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### From fostering social justice to retaining injustice: Examining the Role of State Policies in Addressing Socioeconomic Inequality in Odisha

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#### Abstract

The caste system has long shaped Indian society by enforcing a rigid occupational hierarchy, making professions hereditary. Those at the bottom have remained dependent on dominant groups, unable to qualify for well-paying jobs and thus confined to the informal sector with little upward mobility. Colonial rule reinforced these inequalities, creating uneven access to economic opportunities across social groups. Post-reform periods further deepened informality, keeping marginalised communities in stagnant living conditions. A region's living standards are determined by the availability of civic amenities and household facilities, which directly impact socioeconomic outcomes. Despite societal changes, structural inequalities persist, evident in the reliance on vulnerable family members, such as women, children, and the elderly, for economic survival. This highlights the urgent need for state intervention to promote equality and social justice. However, despite multiple welfare initiatives aimed at poverty alleviation, socioeconomic mobility among marginalised groups remains limited. This raises concerns about the effectiveness of state policies in addressing deep-rooted inequalities.

#### Keywords

Caste structure,  
Informality,  
Intergenerational  
mobility, Social  
Inequality, Social  
justice, State  
intervention

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## Background

The geographical characteristics of a region, such as topography, climate, and water resources, play a crucial role in shaping its agricultural patterns and industrial landscape. However, the social structure of the region determines the eligibility criteria and workforce composition within these industries. In egalitarian societies, like tribal communities, access to resources and opportunities is more evenly distributed among all members. In contrast, hierarchical societies allocate access based on traditional socio-ritual rankings, which significantly influence an individual's socioeconomic and educational opportunities. This interplay between social, economic, and geographical factors dictates an individual's status and is passed down through generations. In India's deeply stratified society, higher social groups experience faster intergenerational socioeconomic mobility, whereas lower social groups struggle with limited access to education and employment, leading to restricted upward mobility. This persistent disparity highlights the urgent need for state intervention to bridge the widening inequality gap and ensure social justice. Despite the existence of numerous welfare measures, the socio-economic conditions of marginalised groups have remained largely unchanged over time. This raises critical concerns regarding the effectiveness of such policies at the grassroots level. To address this issue, it is essential to conduct a thorough performance analysis of welfare measures by considering the daily experiences of the people they aim to serve. A deeper understanding of these lived realities will help identify gaps in policy implementation and create more targeted strategies to promote equitable development and meaningful change.

Against this backdrop, the present study traces the process of participation in development opportunities in the presence of welfare measures. Social mobility, being the central focus of modern development theories, is reflected in terms of intergenerational shifts in income, education, occupation, as well as broader well-being indicators such as health and civic participation. However, despite having a history of social justice mechanisms, the historically led structural inequality has been reconfiguring itself, thereby calling for the evaluation of its causes. Therefore, this entire process of participation in development opportunities is analytically explained with the help of the following objectives:

1. To examine the parameters of social mobility and assess their performance among the selected sample households.
2. To identify the existing measures at the national and state levels that address these social mobility parameters.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of these welfare measures within their respective domains.

## Methodology

The study employs a convergent mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection, with a larger emphasis on the latter. Quantitative indicators—such as housing quality, income levels, educational attainment, and occupational status—are supplemented by qualitative insights into discrimination patterns, family histories, regional trajectories, and dependency networks that are usually overlooked by numerical capture. A cross-sectional framework was selected to balance cost and

efficiency, enabling the simultaneous assessment of multiple household-level outcomes at a single point in time. Recognising this caste-led nature of social stratification in India, Odisha was chosen as the research locus for its cultural richness that implies a strong adherence to caste hierarchies and substantial reserved-category populations (17 per cent SC, 25 per cent ST, and 45–55 per cent OBC). Within Odisha, Puri and Khordha districts were purposively selected to highlight the respective rural agrarian vulnerability and the urban industrial informality. These districts were further narrowed to Kakatpur (rural) and Bhubaneswar (urban) sub-districts. In Kakatpur, Balara village, where Scheduled Castes constitute 27 per cent of largely landless agricultural labourers are exposed to coastal distress, was served as the rural sample site. The other selected sample subdistrict (of Khordha) is Bhubaneswar, known for its highly developed status, therefore having a large share of slum population with three lakh (30 per cent) of the city's population residing in 436 clusters, as a corollary of development. The target population comprised socially disadvantaged groups defined under Articles 341 (SC), 342 (ST), and the National Commission for Backwards Classes Act, 1993 (OBC). A sampling frame was constructed from local panchayat records, and a purposive, non-probability approach was adopted to focus on settlement aspects with high concentrations of backwards communities. Stratification by rural and urban strata ensured proportional representation of subgroups. Ultimately, 320 households were surveyed—159 in Balara and 161 across four notified slums in Bhubaneswar's slums—thereby yielding an appropriate dataset for examining caste-mediated patterns of inequality and

