need to revamp the entire gamut of data estimation.

On several occasions in India, the economic changes are attributed to the business or seasons or structural or simply natural or cyclical factors. This inability to acknowledge the real reasons behind the changes leads to speculation and loss of trust in the economy and government.

The surveys of NSO being the central sample also provide for and encourage state governments to conduct state samples by DES, to arrive at pooled sample data with a higher sample size for robust local-level estimates. This pooled data is very crucial and the need of the hour for local economic planning, implementation, monitoring and development. But there is hardly any volition from the DES to conduct state samples and hence the local-level estimates lag in the absence of such data.

Conclusions and Way Forward

The government departments and programs acknowledge and explain that there are possibilities of over-reporting at the local levels, which suggests that the data entry processes have been fabricated on a very large scale leading to false data reporting in the past and thus needs to be carefully checked in future. The programs and schemes also focus on timely achievement; therefore, they require stringent measures to ensure that the data provided at the local and state level on the MIS database must not suffer from false reporting and that the credibility of these important administrative statistics is restored. This is because ICT will be extensively used in the days to come with the requirements of new sources of data, for example, payroll data, night lights data, GIS data, mobile phones, and big data.

In this situation, the limitations in capturing the new sectors of the gig economy and in the sectoral level data collection as well as addressing the multiple sources of structural issues becomes imperative.

The commendable contribution of MoSPI in producing the Swachh Survekshan 2016 to understand the impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission must be replicated for generating each of the various other datasets in a similar proactive fashion. While several outcomes of the Swachh Survekshan can be contested, the timeliness adhered to understanding the implications of the government scheme cannot be underrated. Only when such a proactive approach of MoSPI is visible, then the program implementation part exhibit vibrancy and dynamism.

The MIS data has taken cognizance of these issues and made several recommendations for improvements in monitoring such as maintaining names, initiatives using ICT technology with information on the geographical location and so on. However, the actual usage of these along with time-bound reporting happens to be very low. While the role of ICT has helped to improve the system for information collection and monitoring, the massive scale at which this technology has to be used in a time-bound manner, especially in rural areas remains a challenge, along with concerns of professional data entry and ensuring quality.

The administrative/MIS database which provides periodic real-time information using ICT by every local level unit can be a very useful, effective, economical and sustainable source of information. The real-time information from MIS should be effectively used and applied to the geographic information system to analyze spatial information. It can also provide visualization to GPs which can be very useful for administrative purposes, spatial and micro-planning, and local resource management.

While the proposed upgradation of MIS to enable reporting is a step forward; past experiences with the information based on MIS provided by local levels raise a question on 'reliability' and suggest that focus is needed to ensure trust in this database maintained by the government offices. In the absence of trust, economic transactions in society are adversely impacted, ultimately yielding to a slowdown of economic activity, and eventually, stagnation (Singh, 2019).

The census-NPR debate, for instance, has become intertwined with other controversies over official Government data. This has portrayed the present decade as disastrous for public data in India and warrants an urgent response to uphold the integrity and credibility of our statistical institutions (Kumar & Mohanan, 2020). Therefore, India must strengthen the credibility of its national statistical system, and its plans to centralize the data in the MoSPI must be an informed and cautious exercise, as it can become a hurdle for its quick and timely release for public research and debate (Kundu, 2019).

There is an immediate need to strengthen and empower the Gram Panchayats, Blocks, and Districts with sufficient infrastructure, capacity building and resources for periodic, quality and sustainable data reporting and maintaining a reliable database at par with the international level and standards, MoSPI can certainly play a holistic role here.

Thus, more emphasis is needed on building processes and institutions at the very grassroots levels to ensure no leakages and act as a modern digital database for

evidence-based policymaking and timely achievement of program output ensuring accountability and transparency. Constant monitoring and evaluation, as well as scrutiny and validation from various available official data sources at various disaggregated levels, is necessary along with village/district level studies on best practices.

Special attention for effective inclusion in implementation is needed towards backward districts, regions, and hamlets of marginalized sections within villages. The desired collective behavioral change also requires a change in the social climate and necessitates 'behavior change' within the government up to the local levels to create the enabling ecosystem. The implementation processes need to be packed up, raised civic conscience needs to be converted into a public movement and sustained for years ahead. The delay in work execution along with financial delays requires to be addressed immediately with effective monitoring and scrutiny with the help of MoSPI.

Since the Indian statistical system is severely underfunded and understaffed, large investments in terms of financial and human resources are urgently needed to strengthen the system (Chandrashekhar, 2019). These investments become pertinent to bring to reality the Prime Minister's vision for a digital India. In this new digital India, the way data is collected, the way it is analyzed, and the way it is consumed needs serious reassessment. The need is to broaden the scope beyond its traditional role of keeping account of economic activity in the economy and instead focus on providing real-time business intelligence for informed policymaking. Having a common data architecture, based on accepted definitions, for every sector is important as it helps in reducing the cost of data collection, and facilitates informed and precise policy action to reach the targeted population.

Since there are so many changes and reform measures being undertaken in the country, we propose holding the census every five years instead of the present decadal system, as it also provides migration data at the district and town level (Kumar & Mohanan, 2020).

However, sufficient data is not available on the living arrangements of the migrants, and their economic or occupational engagements, especially at city levels. (Mohanan & Kumar, 2020). The Census does provide aggregated numbers with limited qualitative dimensions, but we do not have any intercensal surveys to project the census migration data before the next census (Mohanan and Kumar, 2020). Organizing such an intercensal survey, as done in many countries, can also mitigate this deficiency in the Indian data system to a large extent (Kumar & Mohanan, 2020). It will keep the information database updated and vibrant. Proper policy planning and decision-making can be ensured through this change.

Further, we recommend consistency in the calculation of the GDP data. The methodology adopted in the calculation of the data must be clarified and made coherent to avoid confusion by often changing the base years in determining the growth challenges and prospects of the country. Equally important for the government is to be punctual in the release of the data. It has been proposed that the government make a prior announcement of the timeline of the release of the data, and more importantly stick to it, which will help maintain its sanctity (Sen,

2020). This will demonstrate its commitment to facilitating appropriate measures for the benefit of the citizens through its various schemes.

The road to improving the credibility of official statistics would take a long time with a broad consensus that much will depend on effective leadership. Disentangling the overlapping functions of various statistical bodies and creating uniformity and cohesiveness in the duties and responsibilities along with empowering the NSC are the best steps forward to ensure credible, accessible, and legible economic statistics. MoSPI needs to regain and retain the authority over-collection and storage of data from the local level, and not let it become overly spread out.

The system of official economic statistics in India now faces the challenge of adapting to Information and Communication Technology. The paper thus emphasizes the role of strengthening real-time and Management Information Systems data to enable evidence-based policymaking and planning and realize the vision of 'New India' and a US\$ 5 trillion economy.

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Bridging Women, Peace & Security with Feminist Foreign Policy

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Abstract

The introduction of feminism as an ideology in the study of international relations and foreign policy seeks to challenge the notions of power, security, conflict, and sovereignty, which are traditionally masculine. Theorizing the importance of peace, security, and gender justice for the execution of feminist foreign policy requires questioning stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity in relation to significant sites of power and leadership, the dismantling of gender binaries that are present in states' international behavior, the focus on women as a universal category, and the reproduction of intersectional relations in foreign policy practice. In light of this, this paper tries to follow up with some recent updates and deliberations as regards FFP.

Keywords: Feminism, Foreign Policy, International Relations, Peace & Conflict, Security.

Today there is ample data and evidence to establish and sustain the fact that women's inclusion in peace negotiations and higher levels of gender equality are associated with a lower propensity for conflict as well as lasting peace agreements that are less likely to fail. Further analysis of prior peace processes suggests that women's participation increases the likelihood of an agreement because women often take a "collaborative approach" to peacemaking and organize across cultural and sectarian divides. Women's central roles in many families and communities afford them a unique vantage point to recognize unusual patterns of behavior and signs of impending conflicts, such as arms mobilization and weapons catching.

There is also the increasing role and significance of women in violence prevention efforts at the local level. Edit Schlaffer, Founder, and Chair of Women without Borders remarked "For a long time, we looked to the political elite for

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answers. Over time, however, it became very clear that civil society not only better understands these problems, local-level stakeholders also have the access and reach to address these challenges.”

Evidence also indicates that incorporating women in strategies to counter violent extremism can help to mitigate radicalization as the antiterrorism messages can be effectively disseminated throughout families and communities by women, since they are better placed to challenge extremist narratives in homes, schools, and social environments, and have influence among youth populations.

For instance, in the Rwandan case, despite being a patriarchal society that witnessed one of the most devastating genocides in the world, women played a crucial role in national healing and reconciliation. In war-stricken societies, there is a heightened need for emotional reassurance. Women were not just involved in helping male members cope with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) after the War but also were pivotal and apparently the most important factor in persuading the men to shun violent insurgency and return to family life, thereby disentangling male members from uprising by employing various strategies.

Further research shows that an approach— which incorporates the concerns of diverse demographics (e.g., religious, ethnic, and cultural groups) affected by a conflict and with an interest in its resolution—increases the prospects of long-term stability.

UN Resolutions & Aftermath

There were 10 other resolutions that together covered a whole gamut of concerns and made women’s peace and security a global agenda. Women’s inclusion will improve the chances of attaining viable and sustainable peace. There must be zero tolerance for all forms of gender violence. Together they refer to the global codification of principles that underlie dignity, rights, and bodily integrity for women.

Resolution 1325 began a series of conversations that enabled us to interrogate the ethnocentric, anthropocentric, and androcentric notions of security. It is significant as it is a bottom-up resolution. It emerged from the experience of women’s activism at the grassroots level because of the lobbyism of NGOs and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

This resolution was initiated by the global South when Namibia was chairing the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Anwarul Chowdhury from Bangladesh was the prime mover of Resolution 1325. This Resolution 1325 originated from the aspiration of the global south to recognize women’s role in conflict transformation and its differential impact on women in conflict.

It was a major paradigm shift in the understanding of security and an expansive notion of building peace. Subsequently, Resolution 1325 was followed by the exhortation of the Beijing platform which contained an entire chapter on peace and security, war’s impact on women, and sexual violence seen in the civil war in

South Africa, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Thus, it is a process of democracy, representation, and participation.

Two ends of the spectrum of Resolution 1325 are represented in Resolution 2467 which was adopted in 2019, and it has a survivor-centric approach to conflict-related sexual violence.

Resolution 2558 adopted in 2020 affirms the link between development, peace, human rights, and security which are mutually enforceable. So, 1325 is a continuous work, that emphasizes the fact that peacebuilding is a verb and not a noun, it depends on everyday resistances and daily mutinies of women.

Conceptualization has evolved as perceptions changed. Jo Vellacott started her career as an air engine mechanic and later became an air engineer during the Second World War and later became a pacifist. In her biography, “Living and Learning in Peace and War”, she mentioned that the words women, peace, and power, do not speak to each other as the word women sounded very innocuous, sickish, and pinkish, whereas the word power has a scarlet and crimson shield. Later, she realized that the problem lay with the spectacles of the world, and hence, one must change one’s perceptions (read lens) to enrich one’s understanding. The traditional view of women as peacemakers needs interrogation. They are active participants in opposing injustice, war, militarism, and other forms of violence. For instance, Women in Black is an international network of women who resist war with the feminist understanding that male violence against women in domestic life and in the community, in times of peace and in times of war, are interrelated, i.e., violence is used as a means of controlling women. Peace accompanied by justice is the call of the day.

Rosa Parks, the American activist in the civil rights movement, asserted her right to human dignity, refusing to get off the bus which was segregated in 1955 in Alabama. She was glued to her dignity, lit the fuse for social venom, and today the slogan goes that Rosa sat so that Martin (read Martin Luther King, Jr.) could walk (Walk to Freedom, June 1963); Martin walked so that Obama (read Barack Obama) could run (for US Presidency).

Urvashi Butalia, an Indian feminist scholar and activist wrote an evocative article in which she said that democracy is saved by our women. Women’s peace can be in the resistance, therefore the question is: are these women making peace, or are they changing the discourse on security? Feminists argue that the state’s behavior of seeking security is legitimized by its association with certain types of hegemonic masculinity and in the strategic language of foreign policy and defense discourse.

Noted Pakistani economist Mahbub-ul-Haque’s evocative articulation of human security in Human Development Report (1994) said that women’s security is a child who did not die, and disease did not spread, ethnic tension that did not explode, a dissidence that was not silenced and the human spirit that was not crushed. Sara Ruddick, a feminist philosopher, and author of the book *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (1989) remarked that the rational calculus, the

self-interested language of realism, and the power group lie in the philosophy of connectedness. Feminist voices as counter-hegemonic politics exist where the notions of power are inverted. Language like collateral damage equates to real human beings. The international and domestic spheres are connected. Livelihood, food security, the quality of living are important. Non-traditional security expands beyond traditional barriers. Even when our leaders vouch to protect their people and the larger international community along with the United Nations puts security, peace, and protection of human rights on its forefront, somewhere down the line the repetition of such crimes often occurs leaving to question the credibility of policies that are being upheld to alleviate human rights abuses are rather aggravating it. In such instances, the question of why women continue to face the brunt of any war or conflict despite ardent support for their protection leaves us to wonder about the credibility of equal representation of all communities.

Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) as the Way Forward

The International Relations (IR) “hegemony” held by realism was suggested to be deeply gendered, with “its assumptions about the way the world is divided—inside-out, strong-weak, rich-poor, peace-war, men-women” creating false dichotomies and inherently privileging some perspectives over others. According to Feminist IR, these dichotomies carried over into states themselves, meaning developed countries were masculine, strong, rich, and peaceful while developing countries were weak, poor, conflict-ridden, and feminine.

This lack of sensitivity pushes us to question the credibility of existing policies and laws that benchmark the protection of all people. And if men decide for women, make laws, and prevent them from deciding for their own community, oppression will continue to spread. It is for this minute logic, which owing to a gender-sensitive perspective to understanding international relations and formulating foreign policy that is sensitive to women, irrespective of borders is extremely necessary.

The development of society and the liberal understanding of gender roles has put much attention on the debate of security and policy being reserved for just men in modern times, further reinstating existing beliefs of conflict and later peace being a man's domain. Pedagogues of international security have argued that women were always considered too fragile and peaceful to be a part of armed combat. Women's peaceful character is attributed to either nature or nurture and the “nature versus culture” debate helps draw much clarity on why women were seen as frontiers of peace and unimaginable in times of conflict even when they were facing the brunt of it.

FFP provides a powerful lens through which we can counter the violent global systems of power, i.e., patriarchy, racism, cultural nationalism, imperialism, and militarism that leave most of the population in a perpetual state of vulnerability and despair. This is because IR has largely been a deeply masculine field, with a relative paucity of women IR theorists and practitioners.

FFP is the policy of a state that defines its interactions with other states and movements in a manner that prioritizes gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalized groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision and seeks through its implementation to disrupt patriarchal and male-dominated power structures across all of its levers of influence (aid, trade, defense, and diplomacy), informed by the voices of feminist activists, groups and movements. This means a foreign policy that is not only by women or for women but goes further, taking a nonbinary, gendered lens that recognizes and seeks to correct for historically patriarchal and often racist and/or neo-colonialist imbalances of power as they play out on the world stage.

There is a sense of consensus that FFP is surely more than gender parity as well as more than just attempts to make women visible in IR since this approach fails to realize and challenge those underlying patriarchal systems that fuel violence and conflict. It is the level of influence that women can assert on the process that makes a difference, not merely by their headcount.

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A Detailed Study On Financial Inclusion of the Gond Tribes in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Financial inclusion is a critical component of inclusive growth. It is a much-needed intervention for managing financial vulnerabilities, increasing economic resilience by accelerating growth and reducing poverty. Scheduled tribes are the poorest people in India, with 63.68% of Scheduled Tribe households being financially excluded. This study analyses the level of financial inclusion among tribal households in Gondinagar in terms of financial service usage and access, as well as financial awareness. People who live in Gondinagar are members of the Gond community, which is classified as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) and is located in the semi-urban area of the Coimbatore district. Primary data on education, income, expenditure and savings patterns, awareness and use of banking and other financial services were collected from all tribal households of Gondinagar using a structured questionnaire. The findings reveal that although the majority (80.95%) of tribal households had at least one bank account that was mainly opened for savings purpose and to receive pregnancy benefits, around half (53.92%) of those accounts were inactive. Most of the community members were unable to save any money since their daily average household income has been lower than the BPL limit. Female account holders made up around 66.44% of the total bank accounts, which can be attributed to the government's pregnancy benefit scheme. Despite the strong presence of financial institutions in close proximity to the Gond community, the Gond tribes are found to be financially excluded due to a lack of consistent income, insufficient savings, poor financial awareness, and a low level of education. Simplification of financial assistance and the banking system will enable the tribal population, particularly women, to participate in formal institutions as a means of achieving economic growth.

