

A study by Grassroots Research and Advocacy Movement (GRAAM) points to discrepancies in data of persons with disabilities (PwD) at the national, state, and district levels. Without consensus about the numbers of PwD, it is difficult to ascertain if entitlements from Govt.'s welfare schemes are reaching the deserved. Does this discrepancy of data indicate neglect of PwD?

Background

Effective planning, formulation and implementation of any policy or program that addresses development concerns needs accurate and dependable data. Further, in the case Persons with Disabilities (PwD), one of the most socially and economically vulnerable groups, it is necessary that the data covers a wide range of information (such as type of disability, age profile, rural and urban distribution, education, employment status, etc.) for effective intervention and desired outcomes. And if the administration and respective program implementation authorities are unsure about number of PwD in their districts, any entitlement program is bound to fail as there can be no accuracy in planning, budgeting, and designing processes.

Data Discrepancy at the National, State & District Levels

The extent of negligence about PwD can be linked with the discrepancy in the data maintained by different authorities. The discrepancy in data is also seen at the national level, but the reason for this discrepancy is mainly due to differences in definition of disability. According to the World Bank Report, the rate of PwD in India is 8% (2007), while the National Sample Survey conducted in 2002 says it is 1.8%.

Percentage of PwD at National, State & District Levels (Census of India 2011)

	Population	No. of PwD	%PwD
India	1,210,569,573	26,810,557	2.21
Karnataka	61,095,297	13,24,205	2.17
Kolar	1,540,231	32,277	2.10

Data Discrepancy at the Field Level

GRAAM's validation of data on PwD in 15 GPs in Kolar district of Karnataka across 4 Taluks reveals the discrepancies in the data according to different sources. While the data uploaded on the websites of Rural Development and Panchayath Raj Department is found erroneous, the data in the registers of Village Rehabilitation Workers and data maintained by Anganwadi workers also differed, despite functioning in the same village.

Data of PwD in Headquarter villages of 15 GPs in Kolar District

Records of VRW	Records of Anganwadi worker	Data compiled by GRAAM
252	213	343

The above table indicates that 26.64% of PwD are excluded in the VRW records and 36.44% from the AAW records.

The number of PwD registered under MNREGA across 15 GPs as per the information on the website is 1110, but survey data of conducted by Department of Disabilities in collaboration with Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD) indicates that the total number of PwDs in these GPs is 983. Hence, it may be concluded that the numbers of PwD in the GP limits and provisions of opportunity under MNREGA are fictitious.



How are PwD Counted?

The following chart demonstrates how different sources identify and report data on PwD, resulting in inconsistent numbers.

Identification, Reporting & Review of PwD by Different Sources

Process	Village Rehabilitation Worker	Anganawadi Worker	Gram Panchayath
Identification	There is no set process to identify PwD or update records periodically. PwD are registered in the VRW's records only if they have a doctor's certificate. Those who are unable to get the certificate are not considered as PwD for the purpose of ensuring any entitlements.	Identifies and lists PwD during yearly children's census based on general observation or verbal inputs from family or community members. There is no criteria to ascertain the disability	There is no institutionalized system to record PwD by the Gram Panchayath and it is completely dependent on the VRW's records. Absence of VRW means absence of data on PwDs, unless somebody has received some entitlement.
Reporting	Monthly reporting to Multi-purpose Rehabilitation Worker (MRW)	Monthly reporting to CDPO, but not much on PwD	No reporting system w.r.t data on PwD
Review of List	No definitive time or cycle for updating.	During yearly children survey, but not focused on adult PwD	No such independent process observed

The lack of defined processes for reviewing and updating of numbers of PwD is a serious issue and this prevents development interventions and other programs from being responsive to the current situation.

Recommendations

- Reliable and comprehensive Data collection of PwD in Kolar District (and also in the state) to assess their inclusion in various government welfare schemes and socio-economic status must be urgently undertaken.
- Disabilities Welfare Department (DWD) should take up a scientific survey adopting a commonly accepted definition of disability (as provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of PwD)
- A stipulated process and timeline for reporting, review and update of data must be established
- Measures towards capacity building of grassroots or frontline workers in survey methods and reliable data collection and reporting must be undertaken by the Disabilities Welfare Department.

About GRAAM

GRAAM (Grassroots Research And Advocacy Movement) is a public policy research and advocacy initiative based in Mysore, India focusing on research incorporating grassroots perspectives and advocacy based on empirical evidence that reflects community 'voice' and is characterized by a collaborative approach. Incubated in Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (www.svym.org) for about 3 years since its inception in January 2011, GRAAM has undertaken research, evaluation, consultancy projects and advocacy initiatives in the sectors of public health, education, sanitation, nutrition, human development, livelihoods, disabilities, CSR and media. For more information, please visit www.graam.org.in

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