livelihood vulnerability. Before initiating household interviews, all respondents were provided with a clear explanation of the study's aims, scope, and procedure, ensuring consent-based participation. To protect participant's privacy, all data were treated as strictly confidential. Participation was entirely voluntary, with respondents explicitly informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Being reliant on mixed methods of data collection, the concerned data are both qualitative as well as quantitative in nature, with the former receiving a relatively higher importance, given the focus of the research. Demographic characteristics, educational levels, economic indicators, and welfare uptake were recorded quantitatively, while personal narratives of exclusion, educational barriers, and perceptions of welfare schemes were explored through qualitative techniques. Primary instruments comprised structured and semi-structured questionnaires, organised into demographic, education, health, and financial modules. An initial pilot across ten Kakatpur subdistrict villages guided the selection of Balara, where Scheduled Castes constitute 27 per cent of landless labourers, as the rural field site. The urban component focused on four notified Bhubaneswar slums—Gopabandhu Nagar Unit VIII (29 households, 150 residents), Nila Panitanki Basti (400 households, 2,000 residents), Radhakrushna Upper Sahi Unit VI (71 households, 355 residents), and Simili Basti (70 households, 350 residents)—all predominantly belonging to socially backward communities. This dual-site framework facilitates comparative analysis of rural and urban livelihood trajectories. The entire analysis is carried out with the help of univariate (frequency, arithmetic mean, and percentage), bivariate (through cross tabulation), each serving as the

baseline for the key variables, and depicting the occurrence of one variable in relation to the other, respectively.

### Parameters of social mobility and its performance

Social mobility, which is the prime focus of modern economic development, is well reflected in terms of indicators like asset ownership, access to basic civic amenities, quality of housing, stability of livelihood, educational opportunities, and access to food and health services. These indicators can be organised into three conceptual categories: endowments, opportunities, and securities, each holding a distinctive feature of a household's capacity to rise above poverty. The first category, i.e. the 'endowment', refers to the stock of physical and material resources that a household holds, comprising land, livestock, etc., which act as a cushion against sudden economic shocks, enabling the family to continue consumption even when their

#### a. Endowments:

	SC			OBC			Unreserved		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Land ownership									
Landless	13 (9.6)	4 (5.9)	17 (8.3)	1 (9.1)	2 (5.4)	3 (6.3)	2 (15.4)	6 (10.7)	8 (11.6)
Marginal (< 1 hect)	122 (90.4)	64 (94.1)	186 (91.6)	9 (81.8)	34 (91.9)	43 (27.1)	9 (69.2)	48 (85.7)	57 (82.6)
Small (1 to 2 hect)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.7)	1 (2.1)	2 (15.4)	2 (3.6)	4 (5.8)
Semi-medium and above (> 2 hect)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)
Livestock possession									
Bovine	59 (72.8)	2 (100.0)	61 (73.5)	9 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)
Ruminants	48 (59.3)	1 (50.0)	49 (59.0)	2 (22.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (11.8)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)
Poultry	2 (2.5)	1 (50.0)	3 (3.6)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	81 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	83 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	1 (100.0)

Housing type

income falls. The housing quality, on the other hand, measured in terms of structural soundness, ownership of consumer durables, and access to basic civic amenities, shapes the everyday living standard. The second category, ie the 'opportunity', encompasses access to education and decent stable employment, with the former fostering social gain and the latter affecting the capacity to meet consumption needs. The third category is the 'security', referring to the protection against risks in fields of health and vulnerabilities (like old age, widowhood, disability) which restrict the earning potential of the individual. The entire phenomenon of the performance of the sample in various parameters of social mobility has been explained analytically with the help of figures shown below concerning each conceptual category of 'endowments', 'opportunities', and 'security', each being decomposed further in terms of different measuring indicators.