Keywords: Financial Inclusion; Scheduled Tribes; Financial Awareness; Household Income

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Introduction

Financial inclusion is a critical component of inclusive growth (Muthuseshan and Mallan, 2020). The Committee on Financial Inclusion defined financial inclusion as *the process of ensuring access to financial services, and timely and adequate credit where needed by vulnerable groups such as weaker sections and low-income groups at an affordable cost* (Government of India, 2008). It aids marginalized and low-income groups in having open, safe, secure, and affordable access to various financial products (Gautam and Kumar, 2019) thereby increasing their income, building wealth, and managing risks (Ratnawati, 2020). Additionally, financial inclusion plays a vital role in reducing extreme poverty and income inequality (The World Bank, 2020; Omar and Inaba, 2020).

Addressing poverty in India immediately takes precedence because it is a generational issue, that perpetuates itself and traps people in poverty unless external interventions are used to break the cycle (Pagani, 2007). The Scheduled Tribes constitute 8.6% of the country's population and 11.3% of the total rural population, according to the Census report in 2011. They have the highest rate of poverty (45.9%) (IIPS and ICF, 2017). In other words, Scheduled Tribes comprise about one-sixth of all people living in multidimensional poverty (UNDP and OPHI, 2021). According to the poverty estimates, the percentage of ST people living below the poverty line in 2011-12 was 45.3% in rural areas and 24.1% in urban areas, compared to 25.7% of persons in rural areas and 13.7% of persons in urban areas below the poverty line for the entire population. A substantial disconnect is found between the tribal population and the financial system globally. Even in a developed country like the United States, the Native American tribes have no proper accessibility to financial institutions such as banks, credit unions, and other commercial lenders (Guedel and Colbert, 2016).

In India, nearly half of the poor population lacks access to the formal financial sector (Bhattacharjee, 2014; Rajeev, 2015). Hence, it is necessary to focus on the financial inclusion of the tribal population for their economic security. To comprehend the reach of financial inclusion, it is necessary to examine its impact at the grassroots level in underdeveloped regions like Gondinagar, the chosen study area. Therefore, this paper discusses the variety of social and economic factors that influence this tribal community's decision to avail of financial services.

Literature Review

1) Access to Formal Finance and Resilience to Financial Shocks

The World Bank's "The Findex Database 2021" underscores that formal financial access strengthens households and businesses, enabling them to withstand financial shocks more effectively. This aligns with observations from studies conducted across regions, suggesting that those with access to formal finance are better equipped to handle economic uncertainties. However, despite having bank accounts, the Gond community in the Coimbatore District faces barriers in utilizing formal credit, which raises questions about the efficacy of the existing financial services.

2) Women's Empowerment and Economic Development

The World Bank's report also highlights that incorporating women into formal finance enhances their empowerment and contributes to economic development. By promoting gender-inclusive financial practices, women can actively participate in economic activities and decision-making processes. This insight holds relevance for the Gond tribes, as policies promoting financial inclusion should consider the specific needs and opportunities of women within the community.

3) Supply-Side and Demand-Side Factors in Financial Inclusion

K.C. Chakrabarty's (2012) classification of factors influencing financial inclusion highlights both supply-side and demand-side aspects. While supply-side factors such as the availability of financial institutions seem sufficient in the Coimbatore District, the Gond tribes face challenges primarily rooted in demand-side factors. The lack of knowledge and awareness about financial products hinders their utilization, indicating the need for targeted interventions that enhance financial literacy.

4) Financial Knowledge and Mistakes

Research by Calvet et al. (2007, 2009) indicates that low financial knowledge among disadvantaged households often leads to financial mistakes. This resonates with the situation faced by the Gond community, as poor financial awareness may contribute to their hesitance in using formal financial services. Policies and initiatives to improve financial education within the Gond tribes could play a pivotal role in addressing this issue.

5) Illiteracy and Lack of Awareness:

Several studies, including S. Mahendra Dev's work on financial inclusion (2006) and Sudipta Sarkar's study (2022) on tribal households in Purulia district, West Bengal, emphasize the prevalent challenge of limited access to formal credit among small farmers and marginalized groups. This issue is also evident among the Gond community in Coimbatore District. Despite having bank accounts, many individuals in the Gond community refrain from using formal credit due to various reasons. Illiteracy emerges as a common impediment in both regions, hindering effective engagement with financial services. The majority of bank accounts in the Gond tribe and the Purulia district remain inactive after initial government transactions, primarily due to the lack of awareness and understanding of financial products. This shared experience reinforces the critical role of addressing illiteracy and creating accessible financial inclusion strategies that align with the educational background of these communities.

6) Informal Sources of Credit

Fungáčová and Weill's study (2015) on financial inclusion in China emphasizes the prevalence of informal credit sources, such as money lenders and social networks, across BRICS nations. This observation aligns with findings from studies focusing on the Gond tribes, where informal credit mechanisms are commonplace. Understanding the dynamics of these informal systems is crucial for crafting targeted financial inclusion strategies that leverage existing community practices.

Objectives of Study

- To assess the level of financial inclusion among the tribal people of Gondinagar in Coimbatore district.
- To analyze the involvement of women in the financial inclusion process and investigate various factors that influence the ability of tribal people to use formal financial services.

Profile of the Study Area

Gondinagar is a semi-urban area located in the Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, India. People living in Gondinagar are Raj Gonds, an indigenous tribe from Maharashtra, who migrated to Coimbatore several decades ago and settled here. The total population of this community in the study area is 635 members, comprising 46.61% male and 53.39% female population. The population is diverse, encompassing various age groups, educational backgrounds, and occupations. Among the total population, 38.11% are below 18 years old, while 6.61% are aged 60 and above.

Unlike some other tribes in Tamil Nadu, the Gonds do not solely depend on nature for their livelihood. Their traditional occupations include spinning steering wires for trucks, making and selling herbal medicines, and selling dry fruits. Additionally, some community members work as laborers in factories and construction sites.

In terms of facilities, Gondinagar has easy access to a government hospital and a private hospital located seven kilometers away. Financial infrastructure is also readily available nearby, with various commercial banks such as State Bank of India, Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of Baroda, Andhra Bank, ICICI, Axis Bank, Bank of India, HDFC Bank, and Canara Bank functioning within a 3 Km radius from the community. Moreover, a post office is located within 2 Km distance. Previously, there was a Self-Help group operating in this community until the pandemic (2020), after which it ceased to exist.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on intensive fieldwork conducted in Gondinagar, a semi-urban area in the Coimbatore district. A complete enumeration of all tribal households was carried out to examine their financial inclusion status. A structured questionnaire was developed based on a pilot survey, encompassing variables such

as education, employment, income, savings, and access to financial services. Interviews were conducted with approximately 93% of the Gond community, covering 126 households. The collected data was then formatted and prepared for analysis. Univariate analysis followed by cross-tabulation (Chi-square test, Regression, and Correlation) of selected variables was performed.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the Gond community's life experiences, this study employs mixed analysis. Solely relying on quantitative data may not capture all nuances, while a purely qualitative approach may overlook important contextual sensitivities. Hence, in this study, quantitative data is supplemented with qualitative analyses, considering common influencing factors in the lives of the Gond community.

Data Analysis

Socio-Economic Factors: According to the American Psychological Association, socioeconomic factors may reveal inequalities surrounding wealth, education, or status. These background factors may play a significant role in a person's life decisions, such as their career or family choices. (American Psychological Association). Socio-economic factors - Education, Employment, Income, and savings have been examined in the Gondi community to understand the nature of their financial decision.

Education: Table 1 presents the education level of this community. According to PLFS reports, the literacy rate for STs has significantly improved from 47.1% in 2001 to 71.6% in 2021. In comparison, the Gond community's literacy rate stands at 57.26%. The Gross Enrolment Ratio of ST students at the primary and elementary levels has shown marginal improvement since 2015, as reported by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2021-22). This trend is evident in this community, where there is a notably high proportion of enrolment in primary education (i.e., 39.53%) due to free schooling from the Government till Class 12.

However, as per the AISHE report (2018 - 2019), ST students comprise merely 5.5% of the total enrolment at the Undergraduate level, with figures unknown for Postgraduate and Ph.D. programs. In this community, the dropout rate escalates after secondary education due to limited financial resources and inadequate awareness about higher education, with only 1.1% of students opting to pursue Higher education. Common barriers to education in this community encompass a lack of monitoring, financial constraints, remote village location, and challenges related to the medium of language. Furthermore, there exists a noticeable gap in youth literacy rates between STs and the general population.

Table 1: Educational Level

Educational Status	No. of Individuals	Percentage to Total Population
Below 7 years	50	7.87
Primary Education	251	39.53

Secondary Education	68	10.71
Higher Secondary Education	9	1.42
Higher Education	7	1.1
Illiterate	250	39.37
Total	635	100

Employment: Table 2 displays the employment status of individuals in this community, revealing that the total labor force among individuals aged 16 to 64 is 65.04%. The community's labor force participation rate stands at 53.03%, while the Coimbatore district records a rate of 60.44% (Thukral, 2022). Comparatively, the Gond community's participation rate is slightly lower than the 56.3% rate observed among Indian urban ST populations. Notably, a moderate gap exists between the Tribal population's Labor Force Participation rate and the combined rate for all categories, recorded at 57.8% in 2019-20 (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2021-22).

In this community, the total female labor force constitutes 66.67% of the female population. Among these, only 22.57% are employed as housemaids or factory workers, while the remaining 77.43% are homemakers. The total male labor force makes up 63.18% of the male population, with 86.1% of them being employed. These figures underscore the gender-based employment disparity within the community. Traditionally, land holds great significance as the nucleus of tribal productivity, symbolizing both prosperity and social status. However, the Gond tribes, having migrated from Maharashtra, rely on alternative sources of employment and engage in fewer agricultural activities compared to other tribal regions. This could contribute to their stagnant employability and lower Usual Principal Status. Moreover, the community's employment status remains notably low due to the absence of regular, well-paying jobs and comprehensive social security.

Table 2: Types of Employment

Type of Employment	No. of Individuals	Percentage to Total Employed Labour Force
Self - Employed	160	73.06
Daily wage earners	29	13.24
Housemaids	17	7.76
Salaried Workers	11	5.02
Volunteering and social service	2	0.91
Total	219	100

Income: Table 3 presents the daily income distribution of individuals within this community, ranging from Rs. 80 to Rs. 650. The average daily income stands at Rs.292, with an average family size of 5 members, implying a mean income of

Rs.58.4 per person per day. 34.33% of the total population reports having some daily income. However, the remaining 65.67% which includes children (below 16 years), the elderly (above 64 years), and the unemployed, have no daily income. Consequently, 65.67% of the total population, nearly 2/3rd of the community, falls under the dependent population category. This high dependency reduces the financial security of the community.

Table 3: Daily Income of Individuals

Daily Individual Income	Frequency	Percentage
Up to Rs. 200	71	32.6
Rs. 201 - Rs. 400	119	54.6
Rs. 401 - Rs. 650	28	12.8

Savings: From the data presented in Table 3, it is evident that the daily income within this community is substantially low. Such low-income levels result in a decreased demand for financial services, especially saving products. This trend is reflected in the savings habits of the households in this community. As shown in Table 4, out of the 126 households, nearly 90% were unable to save any amount. Additionally, the number of dependents in these households is high. Some respondents even disclosed that they had to go to bed on an empty stomach. Hence exploring ways of increasing income emerges as an important priority from this dataset. As poverty levels decrease and households move into higher income brackets, their propensity to save increases, which, in turn, leads to higher demand for financial services both for saving and investment purposes (Reserve Bank of India, 2008).

Table 4: Household Savings per Month

Monthly Household Savings	Frequency	Percentage
No Savings	111	88.1
Rs. 300	1	0.8
Rs. 500	3	2.4
Rs. 1000	9	7.1
Rs. 2000	1	0.8
Rs. 5000	1	0.8
Total	126	100

Access to Banking Services

The first step towards broader financial inclusion is financial access, which aims at one account per adult (The World Bank, 2020). Among the 126 households in the Gond community, approximately 80.95% possess at least one bank account per household, while the remaining 19.05% lack any such account. Common barriers such as licensure laws, minimum capital requirements, limited access to financing, and security concerns contribute to maintaining a certain degree of distance from banking services. Another issue that needs to be addressed is bureaucratic red tape. In India, about 80% of the adult population owned a transaction account (Klapper et al., 2019). However, within the Gond community, only 37.91% of the total adult population had access to at least one bank account, considerably lower than the national average. Among these account holders, 33.56% are male and 66.44% are female.

Reasons for Opening a Bank Account: Among the various reasons for opening a bank account, savings top the list, as 39.6% of accounts were opened with the intention to save. 31.54% of accounts were opened to receive pregnancy benefits, while 15.44% were opened for receiving pension, 6.04% for joining self-help groups (SHGs), 4.70% opened an account for LPG, 2.01% for availing bank loans, and 0.67% opened a bank account for insurance. Despite the fact that 40 accounts were opened with the intention to save, only 15 households were actually able to save some amount. Hence, barriers to savings must be reduced.

Source of Borrowing: In terms of availing of loan facilities, 38.1% of households obtain loans from moneylenders, while 32.5% rely on friends and family. Previously, 6.3% of households availed credit through SHGs, which ceased operations in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, approximately 7.1% of households abstain from borrowing altogether. About 4% of total households have acquired two-wheeler loans from banks directly at showrooms. The remaining 12% of households adopt a diverse approach, borrowing from a combination of banks, moneylenders, friends, family, and SGHs.

Out of the 126 households surveyed, 117 have taken out loans, underscoring the substantial credit demand within this community. However, loans taken from the moneylenders contribute to greater financial strain and unmanageable debt. This further aggravates financial exclusion. A voluntary preference for non-institutional sources stems from the apprehension of loan denials by banks, leading individuals to opt for informal channels. The prevalent dependence on informal borrowing could further burden their responsibilities. Respondents noted that borrowing from friends and family is perceived as a secure and accessible option, a pivotal factor influencing their borrowing decisions.

Table 5: Source of Borrowing

Mode of Borrowing	Frequency	Percentage
Bank and Friends and Family	2	1.6
Bank and Money Lenders	1	0.8
Bank Loan	5	4.0
Friends and Family	41	32.5
Money lender	48	38.1
No borrowing	9	7.1
SHG	8	6.3
SHG and Family and Friends	6	4.8
SHG and Money Lender	6	4.8
Total	126	100.0

Usage Pattern and Financial Awareness

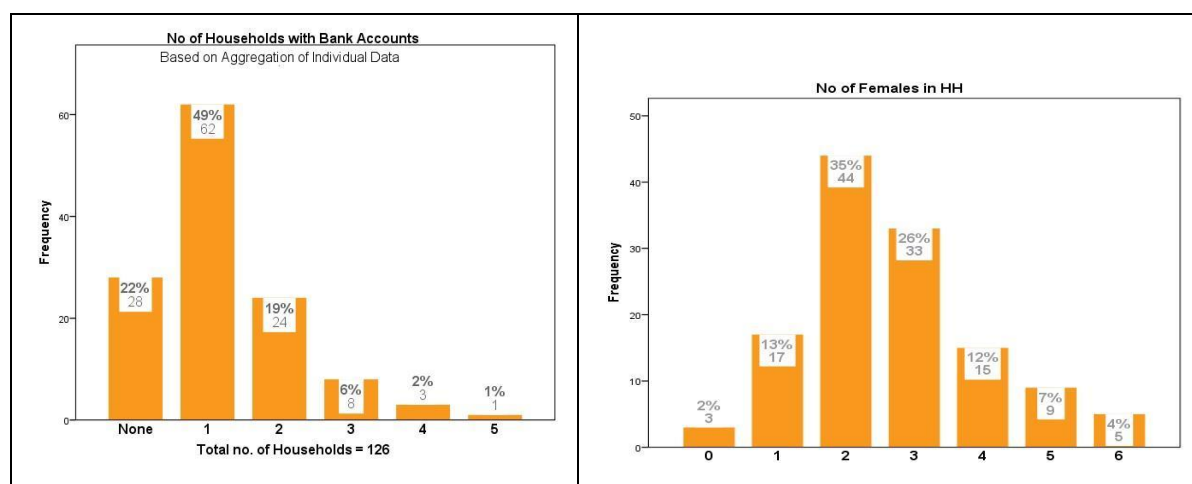
Although 80.95% of households owned a bank account, the usage pattern and awareness about banking services are very poor among the account holders. Not all account holders possessed ATM cum Debit cards, Credit cards, and Cheque books. Only 59.83% of the households with accounts had ATM cards. A mere 1.59% had credit cards, and 7.94% of them reported using UPI payment apps.

According to the Global Findex database report in 2017, India had the highest number of inactive accounts (48% of total account holders) globally, with no transactions conducted in the last 12 months. Regular usage of these accounts and the ability to access other financial services of the bank ensures the complete success of financial inclusion. In this community, 53.92% of account holders had inactive accounts, which is higher than the national average.

