

**To avail entitlements and benefit from affirmative action employment programs, Persons with disabilities (PwD) must have a disability certification card. However, a study by GRAAM indicates that the process for acquiring certification is difficult and as a result, many PwD are ineligible for government welfare schemes. There is an urgent need for the disability certification process to be made transparent and convenient for PwD.**

## Background

To avail entitlements and benefit from affirmative action employment programs, persons with disabilities (PwD) must have a disability certification card. However, a study by GRAAM indicates that the process for acquiring certification is difficult and as a result, many PwD are ineligible for government welfare schemes. There is an urgent need for the disability certification process to be made transparent and convenient for PwD.

GRAAM conducted a study across 4 Taluks in Kolar district of Karnataka to understand the importance and effectiveness of MNREGA as a means of employment for PwD and their inclusion. The study included interviews with PwD, their family members and Gram Panchayat leaders about the socio-economic status of PwD, the need for jobs and barriers to inclusion with regard to finding employment. Out of the 454 PwD surveyed, 35% do not have a PwD certificate and are hence excluded from getting employment under MNREGA and other entitlements.

## Certification Process & Challenges

Disability certificate is issued to PwD by a district level disability certification committee that comprises four doctors from the Department of Health and Family Welfare along with a representative from the Indian Red Cross Institute, and is chaired by the District Surgeon. The committee is expected to meet every week on Wednesday and PwD from all over the district are to present themselves in front of the committee in order to become certified. The committee evaluates the percentage of disability and certifies PwD as such. This certificate is essential for the PwD to get their rightful benefits from various government departments.

There are several difficulties in getting the PwD certificate and GRAAM's study indicates that 35% of PwD do not have this certificate. In survey and Focus Group Discussions held with PwD, the following challenges were revealed

### PwD with Doctor's Certificate

Severity of Disability	<40%	40-75%	75-100%
% of Certified PWD	5.48	35.27	59.25

- **Transportation:** Not all of the doctors are available at the taluk level, so PwD have to travel to the district headquarters for certification. In the case of mental illness, PwD are required to travel to the state headquarters.
- **Discrepancy in records:** Records of PwD maintained by the Village Rehabilitation Worker and the Anganwadi worker in the village differ and those who are excluded in the records are excluded from certification. Across 15 villages, GRAAM's study found that there are 343 PwD, whereas the VRW records showed 252 and Anganwadi worker listed only 213.
- **Corruption:** Many PwD divulged that they had to pay bribes to officials to get their certification, and there is a tendency to get the certification for higher severity of disability by paying bribes.

**The chart below depicts various challenges PwD face to get certified.**



“Certification process is more corruption prone now than earlier. The previous Govt. created pension slab according to the severity of disability. Although intention of the Govt was good to give more amount to the severely disabled (above 75%), demand for certificate with higher severity is increased and so the corruption”

- *Member of PwD Network in FGD*

Issuing disability certificate for persons with mental retardation has become a challenge due to non-availability of psychiatrist / clinical psychologist / pediatrician in the Medical Board. Private practitioners of repute may be co-opted in the Medical Board or experts from the state visit to the district at least once a month.

## Social Entitlements Have Limited Reach

It is found that other social entitlements also have limited reach, and hence there is a need to not only remove hurdles in the certification process, but also link it to greater awareness to PwD on all their entitlements.

- 97% of families of PwD have a ration card. But only 21% of them have an Anthyodhaya card, which is actually an entitlement of all families of PwD.
- The only social entitlement reaching the majority (62%) of the PwD surveyed is the “disability pension.”
- Only 16% of PwD received the bus/train pass entitlement, 5% received essential equipment/appliances, and just 2% PwD benefitted from Rural Housing schemes.
- 14% have not received any type of benefit from authorities, government or otherwise.

## Recommendations

- Raise awareness among PwD about certification requirement for disability benefits
- Establish clear system for identifying disability based on the social model, and certificate distribution by doctors in a time-bound manner.
- PwD certification should be brought under the Service Guarantee Act to ensure timely distribution of certificates and to increase accountability among officials
- Follow National Guidelines for the Issue of Disability Certificates, taking example from Andhra Pradesh
- Ensure that the VRW facilitates the PwD in getting certificates
- Camps must be held for issuing disability certificate at the taluk/block level.
- No fee should be charged from the PwD for issuance of disability certificate.

## 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](http://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](http://www.graam.org.in)

### Grassroots Research And Advocacy Movement

CA-2, KIADB Industrial Housing Area, Hebbal, Mysore, INDIA - 570016  
[graam@graam.org.in](mailto:graam@graam.org.in) | [www.graam.org.in](http://www.graam.org.in)

**Acknowledgements:** The study of Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in MNREGA in Kolar District of Karnataka was conducted by GRAAM, Mysore with the support and participation of the Employment and Disability Institute, Cornell University, New York, USA.