Kutcha	48 (35.6)	3 (4.4)	51 (25.1)	2 (18.2)	1 (2.7)	3 (6.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (3.6)	2 (2.9)
Partial pucca	49 (36.3)	65 (95.6)	114 (56.2)	3 (27.3)	35 (94.6)	38 (79.2)	2 (15.4)	51 (91.1)	53 (76.8)
Pucca	38 (28.1)	0 (0.0)	38 (18.7)	6 (54.5)	1 (2.7)	7 (14.6)	11 (84.6)	3 (5.4)	14 (20.3)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)
Housing ownership									
Inherited	111 (82.2)	2 (2.9)	113 (55.7)	10 (90.9)	1 (2.7)	11 (22.9)	2 (15.4)	2 (3.6)	4 (5.8)
Bought/self-constructed	21 (15.6)	2 (2.9)	23 (11.3)	1 (9.1)	1 (2.7)	2 (4.2)	10 (76.9)	3 (5.4)	13 (18.8)
Rented	1 (2.1)	18 (26.5)	19 (9.4)	0 (0.0)	9 (24.3)	9 (18.8)	1 (7.7)	9 (7.7)	10 (14.5)
Others (no ownership)	0 (0.0)	46 (67.6)	46 (23.7)	0 (0.0)	26 (70.3)	26 (54.2)	0 (0.0)	42 (75.0)	42 (60.9)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)
Source of drinking water									
Own tubewell	49 (36.3)	0 (0.0)	49 (24.1)	10 (90.9)	0 (0.0)	10 (20.8)	11 (84.6)	1 (1.8)	12 (17.4)
Shared (community tube well)	86 (63.7)	1 (1.5)	87 (42.9)	1 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.1)	2 (15.4)	1 (1.8)	3 (4.3)
Public water supply	0 (0.0)	67 (98.5)	67 (33.0)	0 (0.0)	37 (100.0)	37 (77.1)	0 (0.0)	54 (96.4)	54 (78.3)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)
Sanitation (toilet facilities)									
Exclusive	8 (72.7)	14 (37.8)	22 (45.8)	12 (92.3)	25 (44.6)	37 (53.6)	34 (25.2)	19 (27.9)	53 (26.1)
Shared	1 (9.1)	23 (62.2)	24 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	31 (55.4)	31 (44.9)	13 (9.6)	48 (70.6)	61 (30.0)
No toilet	2 (18.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.2)	1 (7.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.4)	88 (65.2)	1 (1.5)	89 (43.8)
Total	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)
Presence of a separate kitchen									
Yes	14 (10.4)	8 (11.8)	22 (10.8)	6 (54.5)	10 (27.0)	16 (33.3)	11 (84.6)	12 (21.4)	23 (33.3)
No	121 (89.6)	60 (88.2)	181 (89.2)	5 (45.5)	27 (73.0)	32 (66.7)	2 (15.4)	44 (78.6)	46 (66.7)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)