Role of Gender in Availing Financial Services

The government of Tamil Nadu launched the Dr. Muthulakshmi Maternity Benefit Scheme in 1987. Under this scheme, impoverished pregnant women are assisted in opening a bank account to receive a financial assistance amount of Rs. 18,000 (this amount has been progressively increased over the years). The presence of a bank account within the household is a prerequisite for household members to access the financial services provided by either the state or the central government. Consequently, 31.54% of the total bank accounts in this community were opened in the name of married females, primarily to receive pregnancy benefits. Therefore, one would expect the number of bank accounts to be associated with no of married females at the household (HH) level.

Figure 2: No of Households with Bank Accounts and No. of Females in Household



Hypothesis 1

H0: There is no association between the number of married females in the households and the number of bank accounts opened for that household.

H1: There is an association between the number of married females in the households and the number of bank accounts opened for that household.

In Table 6, the correlation between the number of Bank accounts in the household and the number of married females in the household is weakly positive at 0.240, though it is significant at the $p = 0.05$ level. Several potential reasons might account for this weak relationship, including a lack of timely communication with local sub-centers or primary health care centers, as well as gaps in administrative communication. In numerous households, women received their pregnancy benefits for their first child on time, but the disbursement of benefits for subsequent children was either delayed or not received.

Table 6: Correlation of Bank Accounts in Households and Number of Females in Households

Correlations			
		Bank Ac in HH	No of Females in HH
Bank Ac in HH	Pearson Correlation	1	.240*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017
	N	98	98
No of Females in HH	Pearson Correlation	.240*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017	
	N	98	126

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: The base 'N' here is only 98 as it excludes households without Bank Accounts and households without females.

Hypothesis 2

H0: There is no association between Gender and Reason for Opening Bank Account

H1: There is an association between Gender and the Reason for Opening Bank Account.

The relationship between gender and the reasons for opening a bank account can be understood by analyzing Table 7. The Pearson Chi-Square value (54.5) is significant at $p = 0.05$. Among the 50 male bank accounts, 37 were opened for saving purposes, while out of the 99 female bank accounts, 47 were opened solely to access pregnancy benefits. Thus, there appears to be an association between gender as a reason for opening a bank account.

Table 7: Cross Tabulation between Reasons for Opening Bank Account and Gender

Reasons for opening Bank Ac ^ Gender Crosstabulation

Count

		Gender		Total
		F	M	
Reasons for opening Bank Ac	Two Wheeler loan	0	1	1
	SHG	7	2	9
	Saving	22	37	59
	Pregnancy	47	0	47
	Pension	15	8	23
	LPG	7	0	7
	Loan	1	1	2
	Insurance	0	1	1
Total		99	50	149

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	54.502 ^a	7	.000
Likelihood Ratio	70.177	7	.000
N of Valid Cases	149		

a. 9 cells (56.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .34.

Hypothesis 3

H0: There is no association between awareness of financial products and the mode of borrowing

H1: There is an association between awareness of financial products and the mode of borrowing.

In Table 8, Pearson's Chi-Square Value (18.56) is significant at $p = 0.05$. There is an association between awareness of financial products and the mode of borrowing. The data suggests that nearly 89% of individuals lack awareness about financial products offered by banks. As a result, they avail of loans from alternative

sources like moneylenders, friends, family, and SHGs. Had the community members been acquainted with PMMY, they could have obtained collateral-free loans at affordable interest rates. Unfortunately, their lack of awareness led them to borrow at exorbitant interest rates from moneylenders. It has been stated that a crucial determinant of an individual’s capacity to make informed financial decisions is their level of financial literacy (Lusardi, 2019). This indicates that financial literacy has become imperative within this community.

Table 8: Cross Tabulation between Mode of Borrowing and Awareness of Financial Products

Mode of Borrowing * Awareness about Financial Products Crosstabulation

Count

		Awareness about Financial Products			Total
		Little	no	yes	
Mode of Borrowing	Availed Bank Loan	3	5	0	8
	Availed Other Loans	3	104	2	109
Total		6	109	2	117

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	18.561 ^a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	9.460	2	.009
N of Valid Cases	117		

a. 3 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .14.

Note: Nine households that have not borrowed were excluded from the above analysis, due to which N = 117.

Factors Influencing the Daily Income of Individuals

It is widely recognized that the number of years of education has a direct and positive impact on income. However, a substantial disparity in income is often observed between males and females. In the following analysis, we attempt to test these observations using daily income, years of education and gender as indicator variables.

H0: Years of education have no significant relationship with daily income.

H0: Gender has no relationship with daily income.

H1: Years of education have a significant relationship with daily income.

H1: Gender has a significant relationship with daily income.

In Table 9, Both Gender and Years of Education are significant. This implies that the relationship between years of education and gender with daily income is significant. By holding the number of years of education constant, we can

comprehend the impact of gender on income. The table indicates that for Gender = 1 (for males), there is an increase of Rs. 174 in daily income relative to females. This discrepancy can be attributed to prevailing cultural norms that restrict women from engaging in work outside the home. Inhabitants of this town hold the belief that the workplace security for women is inadequate. Physically demanding roles are predominantly reserved for men, leading to an elevation in their daily income. Conversely, women are typically confined to employment in factories or as domestic aides. Men, having access to a broader spectrum of occupational opportunities, consequently enjoy higher wages. When we isolate the influence of gender, it becomes evident that the effect of years of education on income is comparatively subdued (yielding a Rs. 5.415 increment in income).

Table 9: Factors Influencing the Daily Income of the Individuals

		Coefficients ^a									
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations		
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	Gender	174.336	18.688	.527	9.329	.000	137.501	211.172	.543	.537	.524
	Years of Education	5.415	1.886	.162	2.871	.004	1.698	9.131	.216	.192	.161
	(Constant)	141.313	16.927		8.349	.000	107.950	174.676			

a. Dependent Variable: Daily_Income

Note: We used Gender as an indicator variable setting Male = 1 and Female = 0, for this regression model.

Findings of the Study

In India around 46.1% of the population is financially excluded (Sharma et al., 2021). While researchers often focus on strategies to encourage the use of financial services among the excluded population, the factors leading to this exclusion are frequently overlooked. As a result, this study investigates the distinct factors contributing to the financial exclusion of a significant portion of households in the Gond community. Our findings reveal that the average daily household income is Rs. 292, supporting an average family size of 5 members. Within this community, individuals are hesitant to engage with financial services due to their entire income being allocated to daily expenses. This hesitancy is further fueled by a fear of approaching banks stemming from a lack of education. Moreover, community members prefer holding onto cash rather than depositing it in financial institutions due to a heightened sense of security.

A core reason cited by the community for not using bank accounts is the absence of savings, attributed to their low income. The monthly average household income for the Gond community is ₹8760, supporting a family of 5 average members. The Rangarajan Committee's 2011-12 report states that the basic monthly consumption expense for urban families of 5 was ₹7,035 (Planning Commission, 2014), without accounting for inflation. However, Gond households spend around ₹7,592 monthly, revealing a considerable gap between income and expenses. This income disparity leads to a situation where most households exhaust their daily

earnings on consumption, resulting in 89% of the population having no savings. (Among the 11% with savings, 40% are literate while 60% are illiterate). This lack of savings further impedes their access to essential financial services like transactions, payments, savings, credit, and insurance.

Although the awareness of bank accounts is widespread, understanding of the services they offer is limited. One instance reveals that only one person had insurance, but its purpose was unclear to them. Furthermore, despite having identity cards, essential documents such as collateral for obtaining credit from banks are lacking. This is due to a lack of assets, creating a scenario where the community relies heavily on borrowing from friends and relatives, with 32.5% of households engaging in this practice.

Government engagement assumes paramount importance in this context. The government's role is evident through direct benefit transfer initiatives such as pregnancy benefits and pensions, which have effectively encouraged bank account openings. Notably, 31.54% of accounts were opened for pregnancy benefits and 15.44% for pensions. Self-help groups (SHGs) offered loans to 6.3% of the population until the pandemic in 2020. However, their absence afterward led to increased reliance on moneylenders charging exorbitant interest rates. Consequently, financial service penetration within this community remains extremely low.

Discussion

Financial inclusion is a key facilitator in achieving 7 out of 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (The World Bank, 2022). The National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI): 2019-2024 has identified factors such as limited surplus income, unsuitable policies, document deficiencies, and lack of financial knowledge that contribute to financial exclusion. In the context of the Gondi community, it's evident that most households lack sufficient surplus income to save. Additionally, despite 80.95% of households having bank accounts, approximately half remain inactive due to banks' inability to cater to their needs, especially concerning small amounts and microfinance services.

Regarding awareness of financial products, nearly 93.65% of households are uninformed. Government initiatives like pensions, scholarships, and insurance schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) and post office schemes like Sukanya Samridhi Account (SSA) and PM CARES for Children Scheme hold potential benefits for this community. Unfortunately, due to a lack of awareness, accessing these schemes proves challenging.

Addressing irregular income patterns involves promoting savings and entrepreneurship. This dual approach can aid financial inclusion in two ways: first, encouraging savings and bank account usage, and second, supporting credit access through MSME schemes when individuals start businesses. The Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana is one such scheme, offering collateral-free loans up to Rs. 10 lakh to micro units or entrepreneurs. This scheme can go a long way in addressing the credit needs of this community since they deviate from the "conventional formal source of credit." In addition, this scheme was strongly advocated for aspiring business owners, particularly women and members of minorities.

Easy access to financial services will benefit the vulnerable sections of society by serving two purposes- productive (uplifting small businesses through microloans) and protective (risk management strategies through savings and insurance) purposes. This understanding emphasizes that financial inclusion is a vital intervention in India to break the cycle of low income, savings, education, healthcare, and productivity among marginalized sections, leading to diminished economic growth. This intervention can enable their inclusion in the financial system and uplift them economically within society.

Recommendations and Suggestions

In the limelight, it is necessary for this community to be financially integrated. There must be a focus on creating awareness and educating people about financial services. An institution like the National Centre for Financial Education was established with the vision to create a financially aware and empowered India. It centers on educating people about financial services through various campaigns. Such campaigns should be extensively promoted in this community to spread awareness about microfinance, post office schemes, banking facilities and other essential information regarding financial literacy.

Post offices are more effective in handling small amounts and small savings compared to regular banks and other financial institutions, such as commercial banks, RRBs, and NABARD. Post offices are known for their allied financial services in India, including micro-savings and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) launched by the Indian Government in FY2018-19. The IPPB provides people access to a formal financial system through door-to-door banking services conducted by postmen. This payment bank is particularly suitable for this community due to its advantages over regular banks. It doesn't charge fees on cash deposits and withdrawals and offers additional facilities like linkage to other financial products such as life insurance, general insurance, etc. Given its government ownership, it's more likely to gain the trust of the people. However, these payment banks do not provide credit and loan facilities to account holders. If this payment bank is permitted to offer small loans and advances through door-to-door services, it could effectively help individuals break away from the clutches of moneylenders. Additionally, restarting Self-Help Groups (SHGs) could promote credit lending at reasonable interest rates. Although SHGs had previously proven successful in this community, they ceased functioning due to COVID-19.

The community's self-employment rate is 72.72%, indicating a keen interest in entrepreneurship and a desire for economic independence. Consequently, various government policies aimed at imparting skills and providing necessary resources for initiating businesses should be made accessible to them. Moreover, only 22.57% of the total female labor force is employed, suggesting that women either don't prefer or aren't allowed to work outside due to cultural restrictions. Skills could be provided to these women, and the government could support them in establishing cottage industries within the community, resulting in increased female employment. With an average population age of 25.54, the community has a youthful demographic. This presents an opportunity to create numerous jobs by teaching them entrepreneurship

skills. The central government has proposed schemes like the Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana, which offers entrepreneurship education, training, and a support network.

Overall, a combination of microfinance facilities from post offices and self-help groups, awareness about financial products and literacy, imparting skills for entrepreneurship development, and establishing cottage industries can enhance the income and savings of the community. This will subsequently boost the utilization of financial services, ensuring the financial inclusion of the community.

Conclusion

Financial inclusion is a widely discussed and debated topic across the world. The World Bank, the United Nations, and Governments aim to integrate people into the formal financial system, providing easy access to various financial products and services. Among other things, poverty is a major issue in India, and financial inclusion is a critical enabler for poverty reduction. When poverty is alleviated, income inequality is also alleviated. As a result, the economy of the country will grow. Hence the central bank, the Union, and state governments have placed such a high value on it.

Merely having access to a bank account without understanding its purpose and benefits will not suffice. To reach conclusive evidence about the financial inclusivity of the region, research must be conducted by collecting and analyzing data on occupation regularity, daily and monthly income, savings, source of borrowing, risk protection, population literacy, bank account maintenance, awareness of financial products, reasons for opening those bank accounts, and factors influencing financial decisions. Only through such considerations can we ascertain whether the region requires financial literacy or needs to stabilize its income.

Hence, it is clear from the above research that our top priority is to find new ways to increase income for this community. We must devise a differentiated strategy in which those with insufficient income are first trained and coached to increase their income, while those with a steady income are encouraged to save, accumulate, build small capital, and borrow. There are a variety of options available to increase their incomes based on their occupations, and these possibilities can be explored through further research. Simplification of financial assistance and banking systems, combined with tailored financial literacy programs for the people, will undoubtedly encourage tribal people, particularly women, to participate in formal institutions as a means of achieving economic growth.

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**Women's Groups and Political Participation:
*The Role of Jeevika in Local Governance Participation***

Sidhant Kumar¹

Abstract

Existing studies highlight the importance of resources, bargaining power, household autonomy, and gender-biased norms in women's political participation. However, it is found through the study that these women remain mere token figures as the male members of the household contest elections and wield decision-making power in the PRIs. This study examines the women's groups formed under Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project (or Jeevika), a community-driven poverty reduction program to improve women's political participation. Women in Jeevika are involved in activities such as SHGs, opening retail businesses, cattle rearing, small-scale production units, etc. Through interviews with 20 Jeevika women of the Siwan district of Bihar, the study argues that women's groups like Jeevika are important in women's political participation. Three mechanisms of women's groups were identified that led to women's political participation; firstly, they led them to interact with women of the neighborhood under the Jeevika groups, producing social capital and women's networks. Secondly, several Jeevika women went on to contest elections in local government bodies due to the close-knit networks of women, and finally, women from lower castes mostly participated in the Jeevika groups. The findings contribute to our understanding of how women's groups influence political participation and underpin women's contestation in PRI elections. The study has implications for policy-making as it becomes imperative to form women's groups that empower them to participate.

Keywords: Political Participation, Panchayati Raj, Gender, Elections, Jeevika.

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Introduction

Having women in local government bodies significantly influence the type of public services delivered. Local government bodies invest more in goods relevant to women's needs, for instance, water and roads, when a woman heads it (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). Most importantly, women's political representation in local government bodies is also instrumental in reporting violence against women (Iyer et al., 2012).

Despite the proven benefits of women's representation in local government bodies, women's political participation has declined. According to the World Values Survey Wave Five, women are 3.5 % less likely to vote and 10 percent less likely to participate in politics in between elections than men. Primarily in Bihar, the strength of women legislators in Bihar's legislative assembly has been declining and is currently the lowest since the last three legislative assemblies.

At the local level, high levels of women's low political participation have been remedied through political quotas in recent decades. Major flaws still exist in whether political quotas have been instrumental in ensuring women's political participation in sub-national units like Bihar. For instance, during the fieldwork for this study, it was found that most women's quota positions are hijacked by male household members who act as the *de facto* mukhiyas or sarpanches. While elected women *mukhiyas and sarpanches* were reduced to token figures.

This study assesses the role of women's groups in facilitating women's political participation in India. However, measures used by current literature are narrow, including metrics like voter turnouts, electoral contestation, and party membership. This study takes an expansive understanding of political participation and complements the traditional metrics by including women's civic meetings, laying claims over public delivery of services, and lower-caste mobilization. Using the sub-national case of Bihar as a case study, primary data was collected during a month's fieldwork, including interviews with 20 Jeevika women, *mukhiyas*, and *sarpanches* of the Mairwa and Nautan block of Siwan district.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 briefly reviews related literature and background on women's political participation and conceptualizes the role of women's groups in political participation. Section 3 situates the women's political participation in the sub-national context of Bihar. Section 4 discusses the Jeevika scheme, data, and methods used in the paper, while section 5 presents the findings on the impact of women's groups on outcomes related to women's political participation. Section 6 concludes.

Conceptualising Women's Groups and Political Participation

In the extant literature on women's political participation, economic heft that brings bargaining power (Burns et al., 2001), household autonomy (Chibber, 2002), and gender-biased norms (Brule & Gaikwad, 2021) influence women's political participation. The main contention of this research is that despite political quotas,

women are not equally placed to be able to avail the benefits of quotas in PRIs. Therefore, economic resources, individual identity, and gender norms matter. In particular, Chibber (2002) argues that those women who have an identity that is independent of the household are likely to avail the opportunity of quotas in local bodies' elections.

