



Caring for the differently abled: An overview of initiatives taken by the government of India

Ajay Kumar

Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Business Administration, Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga, Bihar, India

Abstract

The purpose of any social security measure is to give households the confidence that their level of living and quality of the life will not be eroded because of economic uncertainties. Poor people with disabilities are unfortunately excluded from the mainstream. This paper is a modest attempt to present an overview of initiatives taken by the Government of India towards caring for the differently abled.

Keywords: Deen dayal antyodaya yojana, government of India, national social assistance programme, persons with disabilities, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana

Introduction

It is recognized that poverty and disability are closely related to each other and therefore the Ministry of Rural Development has taken special efforts to address the specific needs of individuals and families of persons with disabilities. Majority of people with disabilities find that their situation affects their chances of going to school, working for a living, enjoying family life, and participating as equals in social life. This in turn leads to increased economic and social vulnerability and exclusion. This exclusion affects not only the individual, but the entire family as well. Poor people with disabilities are thus caught in a vicious cycle of poverty and disability, each being both a cause and a consequence of the other.

Initiatives Taken Towards Caring for Differently Abled

Census 2011 data reveals that there has been an increase in the number of differently abled people in the country with the figures rising from 21.9 million in 2001 to 26.8 million in 10 years. In percentage term it has risen from 2.13 percent to 2.21 percent. Out of the total population of persons with disabilities, 14.9 million are male and 11.8 million are female. The Census data shows that 69.9 percent of persons with disabilities lived in rural areas. This significant group require equal opportunities with special support for their overall development, which is also essential for the inclusive development. Recognizing the differently-abled people as valuable human resource, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has been taking various initiatives to mainstream them in the society. Specific provisions have been made in various rural development programmes aiming at their upliftment.

The relevant details of the Schemes in respect of differently abled persons are given below:

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

MGNREGA is a demand driven scheme. Therefore, separate earmarking of employment/resources have not been provided for differently abled. The disabled or differently-

abled persons defined under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (1 of 1996) as persons with disabilities, the severity of which is 40% and above are considered as special category of vulnerable persons for the purposes of MGNREGA. The disabled persons as defined in the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (44 of 1999) are also to be considered as disabled for the purpose of inclusion of MGNREGA.

To increase participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in the Scheme, some major initiatives are being suggested such as:

- Special schedule of rates of PWDs.
- Identification of suitable works for PWDs.
- Organization of PWDs in groups.

As per the MIS till 2nd February, 2017 a total of 4.1 lakh disabled have been provided employment in the current Financial Year.

Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)

DAY-NRLM recognizes that poverty and disability are closely linked to each other and therefore takes efforts to address specific needs of individuals as well as families of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). DAY-NRLM has advised the states to undertake participatory vulnerability assessment process while undertaking social mobilization. This entry point activity at the village level with a specific focus on identification of households with Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) shall ensure greater inclusion of these individuals and families into NRLM network.

Inclusive development of people with disabilities (PWDs) is one of the critical components of DAY-NRLM's interventions, focusing on enhancing livelihood, functioning, and community-integration of PWDs and their families. Under DAY-NRLM, priority is given to the promotion of exclusive SHGs of differently abled persons and their care givers. The initial social mobilization process lays great stress on

including members of differently abled households in the SHG fold. The organization of PWDs into groups has led to there being an increased awareness of entitlements and rights. NRLM also seeks to provide financial support in the form of Revolving Fund and Community Investment Fund to these SHGs on a priority basis. Further, as of December 2016, a total of 31,775 PwD SHGs have been promoted during the current financial year. During FY 2016-17, these SHGs have been capitalized with Rs. 77.47 Lakhs through RF and Rs. 104.17 Lakh through CIF.

DAY-NRLM facilities inclusion of Persons with Disability into the fold of SHGs. Current, six states- Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Telangana are implementing disability inclusion projects and some of these States have mainstreamed inclusion. The focus is on ensuring inclusion and rehabilitation of PwDs through accessing entitlements and create sustainable livelihood opportunities for them, besides providing financial support and bank linkages.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)

As per DDU-GKY guidelines, States have been mandated to ensure that at least 3% of beneficiaries in the skill training courses being implemented in the State are from among persons with disabilities (PwD). In this year 2016-17 (upto December 2016), 537 PwD candidates have been trained under DDU-GKY projects.

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, provides for social security for persons with disabilities. Accordingly, under PMAY-G while deciding the inter-se priority among the beneficiaries who are to be provided assistance, households with any disabled member and no able bodied adult member have been accorded additional deprivation score so that such households are given priority while allotting the houses, Keeping in view the provisions of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995, the State to the extent possible, may ensure that 3% or beneficiaries at the State Level are from among persons with disabilities.

National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

In February, 2009, the Government approved Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) under NSAP for BPL households with severe or multiple disabilities between the age group of 18-64 years with assistance @ 200/- per month per beneficiary. For the purpose of defining severe or multiple disabilities the following legal provisions are followed:

- A per Section 56(4) of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (PWD Act, 95), "persons with severe disability" means a person with 80% or more of one more disabilities.
- As per Section 2(h) of the National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999 (National Trust Act, 1999), "Multiple Disabilities" means combination of 2 or more disabilities.

Consequent upon the lowering of age under Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS), the upper age limit under IGNDPS has been lowered from 64 years to

59 years. With effect from 1.10.2012, the amount of pension under IGNDPS has been increased to 79 years. After attaining the age of 80 years, the beneficiary would be shifted to IGNOAPS for getting pension of Rs. 500/-. As per latest report, upto December, 2016, 8 lakh beneficiaries have been covered under the Scheme.

Conclusion

The Census data shows that 69.9 percent of persons with disabilities lived in rural areas. This significant group require equal opportunities with special support for their overall development, which is also essential for the inclusive development. Recognizing the differently-abled people as valuable human resource, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India has been taking various initiatives to mainstream them in the society. Specific provisions have been made in various rural development programmes aiming at their upliftment. The disabled or differently-abled persons defined under the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 (1 of 1996) as persons with disabilities, the severity of which is 40% and above are considered as special category of vulnerable persons for the purposes of MGNREGA. Under DAY-NRLM, priority is given to the promotion of exclusive SHGs of differently abled persons and their care givers. The initial social mobilization process lays great stress on including members of differently abled households in the SHG fold. As per DDU-GKY guidelines, States have been mandated to ensure that at least 3% of beneficiaries in the skill training courses being implemented in the State are from among persons with disabilities (PwD). Finally, we may conclude that the Government is making sincere efforts towards caring for differently abled citizens of India.

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