## b. Opportunities

SC	OBC	Unreserved
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	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Education of the head of the household									
Illiterate	54 (40.0)	13 (19.1)	67 (33.0)	2 (18.2)	7 (18.9)	9 (18.8)	0 (0.0)	7 (12.5)	7 (10.1)
Primary	41 (30.4)	28 (41.2)	69 (34.0)	3 (27.3)	11 (29.7)	14 (29.2)	1 (7.7)	16 (28.6)	17 (24.6)
Secondary	33 (24.4)	22 (32.4)	55 (27.1)	3 (27.3)	14 (37.8)	17 (35.4)	6 (46.2)	29 (51.8)	35 (50.7)
Intermediate	5 (3.7)	2 (2.9)	7 (3.4)	3 (27.3)	2 (5.4)	5 (10.4)	0 (0.0)	3 (5.4)	3 (4.3)
Higher education	2 (1.5)	3 (4.4)	5 (2.5)	0 (0.0)	3 (8.1)	3 (6.3)	6 (46.2)	1 (1.8)	7 (10.1)
Total	135 (100)	68 (100)	203 (100)	11 (100)	37 (100)	48 (100)	13 (100)	56 (100)	69 (100)
Occupation of the head of the household									
Salaried	5 (4.0)	5 (7.7)	10 (5.3)	1 (12.5)	1 (2.9)	2 (3.2)	6 (66.7)	3 (5.6)	9 (14.5)
Self-employed (small)	19 (15.3)	20 (30.8)	39 (20.6)	5 (62.5)	21 (0.6)	26 (41.9)	5 (55.5)	23 (43.3)	28 (45.5)
Self-employed (large)	1 (0.8)	1 (1.5)	2 (1.0)	1 (12.5)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.6)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.8)	1 (1.6)
Daily wage	95 (76.6)	22 (33.8)	117 (61.9)	2 (25.0)	1 (2.9)	3 (4.8)	0 (0.0)	11 (20.7)	11 (17.7)
Monthly wage	7 (5.6)	20 (30.8)	27 (20.9)	0 (0.0)	13 (37.1)	13 (20.9)	2 (22.2)	16 (30.1)	18 (29.0)
Total	124 (100.0)	65 (100.0)	189 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	62 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	53 (100.0)	62 (100.0)
Continuity of traditional occupation									
Yes	99 (73.3)	30 (45.5)	129 (64.2)	4 (36.4)	11 (31.4)	15 (32.6)	0 (0.0)	3 (13.0)	3 (10.3)
No	36 (26.7)	36 (54.5)	72 (35.8)	7 (63.6)	24 (68.6)	31 (67.4)	6 (100.0)	20 (87.0)	26 (89.7)
Total	135 (100.0)	66 (100.0)	201 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	46 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	29 (100.0)

The extent of the vulnerability is measured through the categorisation of the indicators of each variable and their corresponding comparison across social groups. From the above analysis we observe that SC are performing worse in areas like housing structure (25.1 percent owning kutch house), civic amenities (42.9 percent relying on shared drinking water resource, 89.2 percent lacking separate kitchen), education (33.0 percent being illiterate), occupation (61.9 percent engaged in daily wage labour,

and 64.2 percent continuing traditional occupation), and vulnerability (10.8 percent having disabled members in the family). Such deprivations among them, however were found more in rural areas than their urban counterparts, as indicated by 35.6 percent having a Kucha house, 63.7 per cent relying on community water resources, 89.6 per cent lacking a separate kitchen, 40 percent being illiterate, and lastly, 76.6 percent being engaged in daily wage labour.

### c. Securities

	SC			OBC			Unreserved		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Food expense as a % of income (food security)									
0-25	124 (91.9)	60 (88.2)	184 (90.6)	8 (72.7)	32 (86.5)	40 (83.3)	12 (92.3)	51 (91.1)	63 (91.3)
26-50	11 (8.1)	8 (11.8)	19 (9.4)	1 (9.1)	5 (13.5)	6 (12.5)	1 (7.7)	5 (8.9)	6 (8.9)
51-75	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (18.2)	0 (0.0)	2 (4.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Above 76	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)
Presence of chronic illness and types									
BP	13 (54.2)	23 (85.2)	36 (70.6)	3 (50.0)	12 (66.7)	15 (62.5)	3 (60.0)	13 (61.9)	16 (61.5)
Diabetes	12 (50.0)	15 (55.6)	27 (52.9)	4 (66.7)	7 (38.9)	11 (45.8)	3 (60.0)	13 (61.9)	16 (61.5)
Asthma	2 (8.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (3.9)	0 (0.0)	3 (16.7)	3 (12.5)	2 (40.0)	2 (9.5)	4 (11.5)
Cardiac	4 (16.7)	2 (3.7)	6 (9.8)	1 (16.7)	2 (11.1)	3 (12.5)	1 (20.0)	1 (4.8)	2 (3.8)
Total	24 (100.0)	27 (100.0)	51 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	18 (100.0)	24 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	26 (100.0)
Presence of the vulnerable in the household									
Senior citizen	78 (57.8)	32 (47.1)	110 (54.2)	8 (72.7)	25 (67.6)	33 (68.8)	10 (76.9)	31 (55.4)	41 (59.4)
Widow	35 (25.9)	18 (26.5)	53 (26.1)	2 (18.2)	17 (45.9)	19 (39.6)	3 (23.1)	17 (30.4)	20 (29.0)
Differently abled	14 (12.6)	5 (10.8)	19 (10.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (5.8)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)