Why Women's Groups?

Women's groups have been widely studied in terms of their consequences on the economic empowerment of women and women's healthcare—including maternal health benefits (Saha et al., 2013; Desai and Joshi, 2014). In the rural context of the panchayat, women's groups such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Aasha, and Anganwadi women have also been leveraged by government and non-governmental organizations to facilitate and deliver health and nutrition benefits to the residents. However, the extant literature has overlooked the role of women's groups in political participation. This paper proposes the critical role of women's groups in influencing women's political participation.

According to Kumar et al. (2019), the concept of women's groups such as SHGs can be employed to illuminate women's political participation because women's SHGs provide mobility and communication to women that are instrumental for their awareness about government schemes and claiming rights. The measures used by Kumar et al. (2019) include indicators of 'whether the respondent voted in the last election and whether she participated in the *gram sabha* or the *mahila* (women's) *gram sabha*.' Secondly, Kumar et al. study the awareness and utilization of various government entitlement schemes targeted at households, women, and children among women's groups to measure women's political participation.

Recent research on women's groups has shown that women's groups help women to mobilize collectively, which has implications for social capital, influencing women's political participation (Sanyal, 2009; Prillaman, 2021).

In contrast to Kumar et al. (2019), Prillaman (2021) takes an expansive understanding of political participation. Prillaman defines political participation as how citizens interact with the state. In her analysis, citizen interaction is measured through 'attending a village assembly meeting, contacting a local elected official, making claims for services, campaigning, and attending party meetings.'

A key insight from these analyses is that they underpin the indirect consequences of women's groups on women's political participation. Curiously though, the above studies on women's groups and political participation control for the caste of the respondents. In other words, the caste of women respondents does not fit into their analysis. During the fieldwork, caste emerged as an important variable in understanding women's political participation. This paper attempts to humbly incorporate caste in the literature on women's groups and political participation thereby contributing to the literature.

In this paper, I will build on Prillaman's (2021) suggestion that political participation involves different ways of interacting with the state. In addition, this paper uses indicators including whether the women contested in the Panchayati Raj elections and whether they are affiliated with any political outfit.

Women's Political Participation in Bihar

Before we take the plunge into the findings, women's political participation in Bihar is in order. Firstly, women legislators in the Bihar Assembly elections is declining. Figure 1 shows that the number of women MLAs in the 2020 Bihar Legislative Assembly (BLA) stands at 26. The present strength of women legislators in the 2020 BLA is lower than the previous two BLA of 2015 and 2010, where women representatives stood at 28 and 32, respectively.

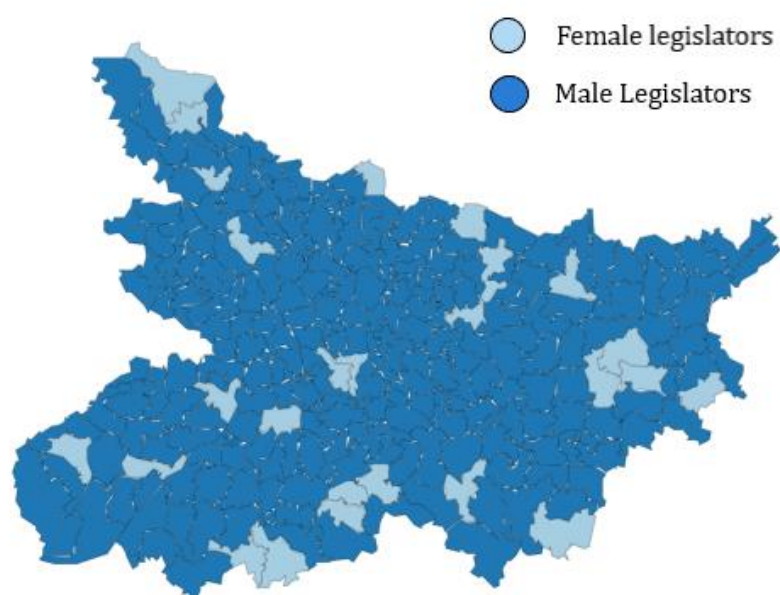


Figure 1: Winner by gender in the 2020 Bihar Assembly Elections, Source: Lok Dhaba Trivedi Centre for Political Dataset (TCPD)

Secondly, the voter turnout for women voters has witnessed an increasing trend, as shown in Figure 2. Women's voter turnout has even surpassed the male voter turnout and the total turnout percentage. Figure 2 shows that women's voter turnout stood at 60%, which was higher than males. It is considered that women-led developmental schemes by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar were the main reasons for the higher female voter turnouts (Kumar 2020).

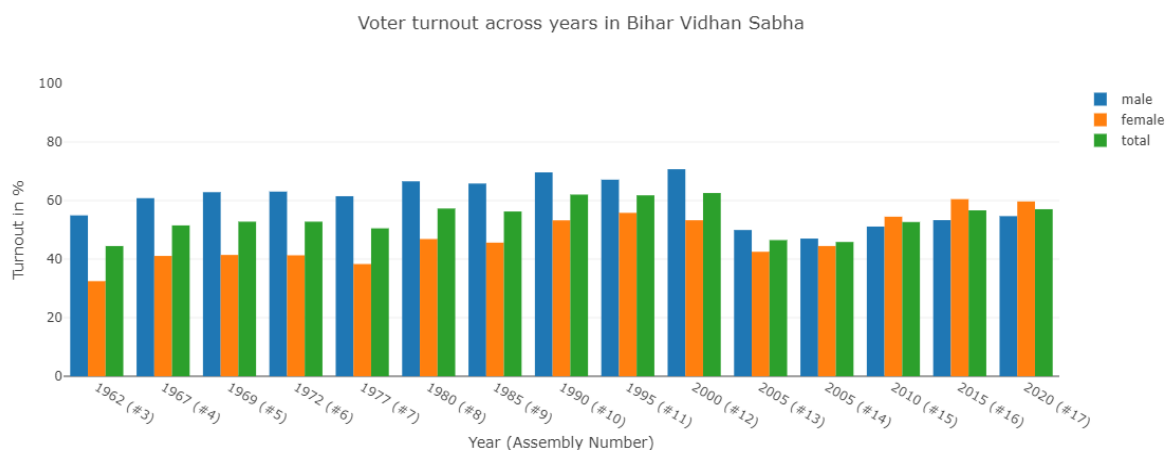


Figure 2: Voter turnout for the 2020 Bihar Assembly Elections, Source: Lok Dhaba, TCPD

Meanwhile, in the PRIs, women enjoy a 50% reservation across different positions, including positions from *mukhiyas* to ward members. The reservation was brought through the 73rd Amendment Act and was implemented in Bihar under Nitish Kumar. During the field visit, PRI women position holders were unavailable for meetings because their husbands had taken up the *de facto* role of *mukhiyas* and *sarpanches*. A more significant proportion of the women that constitute *mukhiyas* and *sarpanches* also came from the upper caste and accounted for more than half of the PRI women members (State Election Commission, 2020).

In this background of declining women's political participation, this study examines the role of women's groups of *Jeevika* in ushering in women's political participation. The following section highlights how women's groups organize themselves in networks and interact with the state at the Panchayat level.

How Jeevika is Facilitating Women's Political Participation?

The Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project (or JEEViKA) is a community-driven poverty reduction program that aims to improve the social and economic empowerment of the rural poor in Bihar. The project is geared towards improving women's lives through various activities such as SHGs, opening up of retail businesses, cattle rearing, and small-scale production units. *Jeevika* aims to capacitate women individually as well as collectively so that they can opt for appropriate livelihood options for themselves (Priyadarshini 2018) and, subsequently, what the World Bank's research team for *Jeevika* calls 'undoing gender' in rural Bihar (Sanyal et al., 2016; Pankaj, 2020). *Jeevika* provisions women to form small-credit groups such as SHGs, open local businesses, and audit and run small and medium enterprises. At present, one of the top priorities of *Jeevika* officials is making Bihar ODF, i.e., Open Defecation Free. *Jeevika* officials are actively engaged in a shaming campaign to demotivate those who defecate in the open.

Jeevika meetings happen weekly. It has a pyramidal structure at the local level with an agency-appointed facilitator who audits and oversees the work of *Jeevika* at the top is usually. They are followed by *Jeevika* CMs or coordinators, who are generally the most educated and outspoken among the cohort of *Jeevika* women. These *Jeevika* CMs convene meetings of *Jeevika didis* (a local expression for women associated with the *Jeevika* scheme who are given funds to open local businesses and produce handcrafts).

For this study, Mairwa and Nautan blocks of the Siwan district of Bihar were selected to understand the role of women in PRIs. Mairwa and Nautan are placed adjacent to each other and are the bordering blocks of Siwan to Uttar Pradesh. In these two blocks, women's numbers of *mukhiyas* and *sarpanches* stand at 34%, lower than the 50% quota sanctioned for women in PRIs. None of the respondents were women during the meetings with the *mukhiyas* and *sarpanches* of the Mairwa and Nautan blocks. The male members of the households represented these women in PRIs positions.

This study used semi-structured interviews with 20 *Jeevika* women of the Mairwa and Nautan blocks to understand the functioning of women's groups. The sampling process followed was mainly snowball sampling. The questions were designed on the three indicators: political profile, political affiliations, elections contestation, and recent activities.

Mechanisms of Women's Political Participation in PRIs

Findings are categorized into three mechanisms: women networks of *Jeevika* highlighting the connectedness of *Jeevika* women, contesting PRI elections and political affiliations, and finally, the caste dynamics within the *Jeevika* women.

Women Networks of *Jeevika*

Building from Prillaman (2021) that political participation involves interacting with the state by attending meetings, laying claims over schemes, and contacting a local elected official, this section highlights that *Jeevika* women were indeed involved in these processes. Under *Jeevika*, women conduct regular meetings to discuss the finances and savings of local businesses by *didis*. Women sit in a circle and discuss the savings from opening local businesses. Meetings of this sort show the sophistication of the *Jeevika* women's activities. Also, the savings accrued through opening businesses equip *Jeevika* women with bargaining power and financial resources both within the household and outside of it. A *Jeevika* CM, who spoke to me eloquently about the *Jeevika* meeting, said:

'Every Saturday, we conduct meetings. Jeevika didis are asked to attend the meetings.' - *Jeevika* CM of Mairwa

The meetings provide the women with civic skills such as deliberation and bargaining within the household. *Jeevika* women, who were mostly illiterate, faced the civic skill problem since women were deprived of education opportunities and restricted from traversing the village neighborhood. Most importantly, women reported that the time they spend out of their homes for meetings brings about self-confidence among them and helps in their self-development, which otherwise would have been negligent. A *Jeevika didi* who recently graduated from senior high school and visited the *Jeevika*-run shops on her bicycle frequently notes:

'Due to Jeevika, we can move from one place to another. Jeevika has provided us mobility in the village.' - *Jeevika didi*

Since *Jeevika* CMs hold an authoritative position, they act as a link between local women and PRI members to avail different government schemes, particularly *Awas Yojana* for widowed women.

Contesting PRI Elections and Political Affiliations

Several women were also directly involved in the political elections by contesting elections and affiliating themselves with a local political outfit. *Jeevika* women were more likely than other women in the panchayat context to contest local body elections. As Chibber (2002) notes women with an independent identity outside the household are at an advantage in contesting elections, similarly *Jeevika* women who were taking on an identity not associated with the household were more likely to participate in elections.

Several women who were *Jeevika didis* before participated in the ward member elections. While interviewing the *Jeevika* women, more than two previous *Jeevika* didis women participated in ward member elections and secured victory.

Ward member elections were considered a favorite because they required fewer resources which *Jeevika* women could muster. According to a local rough estimate, *mukhiya* elections finances could go up to tens of lakhs of rupees. Unlike a *panchayat* that sometimes consists of a dozen villages, a ward is a conglomeration of households in the panchayats. The wards' jurisdiction is small- the size of a hamlet, which enabled accessibility for *Jeevika* women in a context where women are only allowed to visit the neighborhood.

Moreover, most of the *Jeevika* women were averse to political affiliations. Although, these women are usually invited to attend political rallies of the incumbent government of Nitish Kumar. Some reports connect Kumar's gendered schemes and women's penchant for Kumar (2020). It is beyond the purview of this paper to find this connection between Kumar's gendered schemes on women's voting patterns. However, during the fieldwork, several women emphatically celebrated the work Nitish Kumar had done for women.

Lower Caste Women Representation in *Jeevika*

In the PRI positions on which there is a 50% quota for women, upper-caste women dominated these positions. Women in *Jeevika* largely came from Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), showing that the women groups under *Jeevika* positively impacted lower caste women mobilization. The women contestants from *Jeevika* in the ward member elections also came from lower castes.

However, some women complained that the *Jeevika* CM, who often came from an upper caste background, would not release the funds for opening businesses. Women complained about the funds not reaching them. A *Jeevika didi* who comes from the *Teli* caste, categorized under EBCs in Bihar, said:

'I have been waiting for funds to open a general store for months. Jeevika CM does not allow me to avail funds. If I could get funds, I could generate income for my family.' -*Jeevika didi*

Conclusion

This study assessed the role of women's groups in facilitating women's political participation in India. Using the sub-national case of Bihar as a case study, primary data was collected during a month's fieldwork, including interviews with 20 *Jeevika* women and *mukhiya* and *sarpanches* of the Mairwa and Nautan block of Siwan district. Findings indicate that women's groups like *Jeevika* play an incremental role in women's political participation through women's networks and meetings, laying claims of public delivery of services, and contesting elections. A key finding of the paper is that the lower caste women's participation in the *Jeevika* scheme has brought a lower caste upliftment and, in turn, props them to political participation. It, therefore, becomes imperative to step up the formation of women's groups and empower them to participate under the larger ambit of the state.

A significant part not explored in this paper that has ushered in women's political participation is male-out migration in Bihar (Priyadarshini, 2018; Jain, 2020). According to the Indian Human Development Survey, almost 40-70 % of households in Bihar have at least one male migrant member.

At the same time, *Jeevika* women's story of the political participation of *Jeevika* women is afflicted with several concerns. First, *Jeevika* is a government initiative, and women's increasing political participation might be undone if the initiative is withdrawn. Second, most of the *Jeevika* women are fixated on the '*labh*' (benefit) concept, which emerges in conversations with almost every *Jeevika* woman. When asked if they wanted to participate in the local bodies; and elections, most *Jeevika* women said, 'Where is the *labh* in it?' Women have been socialized in a culture of market transaction under the *Jeevika* scheme through the concept of businesses and savings (Priyadarshini, 2018). In this sense, most *Jeevika* women are

averse to participating in the local bodies' elections or being affiliated with any political party because there is no '*labh*' in engaging with these bodies.

Meanwhile, male panchayat members claim that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar uses women as pawns for the incumbent government. *Jeevika* women, they claim, are always asked to attend political rallies of the government and are used as vote banks.

This study concludes that the present status of women's groups has been reeling under an 'elite capture' and impacts the lower caste women's access to these groups. The study, therefore, suggests that *Jeevika* officials should remedy the elite capture under the scheme through continuous checks so that the benefits reach the targeted groups.

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**Key Pathways to Developing a Participatory Theory of Change for
System Change Tracking:
*A practice-oriented toolkit for enabling an evaluation culture***

B. Rajeshwari¹ and Meena Vaidyanathan²

Abstract

The paper demonstrates how a Theory of Change (ToC) could be developed in a participatory process, creating the space for capturing diversity and contextualities within a program and contributing to building a collaborative ecosystem to drive systemic change, through a case study. The process that evolved in building this ToC can be useful for other organizations with similar impact objectives and in similar contexts. The paper shows that a focussed, participatory-consultative approach led by self-reflection and engagement with various stakeholders and their needs, can help address power differentials between funders and the implementing partners of development programs. This approach makes it possible for ToCs to be practically adaptable documents by all stakeholders in the ecosystem, thereby building an evaluation culture. In this paper, we demonstrate seven pathways that can be contextualized to specific realities. The paper fills the existing gap in similar demonstrable cases from South Asia where a participatory approach is adapted to develop the ToC for a development programme.

