

Comparison of Profile and Policies on Persons with Disability in India and China

Background:

The concept of persons with disability (PWD) is seeking more attention among academicians and policy makers. According to International Labour Organisation "The term disabled persons refers to those with visual, hearing, speech or physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, multiple disabilities and/or other disabilities". The literature reveals that until 1980 very few initiatives were taken to bring disabled person's life into main stream. When the United Nations announced 1982-1993 as The Decade of Disabled Persons, it marked shift in the entire debate on the goals of rehabilitation. The Rehabilitation Council of India was set up by the Government of India in 1986 to regulate and standardize training policies and programs for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. The very next year saw the Mental Health Act (1987) come into existence. In the new millennium, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2006. India and China signed and ratified this convention in 2007 and 2008 respectively. By then, there was a demand for providing the reservation for the Persons with Disability (PWD) category by various groups working on disability issues.

The recent census of both the countries revealed that over 26.8 Million people in India and 85.02 Million people in China suffer from some kind of disability. This is equivalent to 2.21 and 6.34 percent of the population in India and China respectively. However World Bank suggests that there are around 80 million disabled people in India. The actual numbers are contested but it is true that India has a fairly large share of the global disabled population. China is expanding coverage of government funded health insurance but in India healthcare is dominated by the private sector and affordability is a major barrier to access. Only 15 percent of the population in India has access to formal health insurance, and 75 percent of all healthcare expenses are paid for directly by individuals, compared with 45 percent in China. The facts are a strike on the face at a time when 33 percent of people with disabilities (not just rare) are in the 10-29 year age group, just starting out their lives. Many with disabilities are locked away in homes, yet others struggle to survive.

Need for the study:

China and India have the world's largest country populations estimated at 1.4 and 1.3 billion respectively. Together they are home to 31 percent of the global population. These two population superpowers have similarly prominent global positions in the Asia-Pacific region, yet different demographic and epidemiological trajectories. Understanding socioeconomic disparities in health is particularly important for policy and planning and China and India are attracting increasing global attention in relation to the impact of social and economic factors on health. Cross-country comparisons can allow global and national insights and provide evidence for decision-making. In this paper we analyse and compare profile and policies for persons with disability in China and India.

Objectives:

The disability rights movement is trying to address the issue by advancing the agenda of inclusiveness. The question should now transition from acceptance into the society (inclusiveness) to equal partnerships with the able-bodied. Until more people who have disabilities enter government, public spaces, schools, and offices, an understanding of their differences and needs will be as vague as it is now in the public sphere. To be able to realize the goal of inclusiveness, a radical shift in perspective that of being equal partners in development and decision making is needed first. The study aims to compare the profile and policies on persons with disability, which helps in cross learning. This paper is an effort to map the scale of disability and related social welfare policies in India and China.

Methodology:

The present study is an effort to discuss the profile and policies of persons with disability with the help of evidence based on available data. The data for the article was obtained from different secondary sources; one among the important and authentic source is census conducted by both the countries; The profile of the persons with disability is studied using census and other sample based surveys results of both the countries, programs and policies to uplift the persons with disability are reviewed from Govt. publications and all the related articles and publications

Discussion:

Although China and India are similar in that they are both undergoing rapid social and economic transitions including rising incomes, increasing rural to urban migration, changing roles for women in education and employment, and shifts from traditional extended family structures to smaller nuclear family units, however there are notable differences. For example, primary education is almost universal in China but India is lagging in this regard. Between 1990 and 2005 the total share of the population attaining post-secondary education in China rose from 2% (2.7% male, 1.3% female) to 6.9% (7.8% male, 6.1% female). In contrast, the population of India is poorer and less well educated

The analysis shows majority (>62 percent) of the disabled population resides in rural areas. Though the profile of the disabled is different in both the countries, they have made significant efforts in uplifting the persons with disability. Both the countries have good measures in up-liftment of the disabled and have lessons to learn each other. Interestingly, on policy front, both India and China have adopted liberal policies to support their disabled population. However, the implementation of the state's promises to the disabled has been an on-going process and there is evidence that welfare policies targeting them have improved and become comprehensive over the years. Indeed, there is a long way to cover against the backdrop of India and China fast becoming ageing societies. The Indian government has sought to change the terminology in the disability debate from *Viklangjan* (disabled people) to that of *divyangjan* (Divine-gifted). Irrespective of good intentions, the *divyangjan* term now officially used by the government is still problematic, however China has no such terminology but taken many measures to bring the persons with disability to mainstream. Remaining finding on profile and policies of both the countries will be discussed in full length paper.

Sample table:

Table 1: Comparison of profile of persons with disability in India and China.

Demography	India	China
Population	21 million (2011 Census)	85.02 Million (2010 Census)
Percentage	2.3%	6.34%
Part of UN Convention	Yes-2007	Yes-2008
Reservation	3% (Public Institutions)	1.5 (Public & Private Institutions)
Provision in Constitution	Yes	Yes
Approach	Welfare based	Right based
First Law	1987-Mental Health Act	1982 (Constitution)
Employment Rate	37.6%	80%

Source: Census and other Govt. Publications