Unreserved, on the other hand, are performing better in majority of the areas such as, housing structure (20.3 percent having pucca house), housing amenities (78.3 having access to public water supply and 33.3 percent having separate kitchen), education (10.1 percent attaining higher education), occupation (1.6 percent employed in large businesses), food security (91.3 percent spending lowest of their income on food). The OBC are somewhere in the transition phase, performing somewhat better than their SC counterparts, but worse than their Unreserved counterparts. Their better performance is

observed in areas such as land (2.1 percent having medium sized and holdings), and sanitation (53.6 percent having exclusive toilets)

The above analysis, therefore, proves the retained prevalence of historical sociocultural inequality among the socially disadvantaged groups, as indicated by a larger presence of SC in vulnerable indicators, and thereby acknowledges the need for state interventions in these concerned areas, which has been discussed in the next section.

### **Existing welfare measures addressing these issues**

Several social welfare measures at the national and state levels have been introduced in the fields of housing, education, livelihood, health, nutrition, and vulnerability. However, our focus is restricted only to those measures that are directly accrued to the sample. Considering the first construct, ie the 'endowment', which is explained in terms of land holdings and the housing status, measures like Indra Awas (later got renamed as PM Awas) provide financial assistance to the poor to construct their house, on an instalment basis. Similarly, in the context of 'opportunities', which is represented better in terms of education and livelihood status, in fields of education, measures like Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan at the national level, along with other state-level programs like Gangadhar Meher Sikshya Manakbrudhi, Biju Yuva Sasaktikaran Yojaan, etc, intend to reduce financial burden in education, with provision of scholarships, accommodation facilities, stationery, and accessories. Under the category of livelihood, measures like PM KISAN (at the national level), KALIA (at the state level), intend to reduce the burden of farming expenses to a certain extent. There are some non-agricultural wage employment measures as well, such as MGNREGA (at the national level) and Urban Wage Employment Initiative (at the state level), to provide unskilled wage employment in rural and urban areas, respectively. In addition to it, the provision of microfinancing provides the opportunity to undertake income-generating activities is also in practice. Lastly, the 'security' construct is concerned with various forms of vulnerabilities arising out of food, health issues, old age, widowhood, and disability. In this context, in health aspects, Biju

Swasthya Yojana (at the state level) provide for health insurance against secondary and tertiary treatment. Similarly, in the context of nutrition, the measures like mid-day meal, Integrated Child Development Schemes providing cooked meals and nutrition to school-going children, young adolescent girls, and pregnant and lactating women, whereas the Public Distribution System provides for certain monthly rations to the poor at a subsidised rate. Lastly, in the context of protection against vulnerability, measures under National Social Assistance Programs provide for financial assistance every month to vulnerable groups like the elderly, widows, and differently abled persons.

### **Performance of these measures at the grassroots level**

Despite having numerous welfare measures directly operative in our sample area, critical flaws in their very design (eligibility rules) systematically exclude the neediest. For example, the housing endowments, both Indira Awas Yojana and Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana, although aimed at the kutcha house families, in practice require clear land titles for disbursement, thereby excluding the landless labourers who arguably have the greatest shelter need. Similarly, in the context of livelihood-related measures, though the share farmers account for most of the paddy producers, they are unable to receive the benefits of crop procurement and compensation post crop failure, due to being unable to produce in bulk (being small landless farmers) and lacking land records, respectively. Similarly, in the absence of stringent poverty targeting, microcredit programs are unable to draw a clear differentiation between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and as a result of priority is given to repayment capacity over

poverty status, thereby extending the loans more to the well-off sections and crowding out the genuinely poor borrowers. Again, in the context of health insurance, the measures cover secondary and tertiary treatments of the in patients, whereas it is usually the chronic status of the illness majorly found among the poor, costing them huge chunk of day to day out of pocket expenses forcing them to overlook their health issues and rely solely on symptoms-based medicines. Lastly, under the category of food security, the eligibility under the PDS is tied to household-level identification, as a result of which the adult children who form separate economic units are often excluded from obtaining distinct ration cards. Such formulation of defects in eligibility thresholds, documentation requirements, and benefit unit definition systematically excludes the marginalised, those most aimed to serve. And whatever the small fraction of genuine beneficiaries who clear these hurdles, they then have to confront implementation-level bottlenecks, thereby diluting the impact of these programs to a further extent.