Keywords: Theory of Change; Participatory Process; Evaluation Culture; Power Differentials; Systemic Change

Introduction and Conceptual Framework

Theory of Change (ToC) has, since the beginning of the 1990s, become a dominant method in the evaluation of development programs, philanthropies, governance, and anyone working to bring about social change. ToCs often describe the logic, principles, and assumptions that explain what an intervention does, why, and how it does it along

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with chalking out the intended results (Ghate, 2018). ToC, as an evaluation method, helps organizations understand and explain how any intervention leads to a specific development change based on a causal analysis backed by necessary evidence (UNDAF Companion Guidance, UNDG). The significant focus on ToCs is developed around how they can be represented or what should they encompass, and how connections can be built from the macro to the micro-level of change and between the inputs, outputs, and outcomes (Davies, 2018; Rasmussen, 2016). However, showing these connections between the macro- and micro-levels and the change occurring as a result of an intervention is complex and power-laden. There are apparent power differentials when those funding programs have a readymade ToC and want agencies or implementing partners to work with the same. There are ‘virtual tyrannies of ToC’ (Behar, 2022) in the social sector. ToCs have often been seen as documents that can go redundant, suffer from over-simplification, reductionism, claims of universalities, and very low weightage given to particularity (Behar, 2022). Such criticism has made development organizations and researchers address how ToCs need to be developed in consultative ways, based on robust evidence and can support continuous learning (UNDAF Companion Guidance: Theory of Change). How the power differentials can be addressed while the ToC processes evolve in development programs? Our paper addresses this question by demonstrating it through a case model of the development of a set of ToCs for tracking the stated impacts of the Oak India program and its diverse group of grantees in the state of West Bengal (a state in the eastern region of India), across two primary Focus Areas, impacting five priority communities.

Through this case, the paper demonstrates how a ToC can evolve through a participatory process and create ways for capturing diversity, and contextualities within a program that has several implementing partners contributing to building a collaborative ecosystem to drive systemic change. We have in this paper attempted to document the process of building a ToC that can, not just be used by the participating organizations, but also by others with similar impact objectives. The paper makes a case for a process focussed, the participatory-consultative approach that is self-reflective and engages with various stakeholders and their needs, to help address power differentials between the funders and the implementing partners of development programs. This approach also makes it possible for ToCs to be inclusive and practically adaptable documents to build an evaluation culture (Srinivasan et al., 2022).

Demonstrating the case of the evolution of ToC is significant given that ToCs help organizations to understand how an intervention or set of interventions shape and lead to a specific development change, becoming guiding documents for organizations to make strategic decisions about program elements, organizational policies, and policies along with providing a structure and accountability for evaluation (DuBow and Litzler, 2018). ToCs create the space for practitioners and M&E specialists to understand and

explain the complex nature of the change processes in development interventions (Van Wessel, 2018).

ToCs are often analyzed in the context of specific programs centering on the benefits derived from the process and how the ToC creates opportunities to improve the evaluation (DuBow and Litzler, 2018, Van Wessel, 2018). Expectations around ToCs tend to focus on how they can help programs achieve goals, create best practices, explain the effectiveness and performance of programs, represent the complex processes of change, and how effective the approach for building ToCs (Mackenzie and Blamey, 2005; Blamey and Mackenzie, 2007; Taplin and Clark, 2012; Stein and Valters, 2012; Mayne, 2017; Davies, 2004). Solutions to creating a robust ToC are often visualized through guides that show mechanical steps to develop them (Rasmussen, 2016; Taplin and Clark, 2012). However, in recent years, emphasis has been given to participatory and consultative approaches to building a ToC so that it meets the needs of the communities and makes it most meaningful for them (Wilkinson et al., 2021; Budzyna, 2021). Despite the emphasis on participatory and consultative approaches, there are very few instances of actual cases that help understand how this happens in reality. A common criticism against ToC documents is that they are used more as a “framework that fixes agreements rather than as a living, a guiding tool that helps in reflection and adaptation (Ho et al., 2020).”

This paper primarily demonstrates the creation of a joint ToC across organizations with diverse programs through a participatory process. In this paper, we show how a ToC process evolved in a South Asian context and what were some of the key features of this process that is relatable and practically applicable to others in a similar context and address the challenges that emerge on the ground. In doing so, we fill the existing gap in similar demonstrable cases in development literature and the actual ways in which a process of ToC building takes shape in the context of a complex program with multiple partners having diverse objectives and end goals. Also, the paper shows that there are specific and conscious ways in which unequal power imbalances can be addressed in programs by creating a consultative ToC.

The Case Study and Evolving a ToC for a Complex Programme

The Oak Foundation’s India program in West Bengal supports efforts to sustainably improve the lives of marginalized people including communities in tea gardens (mainly in North Bengal) and the Sunderbans delta (in south coastal Bengal), unorganized workers and migrants (across the state), as well as indigenous communities (across the state in key clusters) through strengthening systems, enabling sustainable livelihoods and access to entitlements, amplifying community voices and their access to justice. The two focus regions, namely the tea gardens and the delta region, face a range of climate-related issues that receive a special focus from the Foundation. The secondary

grant-making focus area prioritizes three community groups which include unorganized workers, indigenous communities, and migrants. The entire program has been visualized for a period of 10 years during which they hope to achieve and document significant change. A learning partnership to design and inform Oak's tracking, reporting, and learning processes along with its ecosystem of grantees was established between initial consulting and Oak Foundation over a period of 2 years (2021-2023). A series of Theories of Change was commissioned to be developed as part of the learning partnership that could explain how a set of interventions could lead to specific changes through the interventions based on available evidence, inform gaps and enable planning of the grant portfolio of Oak, aligned to systemic outcomes and impacts.

A key objective of this exercise was to use the process of ToC development to build a culture of evaluation among the ecosystem of grantees, that enables them to leverage monitoring and evaluation systems and their enhanced capacities for improved tracking and effectiveness of their programs. The entire process was planned to be participative and consultative, driven by sound analyses, consultations, and practical learning in diverse contexts.

Several organizations, especially international donor organizations, now, visualize framing theories of change through a participatory and consultative process, particularly in the context of the #ShifthePower movement or calls for localization. However, these often do not get translated to action on the ground and examples of specific cases and steps that are taken to build theories of change under specific programs do not find articulation within the academic and development literature.

In this case study of building ToCs within the Oak Foundation India program along with their grantee organization ecosystem, the study team at Niiti aims to document the process, and to show ways in which participative and collaborative evaluation processes can be developed.

Methods

Interviews were conducted with all the members of the Niiti team who were involved in developing the ToCs through participatory workshops and individual consultations with grantees and their partner organizations. The material for this paper also emerged from the stakeholders' workshops conducted (in August and November 2022), as well as several individual and group meetings with the grantees (between April and November 2022) where the ToC document drafts were discussed and views and concerns of the grantees, as well as Oak Foundation were heard by Niiti and feedback incorporated through an iterative process. The data from the interviews, workshops, and consultative meetings between Oak and Niiti were analyzed to bring out the main pathways adopted in building the ToC document as a guide for other organizations in building them in similar contexts. The data analysis was done through a coding method

where similar themes were coded when they emerged in the data from the interviews and in documents created in the process of building the theories of change.

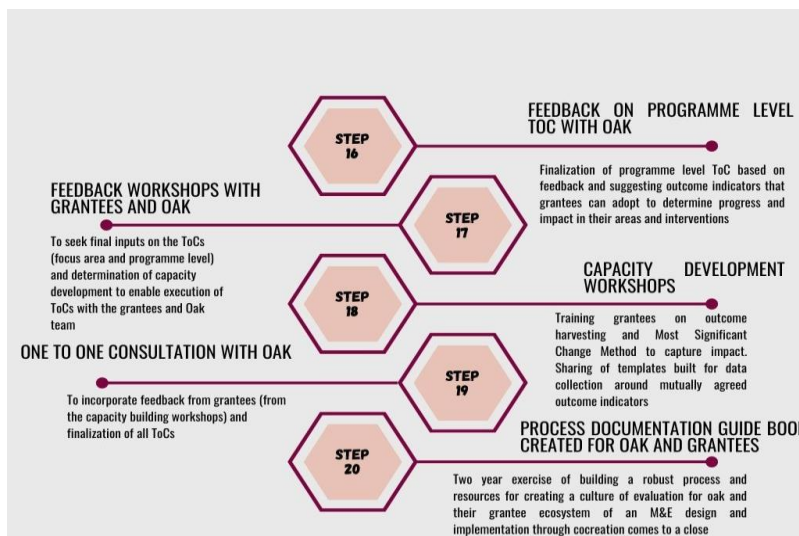
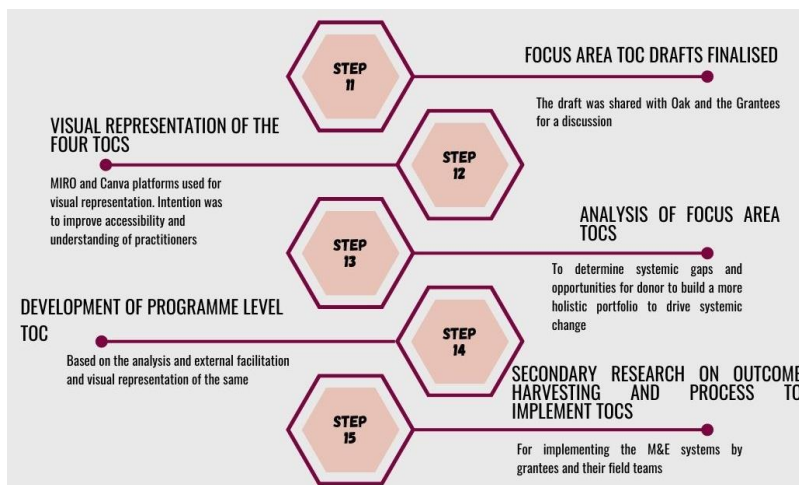
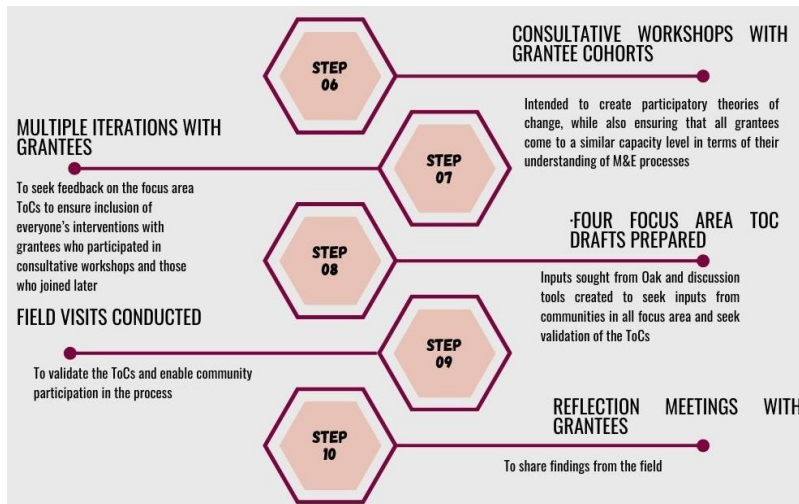
The authors of the paper are conscious of the subjectivities that exist while articulating this case study given that have been closely involved in the process. In a way to address this, the first author, who is part of the organization but was not closely involved in the development of the ToCs, viewed the process objectively through a fresh ‘outside’ lens. In doing so, more scope and space were given for reflection on the development of the ToCs to understand some of the challenges and critical dimensions in the approach to building the theories of change.

The Pathways to Develop Participatory and Consultative Theories of Change

We identify seven main pathways that emerged after analyzing the various steps that were key in developing the ToC for this program. For each of the pathways, we describe their importance and how they help in developing a participatory and consultative ToC. Before, highlighting the pathways, we show below through a figure (flow chart), the specific steps that led to the pathways identified in this case study.

Fig. 1 (Figure is not sourced from anywhere and made by the authors themselves)





The steps shown in the flow chart are significant to depict the organic process of ToC evolution (both for focus areas and program level) and the implementation of the evaluation culture in the Oak India program. However, these steps are not self-explanatory in themselves and only once analyzed along with specific processes adapted, led to the findings of this case study in the form of the seven pathways that can help develop a ToC through a participatory and consultative approach.

1) Process-focussed approach- The ToC in this case was built through a process-focussed approach. Specific steps were adopted in developing the process through which the ToCs evolved and were slowly built. It was viewed both by Niiti and Oak that for an evaluation culture to develop amongst organizations there was a need to create a process-driven approach to theories of change. This approach did not emerge in a vacuum but was a considered and deliberate one, based on the experiences of Niiti in other monitoring and evaluation projects over the years¹. The idea was to create an internal culture of evaluation within organizations and to move away from an understanding of evaluation that is from the perspective of reporting alone. This need for building an evaluation culture is something that the Oak Foundation also strongly believed in, which then resulted in making the processes the focus for creating the theories of change. The Inception Report (Oct 2021) included a needs assessment of the identified 5 priority communities based on existing primary and secondary sources along with identifying the areas of further research. In addition to secondary research, grantees were consulted regularly in the process to understand their work and organization and the challenging context in which they carried out their interventions before we designed workshops to initiate the development of the TOCs. In all, 32 individual consultations were held with 13 grantee organizations, 2 reflection sessions with the entire grantee cohort along with 2 field visits, one each in the two focus areas to establish the rapport between Niiti and the grantees and also to have a first-hand understanding of how the grantees worked while navigating some of their challenges.

Making the process consultative from the beginning defined the process-focused approach to developing the ToC for this program. It was also important given the range of issues that grantees were engaged with. As articulated by one of the initial team members closely connected to developing the ToC, “We understood this was a complex program given the diverse types of organizations and the range of issues they were working on: alternative livelihood, climate resilience to sexual and reproductive health, gender-related issues and addressing patriarchy, better participation in local governance, etc. Given the varied issues and the communities, the grantees were working with, we wanted to develop a sound understanding of their work and context as a team.”

A conscious attempt was made to understand the most credible needs and evidence on them, in the focus areas, both through assessments conducted by the

grantees and from other secondary sources. An initial inception report was then created to articulate the process through which the ToC will be developed and validated. Defining this process was important to make it relevant for the grantees based on their needs and capacities. How learning products and spaces can be created and used by the grantees and associated stakeholders was asked at the beginning of the process to develop the ToC and not as an afterthought which most often happens in programs. This became the stepping stone for making the process participatory and inclusive.

In defining the process based on the needs and capacities of the grantee organizations which emerged through consultations, there were choices given to all the grantees to determine their role in the process of creating the ToCs. They were also given a choice to determine the nature and engagement they would prefer, based on the time and effort they were willing to commit, as well as the availability of key resources for consultations. Some grantees participated more actively than others in the ecosystem, including new grantees who joined the Oak portfolio through the course of the ToC development process. However, all grantees, irrespective of their level of participation were allowed to provide feedback, add their concerns, many unique to their specific interventions and program areas, and provide examples to make the ToC more robust and practice-oriented. This availability of choice made the process more open for the grantees without making participation binding on them or forced.

The process approach, flexibility in terms of participation for the grantees, and transparency in the choice of processes that would be adopted helped in addressing the power differentials to a large extent between the donor organization, the learning partner, and the grantees, many of who were in various stages of their evolution in terms of adoption of monitoring and evaluation practices.

These process-centric approaches put the grantees at the center of the development of ToC, enabling them to be in charge of decision-making, as opposed to someone else making that decision for them, as it often happens in such evaluation design exercises.

2) Asking learning questions in grantee consultative workshops - A significant pathway created to develop the ToCs in this program was through the grantee consultation workshops. These workshops were not viewed as a space to guide or direct the grantees towards a specific path. Instead, a space was created where learning questions were posed before the grantees based on their focus areas and communities, making it a critically reflective process. Grantees working with the same communities and in the primary and secondary focus areas were categorized and based on their interest and ability to participate, 4 sets of workshops were designed, 1 each for all the focus areas identified. The workshops were facilitated in a consultative manner and the framework was largely driven by asking questions so that the answers to impact, outcomes, and outputs of the work that grantees were doing on the ground in the focus

areas, emerged from them. This was challenging as often grantees spoke about several issues and work connected to a community and not necessarily about what they were doing in the area and several grantees working towards the same outcomes had different outputs and activities to reach them. The facilitator's constant probing and questioning helped in making the process focused without devaluing the issues in general that grantees brought to the space and at the same time made the grantees come out with specific impacts, outcomes, and outputs of their work through the answers to the questions that were asked. For example, as articulated by one of the initial members facilitating the workshops - "the grantees working on indigenous communities would talk about several issues faced by these communities along with the ways to address them in the focus areas. However, we had to further ask them if all these issues they were addressing or which were the specific issues they were addressing and how? In this way slowly and steadily through constant questioning, we made the process reflective for the grantees and also more focussed and relevant to the development of the theories of change which all grantees could relate to while working with specific communities."

The learning questions also helped the grantees to understand the difference between impact, outcomes, and outputs, and how to arrive at assumptions in a manner that was not overwhelming, especially for those who were not very familiar with the process. The process made them arrive at the assumptions on their own while they answered the questions asked by the facilitators related to their focus areas. The grantees could understand the differences between impact, outcomes, and outputs through discussions amongst themselves. They were encouraged to probe questions in groups and critically reflect in group activities to help them understand the ways to distinguish these concepts in Monitoring and Evaluation.