The inefficiencies at the implementation level can again be organized into two categories: 'restricted delivery' (with service reaching the intended beneficiaries but fall short of adequacy, regularity, or based on conditionality), and 'exclusion and diversion' (with benefits being denied to the rightful claimants and instead are captured by the well-off social groups). Coming to the context of the restricted delivery, such instances of conditional, inadequate, and irregular accruing of benefits are witnessed mostly in measures related to housing, livelihood, and social security. For example, despite being eligible for housing assistance, many of the beneficiaries received less than

the sanctioned grant, where part of it was siphoned off in the name of 'processing charges. Similarly, despite having the provision of wage payment and allowance being directly credited to the account, delayed reimbursement of funds results in irregularity of payments. Moreover, beneficiaries were also reported to receive less than the prescribed amount through rent seeking and age-related misinformation. The second category of exclusion and diversion is witnessed primarily in housing and safety nets, where the services are provided to the original beneficiaries who were denied through misinformation on one hand, and were transferred to the non-beneficiaries belonging to well-off social groups on the other. Instances such as the upper caste group, who already had their house constructed much before even the programs were introduced, were reported to receive the financial assistance that was initially intended for the poor beneficiaries. Similarly, a certain group of people, even before attaining the age of sixty, were starting to receive old age allowances, while the actual beneficiaries have been made to run back and forth in the name of cross verification, and other formal procedures.

This entire process of the performance of such welfare measures is analytically presented by considering the implementation aspect of the very measures. For this purpose, the analyses have been bifurcated into two major categories of restriction and exclusion, with each further decomposed in terms of the constructs of endowments, opportunity, and security. While the exclusionary forms of discrimination were more descriptive, the analysis primarily focuses on the restricted forms of discrimination.

## a. Endowments:

	SC			OBC			Unreserved		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Housing assistance under Indira Awas Yojana and related									
Receiving	41 (74.5)	0 (0.0)	41 (74.5)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (100.0)	2 (100.0)
Not receiving	14 (25.5)	0 (0.0)	14 (25.5)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	55 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	55 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	2 (100.0)

## b. Opportunities

	SC			OBC			Unreserved		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Sufficiency of mid-day meal (food security)									
Adequate	40 (78.4)	34 (89.5)	74 (83.1)	3 (75.0)	15 (100.0)	18 (94.7)	4 (100.0)	15 (88.2)	19 (90.5)
Inadequate	11 (21.6)	4 (10.5)	15 (16.9)	1 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (11.8)	2 (9.5)
Total	51 (100.0)	38 (100.0)	89 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	21 (100.0)
regularity of mid-day meal provision (food security)									
Regular	51 (100.0)	38 (100.0)	89 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	21 (100.0)
Irregular	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	51 (100.0)	38 (100.0)	89 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	21 (100.0)
Availing educational assistance (stipend, laptop, bicycle, and others)									
Yes	108 (61.7)	67 (38.3)	175 (62.9)	13 (28.9)	32 (71.1)	45 (16.2)	10 (12.2)	48 (82.8)	58 (20.9)
No	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	108 (61.7)	67 (38.3)	175 (62.9)	13 (28.9)	32 (71.1)	45 (16.2)	10 (12.2)	48 (82.8)	58 (20.9)
Adequacy of financial assistance under KISAN and KALIA									
Adequate	69 (63.8)	0 (0.0)	69 (63.8)	4 (80.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (80.0)	3 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (100.0)
Inadequate	39 (36.1)	0 (0.0)	39 (36.1)	1 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	108 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	108 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	3 (100.0)
Regularity of financial assistance under KISAN and KALIA									
Regular	24 (22.2)	0 (0.0)	24 (22.2)	3 (60.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (60.0)	2 (66.7)	0 (0.0)	2 (66.7)
Irregular	84 (77.8)	0 (0.0)	84 (77.8)	2 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (40.0)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (33.3)
Total	108 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	108 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	5 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	3 (100.0)
Days of work under public employment programmes									