While the first three workshops had about 6-7 participating grantees each, based on their primary interest and chosen area of impact, the final workshop had almost 21 grantee participants. The third wave of the pandemic (March-May 2022) forced us to make this process hybrid, and workshops were planned both online and offline. To ensure a good learning experience for the participants as well as the facilitators, Miro was used - a visual platform that enables effective remote work and collaboration. The Miro board was effective in connecting the various views that were emerging from diverse sets of grantees and visually bringing them together to show specific impacts, outcomes, etc in the focus areas

The impact of this process can be gauged by the change in attitude and perception of participating grantees. In the first workshop, the first day of the 5-day workshop was challenging for the facilitators as the participating grantees were visibly apprehensive about the process, and were unsure how different members from different grantee organizations, each of whom was working in a different space, albeit

with the same communities, as well as in different stages of evolution in terms of their understanding and adoption of monitoring and evaluation process could have a meaningful discussion. By the end of the last day of the first workshop, most participants willingly shared their positive experiences with other grantees (in the common e-groups) and also volunteered to engage more actively in the process than they had originally signed up to. The participant feedback is reflective of the experience they had.

“We were able to understand the ToC process and objective better and also others’ work. The facilitator’s patience and persevering prodding was much appreciated. Initially, it seemed like a lot of time to set aside. But it was very necessary and we are glad we invested the time.”

“We are now looking forward to an encore session and hoping to do some in person. We didn’t feel like we were disadvantaged because we were unfamiliar with the Theory of Change process. The facilitators were very supportive and we got the space and opportunity to share our views and experiences.”

“We understood how different organizations are contributing to the larger outcome. We have a clear picture of how to create a ToC now. We realize that this process helps us critically view our projects, and help us reflect better on what we can do better and differently to ensure better project outcomes.”

This locally-led approach pathway where a safe and open space for interaction was created through workshops helped in making the process participatory and building ground-level ownership for the theories of change in this program.

3) An inclusive process and conscious positionality - Making ToC development processes participatory in complex and dynamic programs with several grantees is challenging as every organization is at a different stage of its journey and with diverse types of capacities. In this program, the grantees ranged from professional organizations with skilled staff and capacities to smaller community-led organizations with lower staff capacities and skill sets. The question that was constantly reflected upon by the initial team and in Oak-Niiti meetings was around ways to ensure an inclusive approach where the voices of all grantees, as well as the communities with whom they work were given value and importance.

A key to making this process participatory was also possible because of the Oak Foundation and Niiti’s awareness and acknowledgment of their positionality. The fact that Oak Foundation was aware of its positionality as a donor and the power differentials that this position creates with the donors made it easier to make this process locally led with a participatory approach. The Niiti team, based on its own experience of Monitoring and Evaluation and community-led field work, understood the insecurities and power dynamics that often exist between those leading evaluation and the organizations doing the development work on the ground. This awareness and

acknowledgment of the power differentials helped build trust with the grantees in a way that the organizations found the space to be comfortable to share their views and concerns.

The level of trust was initially built through the workshops where grantee organizations viewed the Niiti team more as facilitators of this process rather than as ‘experts’ who were there to guide or direct them. Another tool used to build trust through providing spaces for grantees to reflect and voice their concerns, feedback, and suggestions was through regular group sessions, conducted both online (in the first half of 2022) and offline (in the second half of 2022). These reflective sessions had an agenda for discussions that were shared ahead of the meeting, where updates on the stage of the ToC process were shared transparently, and plans for the next step were discussed and finalized together with the participating grantees. Consensus through online polls was built for decisions around the frequency and nature of capacity-building topics and delivery, the level of engagement that grantees preferred in workshops, and the preferred time window to conduct them. Individual grantee consultations were also a critical tool adopted to seek individual grantee feedback and concerns on the alignment of the ToC, indicators developed, and methodologies like Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change method, with their organizational working systems. Some of the key questions that were discussed in the reflection meetings, especially after the field visits, were very pertinent.

“Do the outcomes and outputs highlighted in the ToC relevant to your area of work, adequately represent your impact objectives and key result areas?

Do the strategies highlighted in the ToCs reflect broadly the activities that you are doing on the ground?

Do you agree with the gaps identified in the ToC? Do you suggest any other set of gaps that need to be captured?”

These discussions enabled us to ensure that the ToC was grounded in the work systems of the grantee organizations, looked at evaluating both short- and long-term impacts, and most importantly built a sense of ownership among the grantee organizations. There were two other pathways that we believe were important to capture diversity in voices and ensure the process was truly participatory and consultative.

4) Methods to enhance stakeholder involvement - During the course of developing the ToCs for this program, some specific methods were used to ensure that all the stakeholders were involved in the process of development and subsequent implementation. An important way was to create a channel for one-on-one consultations with the grantees. These consultations were scheduled regularly not just with the grantees who participated in the process of developing the ToC, but also with newer grantee organizations who were inducted into the ecosystem through the course

of the year, some as late as Nov 2022. The Niiti team facilitated these discussions that were centered around various aspects of their work, the communities they were working with, and how they visualized their intervention to shape up.

These consultations were multilingual, where facilitators switched between Bangla, a language that most grantees working in West Bengal were familiar with, Hindi, and English. Language barriers often create communication gaps and apprehension to participate, and therefore vernacular language was consciously used to build greater participation and engagement.

Developing the ToC also required the participation of all stakeholders, especially to include the voice of communities and an important method to ensure this was through field visits. The field visits were conducted in two stages, once before the development of the ToCs and later after the first draft was ready. Validating the ToCs through field visits and community observations was initially planned more as a check to validate the ToCs as opposed to capturing community voices actively in the documents. However, regular consultations between Oak and Niiti resulted in bringing forward the importance of the process of including community voices, to ensure implementability and higher adoption of the ToCs and evaluation methods with the entire spectrum of stakeholders. Field visits were conducted to meet with various categories within the five communities, namely tea garden workers, communities in the Sunderbans, migrant and unorganized workers, and indigenous communities, and actively seek their inputs on the ToCs. Detailed stakeholder-oriented evaluation tools were developed, and focus group discussions and key informant interviews were conducted with all the communities and other primary stakeholders.

These field visits, conducted over a period of 3 weeks, enabled three types of validations. First, the needs of the communities that existed on the ground included in the ToC document were confirmed, and any new needs that the team learned of were recorded with evidence. Second, a better understanding of how the planned interventions were implemented on the ground enabled critical corrections and additions to the ToCs. Third, these field visits enabled us to identify some gaps that existed in the current ToC. These gaps existed as none of the grantee organizations was working on these issues and though they were important to bring a systemic change that the program aimed to achieve over the years, they did not come up either during the workshops or the individual or group consultations.

This method of stakeholder involvement through field visits and interactions with the communities was a pertinent step to ensure all stakeholder voices were captured and included in the ToC. The direct participation of the communities in this process made it more substantially inclusive and grantee organizations also could relate better to both the process and the final document that emerged from it. It also enabled us to understand the systemic gaps that existed, that could inform the donor of potential

limitations or barriers, or even opportunities in their quest for systemic change. This process of conducting field visits and involving community voices, however, has its own challenges. The first challenge was to make this process time efficient while capturing the breadth of stakeholder diversity. This was mitigated through a thorough preparation that captured the various perspectives of diverse communities in a time-efficient manner. The second challenge was to convince the grantee organizations that this was a useful and important step that was not intended as an evaluation of their work or activities but to further substantiate the ToC through an outside lens which Niiti had the capacity to do. The trust developed over the months through consultations and rapport-building, was useful in addressing this challenge.

5) Capturing various types of diversities - An important pathway to the process of developing the ToC in this program was through capturing the existing diversities of a complex program involving so many grantees (32, as of Dec 2022). The diversities were in the types of grantee organizations, their capacities, the nature of work they were doing, the communities that they worked with, and the size and outreach of the organizations. This was made possible by making the process dynamic and not a linear process where one or two consultations were done and then the ToC was developed. Also, the process was dynamic because of the openness to change and incorporation of new steps, and being self-reflective in this entire process of developing the ToC. An example of this was the adaptive changes that were made during the field visits based on the situation.

In the process of developing the ToC, a space was created for organizations to join later and give feedback. Organizations were given multiple opportunities to consider the document and come forward with concerns or inputs that were discussed and then incorporated in cases found mutually valid. The process was therefore never closed-ended with no scope available to make changes or participate in a different mode or way. These steps ensured that the diversity was captured given that organizations were not coming from the same space and had the same approach to implementing the program on the ground.

In developing the methodology for participation, suggesting ways to conduct the field visits, and leading the consultative workshops, diversity was always given primary importance making it an adaptable and accommodative process rather than suggesting 'one method fits all'. This can further be substantiated through the ways in which grantee organizations who have joined the process later have also not just embraced the ToC, but have also found it relevant and aligned to their work. The statement by one of the grantee organizations who joined the process as late as Nov 2022 (during the second capacity-building workshop) sums this up.

“Even though we didn’t participate in the ToC development workshops, the outcomes and impacts arrived at in the ToC are relevant to us. Some activities may not be adequately reflected in the ToCs currently, but we can understand the process of how our actions could lead to a larger systemic change. We also are able to assess the gaps we may have and improve the scope for collaboration with other organizations to reach the larger goal.”

The process also allowed the Niiti team to develop a program-level ToC for Oak Foundation based on the learnings during the focus area of ToC development, highlighting the gaps and opportunities for the donor organization.

6) Representation of the ToC visually - An important aspect of the robustness and relevance of any ToC is in its practical implementation. For the best adoption of evaluation systems and to enable stakeholders in any ecosystem to adopt an evaluation culture, it has to be easy to understand and appeal to their sensibilities. The visual representation of any ToC is, therefore, a significant aspect of the process of its development. The connections and dependencies between the various elements of the ToC like impacts, outcomes, outputs, assumptions, and inputs are reflected as a narrative and the visual representation makes it more appealing and comprehensive to a wide range of stakeholders, especially practitioners. This gap in representation exists even in the most robust processes of ToC development because often those creating visual representations and those working on the process of developing the ToCs work in silos. This representation is a struggle for most and was no different in this case as well. It was first addressed by adopting a visual platform like Miro to capture the process in a comprehensive and simple way. Second, a platform like Canva was used to develop a visual representation of all the complex dependencies of the logical framework of the ToC and also Powerpoint to create a simpler version of the ToC that could be used by Oak as well as all grantee organizations as a summary of their direct and indirect spheres of influence. This was accompanied by a narrative to provide detailed insights where required as an accompaniment to the visual depiction. This required a lot of flexibility and adaptability with several iterations to create the visual representations and organizations while developing this need to take this into account both in terms of time and cost needed for this purpose.

7) The way forward after developing a ToC - In the next steps after the four ToCs have been developed for the two focus areas and in relation to the five communities, the pathway is towards the implementation of these theories by the grantee organizations. In this case, since the entire process of developing the ToCs was done through a participatory approach, the organizations have a higher sense of ownership of the document and leverage it to improve their own evaluation and learning. This comment by one of the organizations shared during the workshop to discuss the ToCs,

expresses the overall experience we heard from the participating grantee organizations.

“We found the process not only self-reflective but also as a step for us to create our own organization’s ToCs. We understood for the first time why it is important to develop a ToC and the practical need for the same and these emerged for us gradually as we progressed towards developing the ToC for this program with Niiti.”

The steps ahead are also consciously being co-created with the stakeholders in helping them use the ToCs in an effective and efficient way. For example - in identifying the most relevant indicators for the grantee organizations to measure their interventions in ways that will help them to understand the impact they are creating. There has been a deliberative attempt to have the process continue being consultative while deciding on ways to formulate the evaluation method and develop the capacities of the grantees so that they can use methods like Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change to capture the change effectively. However, this process is left open for grantees to adapt while they implement the ToC in specific focus areas ensuring that they can formulate timelines based on the stage of their intervention rather than having similar timelines and rigid ways of using these methods. The templates for the evaluations based on the ToCs are also being visualized through a consultative process to understand the possibilities and challenges ahead. Therefore, it is not just the process of developing the ToC that is of value when done through a participatory approach but the next steps and the way forward also need to be the same to ensure that the ToCs are practically used by organizations and not remain as documents which occupy their shelves.

Conclusion and lessons drawn

Co-creation, stakeholder involvement, creating safe spaces for sharing experiences, trust building, being conscious of own positionalities, and capturing diversity are all aspects that are often processes adopted in most participatory approaches. However, how these unfold on the ground, especially in complex programs where the goal is not only to develop a ToC but also to build systems and processes to practically implement it, is what the paper shows through the case of ToC development by the Niiti consulting team in the Oak India program. There is usually no method of overcoming the power differentials in development programs. However, they can be consciously addressed and the gap can be reduced particularly by adopting processes that create spaces for self-reflection and shared reflection within and amongst organizations. A key lesson that can be drawn through the process is the relevance of time and resources needed which is not possible perhaps in every program. Time was a key challenge in the Oak India program as well with specific timelines to be met and bringing organizations together for workshops at the same across geographies. The process of trust building

between the facilitators of developing a ToC and organizations is a slow and dynamic process that occurs over a period of time and programs need to prepare themselves for the same. The challenge faced in the program was when new organizations were included and similar levels of trust had to be created with them as existed with the organizations that were part of the process from the beginning.

Another important learning is to keep consultations continuous and not episodic, where every step in the evolution of the ToC is consultative and becomes a part of the program. Programs and organizations often aspire to develop an evaluation culture through developing a ToC. This case shows that the emergence of an evaluation culture that can remain sustained is possible when organizations take ownership of the evaluation method and the development of the ToC for the same

¹ See Nokia India Annual CSR Report based on the report prepared by *niiti consulting private limited*. Available at: https://niiticonsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Nokia_India_CSR_Report_-_2018-19_-_V2E_24th_Nov.pdf

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Young Voices

Fishery Trade in the Trap of Pirates of the Sea

Bhanvi¹

Abstract

The fishery sector contributes a significant role in national income and its growth in the recent past also witnessed impressive outcomes. However, the fishery trade is facing some prominent encounters in terms of illicit, unregulated, and unreported trading hampering the sector. The present article highlights the concerns related to the above-mentioned encounters and suggests transparency should be ensured via proper mechanisms and legislative structures that will regulate fishery laws and policies.

Keywords: Fishery sector; National Income; Laws and Policies

Introduction

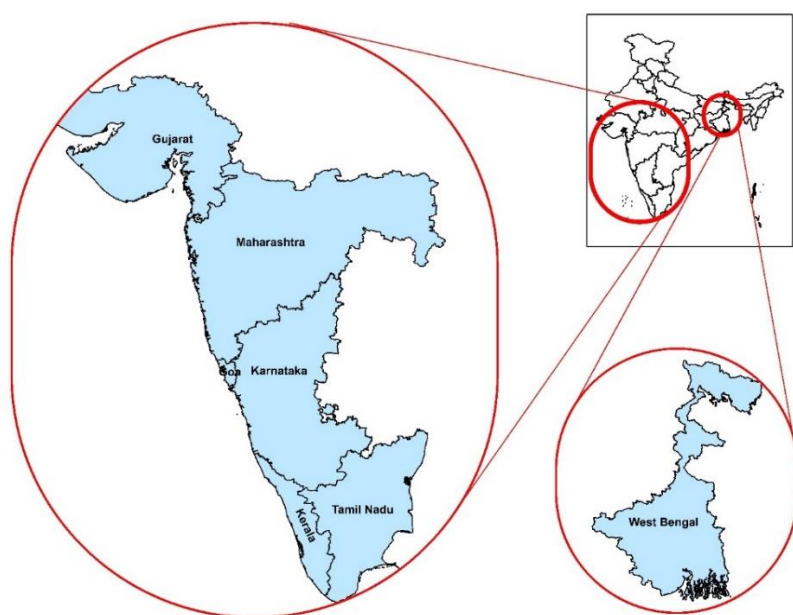
According to the National Fishing Development Board fishery is an economic activity that includes harvesting fish or any aquatic organism from the wild (Capture Fisheries) or raising them in confinement (Culture Fisheries/ Aquaculture). It may be Traditional/ Small Scale Fisheries (SSF) for sustenance, or Large-Scale/ Commercial Fisheries for profit. India is the second largest fish-producing country after China accounting for 7.56% of global production (Economic Survey 2021-22, pg. 279). It contributes about 1.24% to the country's GVA (National Accounts, 2021-22) and over 7.28% to the agricultural GVA. Since 2014-15, the fisheries sector has witnessed a double-digit average annual growth of 10.87% (Economic Survey 2021-22, pg. 279) with fish production of 145 lakh tons in FY 2020-21 (provisional). The fishery sector ensures employment and livelihood to about 28 million people in India (Economic Survey, 2021-22, pp. 253), especially the marginalized and vulnerable communities. Illegal, unregulated, and unprotected fish trading is a common site these days that in turn adversely impacts ocean quality, livelihood, and economy in return.