Below 50	88 (96.7)	11 (100.0)	99 (97.1)	6 (85.7)	5 (83.3)	11 (84.6)	0 (0.0)	9 (100.0)	9 (100.0)
Above 50	3 (3.3)	0 (0.0)	3 (2.9)	1 (14.3)	1 (16.7)	2 (15.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	91 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	102 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	9 (100.0)
Payment adequacy under public employment programmes									
Sufficient	32 (35.2)	9 (81.8)	41 (40.2)	1 (14.3)	4 (66.7)	5 (38.5)	0 (0.0)	8 (88.9)	8 (88.9)
Under supply	59 (64.8)	2 (18.2)	61 (59.8)	6 (85.7)	2 (33.3)	8 (61.5)	0 (0.0)	1(11.1)	1(11.1)
Total	91 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	102 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	9 (100.0)
Payment regularity under public employment programmes									
Regular	29 (31.9)	1 (9.1)	30 (29.4)	2 (28.6)	2 (66.7)	4 (30.8)	0 (0.0)	4 (44.4)	4 (44.4)
Irregular	62 (68.1)	10 (90.9)	72 (70.6)	5 (71.4)	4 (33.3)	9 (96.2)	0 (0.0)	5 (55.6)	5 (55.6)
Total	91 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	102 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	9 (100.0)
Purpose of loans undertaken under Self-Help Groups									
Business purpose	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (62.5)	11 (47.8)	16 (40.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Debt repayment	32 (31.7)	0 (0.0)	32 (21.3)	3 (37.5)	4 (17.4)	7 (17.5)	3 (50.0)	9 (26.5)	12 (30.0)
Regular consumption	69 (68.3)	49 (100.0)	118 (78.9)	0 (0.0)	8 (34.5)	8 (20.0)	3 (50.0)	25 (73.5)	28 (70.0)
Total	101 (100.0)	49 (100.0)	150 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	40 (100.0)	6 (100.0)	34 (100.0)	40 (100.0)

## c. Securities

	SC			OBC			Unreserved		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Sufficiency of ration provision under the PDS									
Sufficient	117 (91.4)	60 (95.2)	177 (92.3)	6 (75.0)	32 (88.9)	38 (86.4)	2 (100.0)	45 (97.8)	47 (97.9)
Under supply	11 (8.6)	3 (4.8)	14 (7.7)	2 (25.0)	4 (11.1)	6 (13.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (2.2)	1 (2.1)
Total	128 (100.0)	63 (100.0)	191 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	44 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	46 (100.0)	48 (100.0)
Regularity of ration provision under the PDS									
Regular	112 (87.5)	60 (95.2)	172 (90.1)	5 (62.5)	35 (97.2)	40 (90.9)	2 (100.0)	46 (100.0)	48 (100.0)
Irregular	16 (12.5)	3 (4.8)	19 (9.9)	3 (37.5)	1 (2.8)	4 (9.1)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	128 (100.0)	63 (100.0)	191 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	36 (100.0)	44 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	46 (100.0)	48 (100.0)

Free health coverage (under Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana and Jan Arogya Yojana)

Yes	1 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	2 (18.2)	1 (2.7)	3 (6.3)	2 (15.4)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.9)
No	134 (99.3)	68 (100.0)	202 (99.5)	9 (81.8)	36 (97.3)	45 (93.8)	11 (84.6)	56 (100.0)	67 (97.1)
Total	135 (100.0)	68 (100.0)	203 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	37 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	56 (100.0)	69 (100.0)
Adequacy of the old age allowance amount under NSAP									
Sufficient	37 (67.3)	16 (76.2)	53 (69.7)	7 (100.0)	7 (50.0)	14 (66.7)	6 (75.0)	19 (100.0)	25 (92.6)
Under supply	18 (32.7)	5 (23.8)	23 (30.3)	0 (0.0)	7 (50.0)	7 (33.3)	2 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (7.4)
Total	55 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	76 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	27 (100.0)
Regularity of the old age allowance amount under NSAP									
Regular	34 (61.8)	16 (76.2)	50 (65.6)	7 (100.0)	7 (50.0)	14 (66.7)	6 (75.0)	19 (100.0)	25 (92.6)
Irregular	21 (32.8)	5 (23.8)	26 (34.4)	0 (0.0)	7 (50.0)	7 (33.3)	2 (25.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (7.4)
Total	55 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	76 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	27 (100.0)
Adequacy of the widowhood allowance amount under NSAP									
Sufficient	30 (88.2)	14 (87.5)	44 (88.0)	2 (100.0)	13 (76.5)	15 (78.9)	2 (66.7)	17 (100.0)	19 (95.0)
Under supply	4 (11.8)	2 (12.5)	6 (12.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (23.5)	4 (21.1)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.0)
Total	34 (100.0)	16 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	20 (100.0)
Regularity of the widowhood allowance amount under NSAP									
Regular	31 (91.2)	13 (81.3)	44 (88.0)	2 (100.0)	12 (70.6)	14 (73.7)	2 (66.7)	17 (100.0)	19 (95.0)
Irregular	3 (8.8)	3 (18.7)	6 (12.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (29.4)	5 (26.3)	1 (33.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (5.0)
Total	34 (100.0)	16 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	2 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	17 (100.0)	20 (100.0)
Adequacy of disability allowance amount under NSAP									
Sufficient	5 (33.3)	2 (50.0)	7 (58.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (66.7)	2 (66.7)
Under supply	10 (66.7)	2 (50.0)	12 (63.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)
Total	15 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	3 (100.0)
Regularity of disability allowance amount under NSAP									
Regular	5 (33.3)	2 (50.0)	7 (58.3)	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	2 (66.7)	2 (66.7)
Irregular	10 (66.7)	2 (50.0)	12 (63.2)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)
Total	15 (100.0)	4 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	0 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	3 (100.0)