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Legal but Unregulated Trade

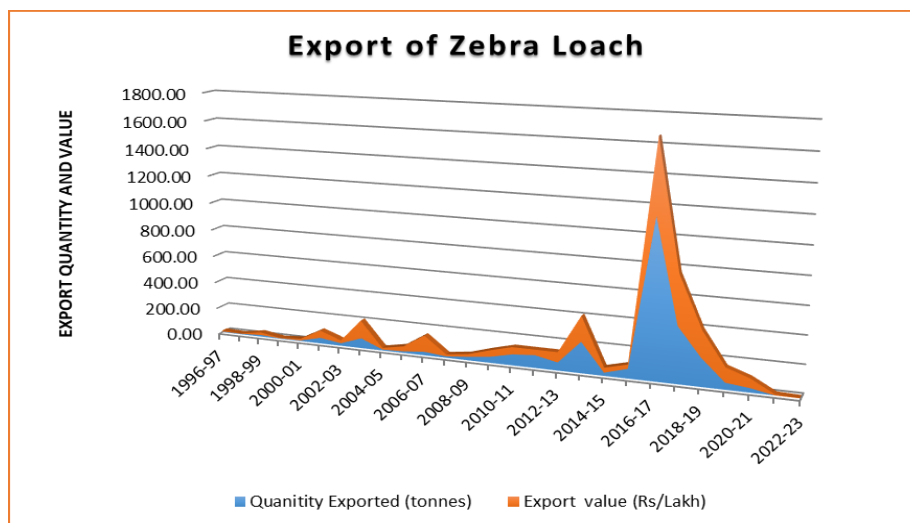
Unregulated fishing refers to fishing activities in areas where there are no applicable management measures to regulate the catch; in India trade in one such endangered species of fish (Zebra Loach) that is endemic to the Western Ghats, particularly Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu. Due to their distinctive stripes, they are being traded in large quantities which is leading to their extinction and unsustainability. Moreover, they are good tank cleaners, peaceful species that can breed with multiple species without harming others, require less maintenance, and have a long lifespan. Due to these unique features, the global aquarium trade of Zebra Loach is being witnessed with Singapore (73.05%) being its major importer and Kolkata (58.75%) contributing to a major exit point from India. Trading of Zebra Loach is legal but unregulated, due to this loophole these species are on the verge of being extinct as maximum trade (60% approx.) is done during the breeding season which increases the risk of their extinction (Tapkir et al., 2021).

Figure 1: Spots where Zebra Loach fish are endemic in India



Source: Author's creation based on data from Tapkir et al., (2021). Far from home: Tracking the global ornamental fish trade in endangered zebra loach, *Botia striata*, from freshwater ecoregion and biodiversity hotspot in India. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 61.

Figure 2: Export of Zebra Loach in terms of quantity exported (tonnes) and value of export (Rs/Lakh) over the years



Source: Ministry of Commerce, Gol

Over the years from 1996 to 2017, there was an increase in the quantity and value of exports signaling towards proper maintenance and reporting of export cases as well as ensuring a check on the number of species being traded. During 2016-17, there was a tremendous increase in the value of export because of the introduction of various welfare measures introduced by Gol such as the introduction of the Blue Revolution that gave a boost to the fishery sector but after 2017, there has been a drastic decline in the export of Zebra Loaches raising concerns for its under-reporting and exploitation of species resulting in maximization of their profits. Thus, the impact of the blue revolution was short-lived. In order to make it sustainable, continuous advancements need to be made for the development of the fishery industry.

Illegal Trading

According to multilateral environmental agreements, illegal trade refers to the transboundary movement of species without the notification and consent of the concerned authorities and states. The Asia Pacific and the Atlantic off the coast of West Africa are the places where illegal fishing is causing the biggest revenue losses for local economies. In India, according to the PLFS (2021-22), the fishery sector provides livelihood to about 2.23 million of the total workforce out of which it comprises 81% of the male population and 19% of the female population making it a total of 33.2%.

Analyzing the composition and scope of the fishery sector, various training programs and workshops should be organized by the government that will provide skill enhancement to marginalized communities including women. But, illegal trading of fish is a rising concern that needs to be dealt with carefully otherwise, it will act as a roadblock in the livelihoods of around 33% of the population.

Various illegal activities are flourishing in the fishery sector such as the illegal catching of fish by fishermen by crossing borders because of their knowledge and skills to cross borders undetectably, maintaining friendly relations with the people who work at ports where vessels of catching fish are landed for illicit purposes so that fish stock can be exploited for unauthorized purposes such as money laundering, corruption and illegal trafficking that depletes the valuable fish stocks and threatens the sustainability of marine life, thus in return reduces the revenue for law-abiding fisherman and ensuring competitive edge to illegal businesses.

Unreported Trading

In the words of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), unreported fishing means fishing activities that have not been reported, or have been misreported by the vessels to the relevant national authority. There are numerous marine species that are endangered in India. Some of the endangered and threatened species according to the National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources, Lucknow (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) are *Puntius Stoliczkanus*, *Raiamas Guttatus*, *Silonia Silondia*, *Botia striata*, etc. The FAO remarked that unreported and illegal fishing is responsible for the loss of 11-26 million tons of fish each year, and estimated that 1 in every 5 fish caught, came from Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing. This unreported trading is also causing a threat to food security as 60% of the Indian population consumes fish (Shyam et al., 2013) with variation in consumption patterns depending upon the terrain where they are living and the type of activity in which they are engaged.

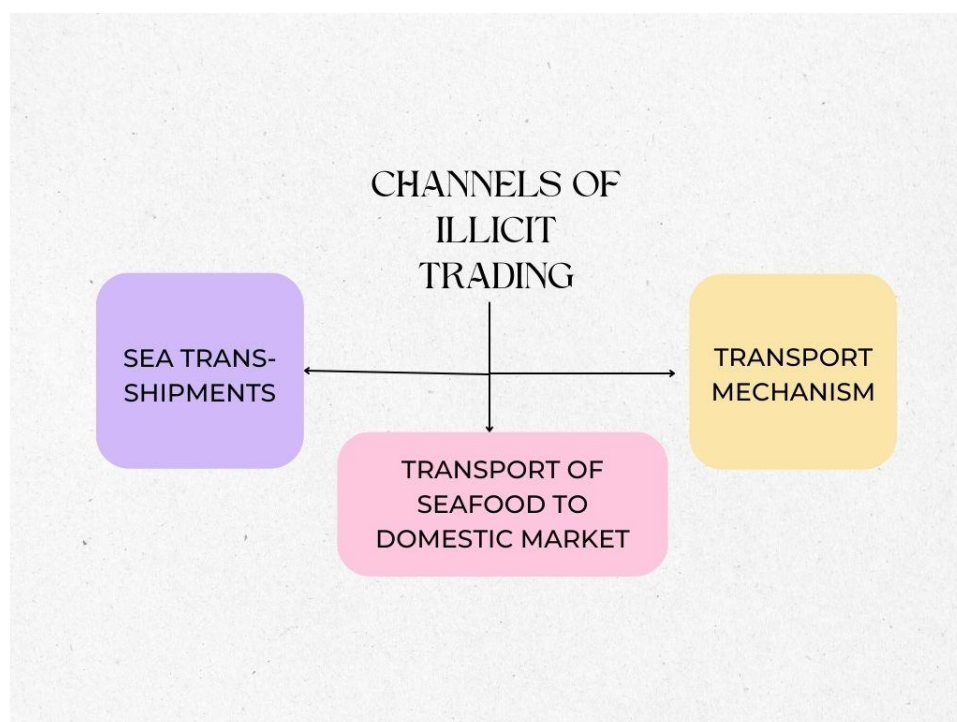
The annual per capita consumption of fish for the entire Indian population is estimated at 5-6 kg whereas for the fish-eating population, it is found to be 8-9 kg. Average annual per capita fish consumption is highest in Kerala state at 30 kg (Shyam et al., 2015). However, because of IUU activities in the fishing sector, Indian consumers are forced to buy fish from unhygienic markets and vendors. So, this issue needs to be addressed as despite being the second largest producers and self-sufficient in fish production Indian people have to depend on outside markets that can hinder the growth of the economy.

Channels of IUU Trading of Fish

There are three major channels of illicit trade in fish:

- One of the major channels is via ship transshipments that include offloading catches from varied fishing boats at a common place and collecting them into large freezers and processing ships at sea that ensure proper and transparent accounting of the origin and authenticity of catches become illegal and impossible to trace.
- The second loophole is in export mechanisms as to how seafood is transported, various traders use large refrigerators that are not subject to less reporting and inspection.
- The third channel is the illegal supply of seafood in domestic markets that are export-dominated so the source of seafood can be recognized.

Figure 3: Various Channels of IUU trading of Fish



Source: Authors Creation

What all has been done?

The Fishery Sector is considered to be the “Sunrise Sector” due to its double-digit growth since 2014-15 and catering to the employment needs of about 28 million people. Fish is also considered to be a cheap source and affordable source of animal protein with numerous benefits and has the potential for future growth and positive contribution to the country’s GDP. Seeking these various initiatives, have been undertaken by the Gol to promote the fishery sector and Blue Revolution.

- a. On September 10th, 2020, **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) Yojana** was launched with the highest total investment of about Rs. 20,050 crores. Under this, the focus was on the increasing area under inland fishery about 2,983 Ha., and the area under marine fisheries along with the development of fishermen by providing their boats and nets along with livelihood and nutritional support to 6,58,462 fishers’ families for conservation of fisheries resources during fishing ban/lean period and development of infrastructure in fishing and aquaculture.
- b. Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF) was created with total funds size of Rs 7522.48 crore in order to provide concessional finance to the Eligible Entities (EEs), including State Governments/Union Territories and State entities for the development of identified fisheries infrastructure facilities through Nodal Loaning Entities (NLEs) namely (i) National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), (ii) National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC) and (iii) All scheduled Banks.

c. Under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package, the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, announced a Rs. 2 lakh crore concessional credit boost to Rs. 2.5 crore farmers including fishers and fish farmers under the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme.

The Budget for 2023-24 also provides an encouraging and optimistic trend toward the development of the fishery sector as various initiatives were announced such as the development of 5 Major Fishing harbors as the hub of economic activities in the areas of Kochi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Paradip, and Petuaghat that will increase the income of the fishermen. Various training sectors has been developed by state governments to provide training against various diseases and risk associated with the introduction of live aquatic animals.

Despite, several steps taken by Gol, risk and conspiracy associated with illegal, unreported, and unregulated trade cannot be eliminated.

Suggestions

- 1) According to data from National Accounts Statistics there has been a considerable increase in the value of output of fishing and aquaculture from Rs. 80,10,453 lakh in 2011-12 to Rs. 1,59,09,495 lakh in 2020-21 predicting that this sector has a promising future so government should ensure proper mechanization for reporting illegal, unregulated and unreported activities so that authenticity and proper channel be ensured for trade in fishery sector and true motive of Blue Revolution can be maintained.
- 2) Proper awareness campaigns and workshops should be organized with the local people and fishermen by educating them on the ill-effects of unregulated, unreported, and illegal fishing. So that they form a strong community against fraud and illegal businesses that exploit fish which will subsequently result in reducing unregulated and unreported fishing.
- 3) Since illegal fishing is not considered a serious and heinous crime proper and strict legislation, regulations, and legal laws should be made in order to conserve our marine ecosystem.

Conclusion

Despite India being a maritime country that has wide water resources lying both in inland and marine sectors which are being utilized for capture and culture fisheries and offers a wide variety of biodiversity. Subsequent to that, illegal trade is also rising at an alarming rate, most of the fishermen engaged in illicit trade in order to get better returns and increase their standard of living. In order to eliminate this practice ensured returns at better and increased prices should be guaranteed to fishermen that will enhance their income and wealth impelling them to get rid of this vicious trap of illegal activities. Along with this, stricter laws should be implemented against illegal activities. To attain the socio-economic and well-being of marginalized fishermen via various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as SDG 2 and 3 that focus on zero hunger and good health, respectively, the government should catalyze its activities for the upliftment of the fishery sector as fish is considered to be the most nutritious and healthiest option to mitigate hunger and

nutrition deficiency and can be used to eradicate hunger and provide good health as it is rightly said 'Fish for Health and Fish for Wealth'.

Development in the fishery sector has trajectory growth trends that can help us achieve a blue, sustainable, and stable future and economy with the help of advancements in technology and better transportation facilities for export that are properly regulated via a transparent mechanism that can curb the menace of unreported and unregulated fishing trade. Moreover, illegal fishing is not considered a crime because it lacks the attention of the officials due to its nature not being understood by the authorities. In order to overcome this, a properly coordinated criminal force mechanism should be ensured with proper monitoring and scanning only then we can achieve ecologically healthy, economically viable, and socially inclusive development of the fisheries sector of India.

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Young Voices

Dance of the Nations: *Old Problems and New Realities*

Akash Kumar¹

Abstract

From the history of the Peloponnesian War in the 5th century BC to the war between Russia and Ukraine, the world has come a long way. But the war has never left humanity or rather we should say humanity never left the wars. Tribes fought among themselves in ancient times, Kingdoms and Empires in the medieval age and so did the Westphalian states born on the principles of sovereignty, territory, population, and government. The nations are fighting among themselves and the world has not learned its lessons after fighting the tragic world wars in the twentieth century. The paper 'Dance of the Nations' is an attempt to analyze the enduring questions of war and peace and how can these these wars be stopped or at least their magnitude be reduced. The nations dancing on war tunes forget that there is a real threat of an apocalypse since the weapons and scale of the war have risen to a magnitude where we would need thousands of earths to settle the scores. But sadly, we got only one. The paper will also mull over how India can strike a slightly different chord in the era of new bipolarity (rivalry between the USA and China) where 'nations are dancing to the tunes of these powers' leading to a peaceful globe.

Keywords: War & Peace; New Cold War; US-China Rivalry

Introduction

War is a persistent feature of world politics. The conception of the nation-state is itself an outcome of thirty years of war and peace in Westphalia in 1648.

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In his magnum opus, *On War*, Carl von Clausewitz gave his famous dictum, “*War is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means.*” This has been misinterpreted and interpreted in many ways (primarily due to translation errors) but what he meant was that the war should act as an instrument of policy and serve some ends (O’Donovan, 1998). From the history of the Peloponnesian War in the 5th century BC to the war between Russia and Ukraine, the world has come a long way. The tribes, kingdoms, empires, and nation-states have been dancing to the war tunes since antiquity to modernity and the trend is continuing even today.

This article draws its inspiration from George RR Martin's fantasy '*Dance of the Dragons*' which was a civil war that resulted in the downfall of the most powerful Targaryen Empire. The dynasties in the fantasy fought among themselves to the ruins unaware of the real apocalyptic danger from the dead (zombies). The analogy is clear that the nations are fighting among themselves both in terms of interstate wars and internal wars (civil wars) unperturbed by the real threats in terms of Climate Change, Pandemics, Nuclear Wars, and uncontrolled development of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). These threats have the potential to cause human extinction. Meanwhile, the war of nationalities has receded to the background and the war of identities has taken center stage though not fully. The war has led to death, destruction, and an armament race unaware of the global catastrophic risks. Humanity has created destructive weapons (Nuclear and Biological Weapons) which in case of a total war (a war where actors use all the resources at their disposal and attack even civilians) can destroy our planet Earth, a thousand times over. The road to peace is filled with challenges and the questions on war and peace need to be answered in the context of new emerging realities.

Changes in the Phenomenon of War and Peace

The study of war and peace has evolved significantly over time. The war among states i.e., the **inter-state wars** was a prominent feature of nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe. Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), World War I (1914-1919), and World War II (1939-1945) led Europe into chaos and disarray (Mulligan, 2008). The total number of military and civilian casualties roughly was 40 million in World War I and 50-60 million in World War II. The post-world war scenario completely transformed the nature of war and during the Cold War, the two superpowers fought mostly proxy wars with some exceptions like during the US-China war in Korean Peninsula (1950-1953). The advent of nuclear weapons was also a tectonic shift in war strategy with the coming up of deterrence theory and the nuclear umbrella being provided by the superpowers. Many argue these acts as a deterrent against a full-scale war and the world has become a relatively stable place (Waltz, 1995) post-World War II but we can see instances of the growing frequency of proxy wars and Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) which is military coercion below the threshold of full-scale war (Jones et al., 1996). The occurrence of **intra-state** or civil wars has increased post-Cold War fought along the lines of ethnic-religious identities. The

most prominent example of intra-state war is the Rwandan Genocide (1990-1994), the Bosnian Civil War (1992-1995), the Syrian Civil War (Since 2011), and Myanmar (Since 2021). The world it seems has not learned its lessons despite witnessing so much death and destruction in the last century and is continuing on the path of death and destruction.

The absence of total war in no way testifies to the world being a peaceful place. Limited wars have been fought among the nations and even nation-state and non-state actors examples being the Sino-Indian Conflict (1962), India-Pakistan (1947,1965,1971,1999), Arab-Israeli War (1948), Vietnam War (1955-1975), Gulf War (1990-1991), Iraq War (2003), and many others. A limited war is a war where the state does not use all the resources at its disposal to fight the war. As per the Correlates of War (COW) interstate wars have dramatically reduced post-world war and the deaths related to extra-state wars have seen tremendous jumps. An extra-state war is when a state clashes with a foreign unrecognized state or a non-state actor. The US attack on Afghanistan (2001-2021) post 9/11 attacks and the US-led action in Syria (2014-till date) can be an example of an extra-state war. These classifications are not watertight and the combination of extra-state and intra-state can occur at the same time, for example, the US-led Global War on Terror Afghanistan is the extra-state for the US, but there is an intra-state war among the different factions in Afghanistan.

The United Nations has been successful in preventing World War III but it has badly failed as an international governmental organization in tackling proxy wars, Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs), ethnic-religious clashes, and civil wars. The concept of positive peace (where peace does not merely mean the absence of war but the presence of attitudes, structures, and institutions) that promotes harmony has failed to a great extent (*Defining the Concept of Peace » Positive & Negative Peace*, n.d.). The death and destruction of precious lives and resources continue despite the peacebuilding and peacemaking efforts by the UN.

Contemporary Challenges

The latest conflict between Russia and Ukraine is another example of the long war list. The war has never left humanity or we can say humanity has never left war. The road to peace seems difficult but at the same time, the world needs to devise a mechanism or theory which can attain relative peace, if not minimize the impact of wars. But the realities have changed the scales have magnified, and so has the cost of war. The war fuels the economy of an unprecedented kind. There is a simple correlation between wars and the profitability of weapons-manufacturing countries. Scholars argue that vested interests keep the war machinery running to suit their military-industrial complex. The newer technologies have acted as a catalyst that has increased the propensity of war. One single miscalculation can cause total annihilation of the planet which is already reeling under huge pressures from climate change, economic inequalities, illegal migration, and ethno-religious conflicts.

The anarchy in international relations is a fertile ground for chaos to prosper. The revival of Great Power Politics due to the monumental rise of China which is seen as a revisionist power challenges the existing institutions and liberal rule-based order. The sparks can be seen in the Taiwan Strait (post-Nancy Pelosi's visit) and the Galwan incident (2020). These manifestations of changing world order can be a threat to global peace as no great power has gone down without fighting. The US is going all out to arrest the rise of China. It remains to be seen whether China goes down the route of the USSR in providing a peaceful end to Cold War 2.0 or China rises to the top displacing the US. The world is witnessing the signs of old power politics like balancing and alliances with the formation of groupings like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) consisting of the US, India, Japan, Australia; Australia, United Kingdom, and the United States trilateral grouping (AUKUS); and the growing proximity of China-Iran-Russia axis. The world order is seeing a tectonic shift and the shift is causing tensions (*Debate on the "Democratic Peace": A Review*, n.d.)

Pathway to Peace

As American political activist A.J. Muste once said, "*There is no way to peace, peace is the way.*" Scholars have debated for a long on the potential pathway to peace in international politics. The most prominent are the Democratic Peace Theory and Hegemonic Stability Theory. The theories have a mixed experience in the way they have been successful in theorizing that democracies are less likely to wage a war with each other. Hegemonic Stability Theory argues for stability in world affairs in the presence of a dominant power (Webb & Krasner, 1989). Pax Romana in the case of the Roman Empire, Pax Britannica about the British Empire, and Pax Americana about American leadership of the global order are referred to as being prime examples of hegemonic stability theory. The hegemonic stability theory benefits the hegemon and leads to the impoverishment of other nation-states.

Scholars of international relations also argue for an international government structure on the lines of the European Union where a supranational body governs at the cost of loss of some kind of sovereignty of the nation-states. But seeing the events of Brexit and the tensions within the European Union, it is highly unlikely that an international government could overcome the anarchic structure. The United Nations being an international organization has largely failed in providing a mechanism where the nation-state can resolve their differences without going to war. The role of the UN has been limited to peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations. The nation-states remain the unitary actors in global politics and the major powers play the veto card in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to suit their interests at the cost of peace and prosperity. The collective security arrangements have been largely successful like the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), but their expansion after the fall of the USSR is being questioned.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict is being fought on Ukraine's eagerness to join NATO; this is itself the biggest question mark on the collective security architecture. The question of war and peace is an enduring question in international relations. The wars in the age of European imperialism were being fought on the issue of the acquisition of more and more territory. The Cold War was fought on the issue of ideology which in turn was an attempt to expand the sphere of influence which in turn was for the benefit of the two superpowers. After the disintegration of the USSR in the 1990s the capitalist ideology prevailed and scholars like Fukuyama termed it as the *end of history*. In the post-Cold War era, inter-state wars reduced and the world saw a significant rise in the instances of ethnic conflicts. This was somewhere along the lines of the *Clash of Civilizations* and the 9/11 attacks in the US gave currency to the theory (Huntington, 1993). There is a dire need for the Compatibility of Civilizations to take precedence over the Clash of Civilizations for a peaceful world. How this will be achieved is a complex question.

We can hedge our bets against the catastrophic challenges, which may bind the globe together. Until then, the combination of hegemonic stability and democratic peace is the best among the worst where more democratic nations exist that are war averse (with complex interdependence and people-to-people connections), where it is difficult to wage a war with a potential regional hegemon to lead the way along with robust international laws and institutions. These must work in cohesion so that faith in this kind of international structure remains unquestioned. The goal is to enhance multilateralism where the voice of all including the global south is heard with the north providing the capacity-building tools on the bedrock of technological innovations.

The institutions must reflect the current geopolitical realities and the role of middle powers needs to be enhanced. Multilateralism and rule-based international order with democracy at its core are key for a peaceful globe. Countries like India have much to offer to this world in terms of inner peace through ancient philosophical and spiritual traditions of non-violence and yoga. Outer peace by following the mantra of 'Vasudhiava Kutumbakam' i.e., when we think of this world as a family, we are less likely to ruin it through wars. India can be a perfect state with tremendous balancing power. It can be ideal for the other states especially the global South being in working relations with both power centers namely the US and China. At a time when nations are dancing to the tunes of these two great powers, India is asserting its strategic autonomy. The world needs truly an ***India Way*** to peace and harmony in the world of anarchy and geopolitical uncertainty.

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Young Voices

Perception of Youth on Domestic Violence

Barsha Chattaraj¹

Abstract

The problem of today's society is that the people who, if not a victim of a particular kind of injustice, seem to turn a blind eye to the continuing crimes in society, one of the most serious of which includes domestic violence against women. Over the years, women from various backgrounds have been facing gender-based violence, especially in a country like India. Though domestic violence does not exclusively refer to wife-beating or emotional abuse on the wives by their husbands or in-laws, statistically the percentage of women being the victims of such kind of violence is higher. Certain sections of the youth can be characterized to be politically aware of the continuation of such heinous crimes in society to date and scorn upon it. However, some are not aware or sensitive to such problems as such or believe that the wives are responsible for the violence inflicted upon them. This article basically discusses the perceptions of such kinds of people and briefly throws light upon the significance of their understanding of the problem through a sympathetic perspective. This article is based on primary and secondary research.

Keywords: Domestic Violence; Gender-Based Violence; Youth

'Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.'- Margaret Atwood

The world, even in the twenty-first century, is not a safe space for women. While world leaders would never abstain from talking about an all-inclusive world and how the freedom of women is a necessary condition of achieving it, women all over the world still face obstructions in their progress of which one of the major reasons is domestic violence. Domestic violence can stand in the way of the progress or growth of a person belonging to any gender, place of birth, age, race, and so on.

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The term broadly encompasses violence against children, the elderly, and parents and in one of its narrower or more specific understandings, it refers to intimate partner violence and family violence.

Though, as mentioned, the victims are not gender-specific, according to www.womensaid.org.uk, “Whilst both men and women may experience incidents of interpersonal violence and abuse, women are considerably more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of abuse, including sexual violence. They are also more likely to have experienced sustained physical, psychological or emotional abuse, or violence which results in injury or death”. (Women’s Aid; n.d.)

In India, domestic violence against women is an age-old thing and thus, is detrimental to the exercise of even the fundamental freedoms of the victims. It is comprehended by the perpetrators as a tool of power that they can exercise on their wives. People from different educational and cultural backgrounds have different opinions on domestic violence and these opinions are often structured by facts or the kind of conditions that they have been exposed to.

Recently, I interviewed a group of youngsters from the age group 20-25 following a semi-structured questionnaire from government-sponsored and private institutions about their perception of domestic violence against women in India. Questions to my interviewees revolved around what, according to them, were the regular reasons leading to such an aggravated form of violence and what they thought was the reason behind the feeling of entitlement of the perpetrators. More precisely, if they thought that the victims, i.e., the wives had a role to play in the violence that is caused to them by their husbands (or in-laws).

While some of the respondents narrated how they strictly believe that domestic violence is not an appropriate response or reaction to any aggravated level of conflict between the husband and the wife, others explained how the women have a solid role to play, direct or indirect, in making the husbands feel compelled enough to express their anger or frustration by means of physically assaulting their ‘significant other’. Now, the role that they talked about was two-fold. One group felt that women test the patience of their husbands in some way or the other, leading them to hit them. In this case, the reason behind the initiation of the conflict on a violent level by the husband, usually, can be as frivolous (and the most common reason for domestic violence) as less or more amount of a particular flavor in a dish or not having the bed made according to the husband’s whim. This group also feels that the wives are often not submissive enough towards the in-laws leading the husbands to react violently. However, in this case, even the mere existence of the woman can become a reason to hit her.

Others felt that the inability of women to stand their ground makes their husbands feel entitled or acquire the audacity to hit them. Earning a minimum amount of money, according to this group, would help the women to establish their own ground. Be it from whatever background, a woman has to earn so that they can support themselves. While the age-old reasons leading to domestic violence are still there, “Women who earn equal to their husbands have about 14% lower odds

(statistically significant) of being victims of domestic violence as compared to women who earn less than their husbands” (Suri et al., 2022).

What remains unaddressed is the fact that not all women get to earn a living, even though they are capable. Women from middle-class or upper-class families are not allowed by their families to do any less-reputed jobs (like domestic help). Plus, they are often not well-educated or trained enough to do a corporate or academic job. The problems in getting a job are usually context-based but these are two of the commonest ones.

However, it is unimaginable that violence can be an answer to any kind of trigger, especially between spouses. Women to date teach their girls to be more patient with their husbands. In a country like India, domestic violence against women is still defended as a “cultural weave” (Singh and Arora, 2022).

Though today’s youth is more or less well or, at least, adequately acquainted with the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, many of them are either not sensitive to the problems (due to lack of awareness or privileged status) or abstain from talking about it because “there are other problems too” or “even women beat up their husbands”. The fact that the level of domestic violence against women is a continuing crime in India for a long period of time is reason enough to discuss this issue continuously (of course without taking away any focus from other forms of oppression including violence inflicted upon other genders). If the youth is not bothered by the existence of such injustice in society, it is unlikely that the world will be better in any way, any time soon. The youth have to be more aware and learn to sympathize with the victims because it is significant on their part to take the lead in breaking the established narratives of society characterized by regressive practices so that the world becomes a safer, more inclusive, and better place for women, and in turn all, in the future.

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Migration, Gender, and Home Economics in Rural North India

Dinesh K. Nauriyal, Nalin Singh Negi, and Rahul K. Gairola¹, Routledge

Chandrika Arya²

Migration plays a crucial role in the process of socio-economic change and leaves a significant impact on gender-based power relations in rural households and communities. **Migration, Gender and Home Economics in Rural North India** critically examines how the migration pattern of male family members in rural North India in general and the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand in particular affects the left-behind families, wives, and agricultural lands. The book argues that the trend of male out-migration has reshaped kinship and gender dynamics, agricultural lands, and home economics at the origin places of the migrant members. The book attempts to examine various complex challenges faced by left-behind families in general and wives in particular in the absence of their husbands.

The book highlights that low employment opportunities in rural North India drive a major workforce to migrate to high-income states like Maharashtra and Delhi. The study, focussed on the Pauri Garhwal district, articulates that out-migration in Uttarakhand hills is largely driven by men but its effects go far beyond individual migrants. Male out-migration does not only affect left-behind families and wives but also has serious implications for the development of the region.

The co-authored book is a serious attempt to study a greatly under-explored area of research- *left-behind wives* which is overlooked by most of the studies available on migration, primarily focussing on the *causes and consequences* of migration by taking migrants as the central point of analysis. What was missing in the existing literature and which this work attempts to provide is the gendered dynamics of rural households, invoking the field of migration studies to critically consider the economic, social, and psychological impacts of migration on the left-behind wives.

Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, based on data collected through a survey and focus group discussion, the co-authors offer a detailed analysis of the challenges and opportunities that migration engenders.

¹ Oxon and New York: Routledge 2020, ISBN: 978-0-429-26183-1(e-book)

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By using a household approach, the book unravels the paradoxes of migration- On the one hand, out-migration provides economic gain to migrants' households and contributes to women's empowerment but that gain comes at psychological costs. On the other hand, out-migration has resulted in the collapse of agricultural lands and other livelihood options in the absence of able-bodied workforce at origin places.

The study backed up with statistics questions various pre-established common beliefs surrounding migration and its impacts. Conducting a comparative study of migrant and non-migrant households and the life experiences of migrant members' wives parallel to non-migrant wives, the book seeks to analyze the impacts of male out-migration on four broad parameters- Patterns of farm activities, Health status and treatment-seeking behavior, Familial life, and work participation, Perceptions of husbands' out-migration (pp. 40).

Beginning with examining the pattern of farm activities, the study finds that in view of the long-term absence of an active major workforce, the rural households with migrants are losing out on their productive assets- agricultural land and livestock. The shortage of economically active populations eroded the conventional sources of livelihood and hampered the development of source regions.

The subsequent chapter illustrated that male out-migration has no general impact on the health status of left-behind wives but it certainly affects their sexual health and emotional well-being. The absence of male members has contributed to increased awareness and greater accessibility to health care among women. Greater accessibility to health facilities in terms of arranging money for treatment shows high income enjoyed by wives of out-migrants through sent remittances (pp. 154).

Contrary to expectation, the study found no association between the out-migration of male members and the number of working hours of left-behind women (pp. 168). Women are traditionally involved in agricultural tasks in view of gendered roles and responsibilities. Wives of out-migrants are more autonomous in decision-making regarding money matters. Out-migration doesn't have any statistically significant impact on agriculture-related decision-making autonomy among left-behind wives.

The last chapter demonstrated various costs and benefits associated with the migration process in the Garhwal hills of Uttarakhand. The benefits have been recorded in terms of survival strategy and future financial security. Non-migrant wives also favored migration as a tool for ensuring financial security and diluting gender roles in society (pp. 191). In the absence of their husbands, women deal with banks and government agencies, attend meetings at the panchayat level, and meet teachers at the school of their children. This indicates a greater degree of autonomy and higher mobility enjoyed by out-migrants' wives whether out of choice or compulsion (pp. 196).

The costs of male out-migration have been reported in terms of loneliness, and suffering from spousal separation (pp. 185).

The work summarized its findings as: ‘Male only’ pattern of migration from rural to urban areas in search of gainful employment opportunities has both positive and negative ramifications. The migration process has contributed to improved economic standing and quality of life of migrants’ families to some extent and recalibrated gender roles. Simultaneously, origin places are losing a dynamic share of the active workforce which has resulted in worsening of crop production and other livelihood options. Male out-migration also resulted in long-term separation of family members which causes psychological and emotional stress to left-behind wives.

Well-researched work with valuable insights doesn’t confine itself to narrow economics which constitutes the major thrust area of most of the existing literature, it innovatively demonstrates how male out-migration also provides various opportunities for capacity-building to women that may not be available to non-migrants wives. This book is an important reading for those who want to have a comprehensive understanding of the link between gender and migration in rural North India.

The book has done a ‘superb job’ of highlighting the issue of ‘forced’ migration in hilly regions of Garhwal which has transformed socio-economic and demographic profile at the place of origin and created complex challenges for entire family unit in general and left-behind wives in particular. Exposing ground realities, this work invokes policymakers to tackle the issue of *brain-drain* by providing adequate income-generating options for *brain gain* in the home state because the withering away of the population from hill parts of Uttarakhand given its strategic location may also have serious implications for defense of the country.

Had this work devoted a part of its analysis to the impact of male out-migration on women’s participation in community-based forestry- *van-panchayats* of Uttarakhand, it would have been better. Nevertheless, the book has achieved its desired objective of investigating the impact of gendered migration on the lives of left-behind wives along with left-behind lands, agriculture, and economics. This original work enlightens readers about first-hand experience of community lives living in remote hilly areas by throwing special light on *unsaid and unheard* problems of left-behind wives. This excellent work is a welcome text across disciplines and a ‘must read’ for those who are interested in migration, gender, development studies, and decision-makers for rural North India. This book provides several constructive questions for future research on migration in Garhwal such as to what extent migration shapes the level of women’s autonomy if it is maintained even when migrant husbands re-join their native places.

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