From the tables, we see that it is again the SC who are facing higher rate if inefficiencies under the majority of the policy measures

such as mid-day meals (16.9 percent receiving inadequate supply), livelihood related financial assistance (36 percent

receiving inadequate amount under KISAN (and KALIA) and 77.8 of receiving them on irregular basis), subsidised food programmes (9.9 percent receiving ration on irregular basis), health coverage (99.5 percent neglected under free health coverage), and transfer payments concerning old age (34.4 percent receiving irregular payments) and disability (63.2 percent receiving inadequate amount, and 63.2 percent, on irregular basis). Such inefficiency was again witnessed more in rural areas, especially in context of mid-day meal provision (21.6 percent), livelihood related measures (36.1 percent, and 77.8 percent, under PM KISAN), PDS provision (12.5 percent receiving irregularly), senior citizen allowance (32.8 percent receiving on irregular basis), and lastly transfer payment in context of disability (66.7 percent in each). Such measures however have been reaching efficiently to the socially better off groups of unreserved, as witnessed by higher coverage of housing assistance (100 percent receiving the sanctioned amount), livelihood related measures like KISAN (100 percent receiving sufficiently and 66.7 percent, on regular basis) and public employment programs (88.9 receiving sufficient payment and 44.4 for regular basis), subsidised ration provisions (97.9 percent receiving adequately, and 100 percent, regularly), and transfer payments in context of both old age and widowhood. As the cost of these policy ineffectiveness is again borne by the socially disadvantaged groups, this indicates the reconfiguration of the structural inequalities in the current times.

### Conclusion

The study examined how marginalised groups engage with development opportunities under welfare schemes

designed to promote social justice. Although a variety of social-mobility measures exist in our sample region, a substantial share of eligible beneficiaries remains unable to secure the intended state support, underscoring the need to probe the implementation process itself. While prior research has catalogued deprivation indicators and evaluated welfare provisions, it has largely neglected the underlying causes of implementation failures, focusing predominantly on coverage levels. The present study moves a step ahead by addressing the cause part by understanding the implementation process in a nuanced manner by identifying a three-player exclusion mechanism in which power flows unidirectionally—from socially privileged elites, through panchayat functionaries, to the poor—thereby mediating access to entitlements. Low literacy and limited awareness among disadvantaged households render them dependent on local elites for information on eligibility and procedures. Conversely, socioeconomically advantaged families leverage their influence over intermediaries, who control critical delivery nodes, to obtain preferential treatment. This dynamic not only diverts resources from rightful recipients but also entrenches the poor's reliance on local power brokers, perpetuating a cumulative cycle of structural impoverishment. While this study is rooted in the notified slums of Bhubaneswar and rural economy of Kakatpur sub-districts, and based on a cross-sectional sample, its findings nevertheless reflect a broader pattern of policy exclusion among marginalised groups. Future research should therefore employ a larger, more diverse sample—spanning multiple urban, peri-urban, and rural sites—and adopt a longitudinal design to trace how implementation gaps and power dynamics

evolve. Such comparative and temporal analyses will be crucial for testing the generalizability of our three-actor exclusion mechanism and for informing policy interventions that genuinely reach the most vulnerable.

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