National Infrastructure Equity Audit 2010

Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices, Secretariat, Social Equity Watch

Questioning Disparity

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Step 1 - Training community members and selecting sample GPs

A participatory training programme was conducted by Praxis for community volunteers from community groups and organisation working with Dalits, Tribals and Religious Minorities, which wanted to undertake this equity audit in their working areas.

The community groups and organisations selected one hundred and twenty four (124) Gram Panchayats (GPs) in nine districts in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan. In each of the states, one backward district and one developed district were selected.

It must be noted that the sample GPs would undertake the extent of inequity

Step 2 - Transit walk and Mapping

A two-member team started the study with Transit walk, mapping village and Gram Panchayat boundary and collected information about GP population and caste composition between 21 February and 10 April 2010. In the process the team identified key respondents representing all caste habitats.

Step 3 - Mapping infrastructures and service providers in GPs

Mapping exercise in 124 GPs showed that except for electricity and community centre, no other infrastructure services were available and functional in the sample GPs

Step 4 - Mapping different social habitations in GPs

All habitations belonging to SC/ST/Minority/GEN/ BC were mapped in the sample GPs and compared in terms of availability of different infrastructure facilities.

Step 5 - Mapping officially excluded SC/ST/Minority habitat

After locating the disparity in the location of village level infrastructure services, an exercise was undertaken to identify number of infrastructures which officially do not cover SC/ST/Minority GPs.

Step 6 - Assessing access difficulties by different caste groups

In the sample GPs, separate group exercises were conducted for 812 members from 121 SC, habitations, 100 ST habitations, 99 BC habitation, and 82 general caste habitations. These groups rated each infrastructure on a ten-point scale, defined in terms of poor performance (1 to 4), moderate performance (5 to 7) and good performance (8 to 10).

The figure shows low aggregate ratings given by SC/ST/Minority groups in comparison with BC and General caste groups for eight infrastructure services, especially in habitations available and commonly available in the GP.

The relatively higher dissatisfaction among SC/STs was largely due to social distance they faced due to location of services in powerful caste habitations (the figure above shows this result for one of the infrastructure facilities).

Powerless to make dominant caste service providers accountable

Apart from social distance, the relatively higher dissatisfaction among SC/STs was largely due to attitude of service providers. The figure above shows this result for one of the infrastructure facilities (PDS).

Recommendation

There is an urgent need to make infrastructure planning and location more efficient. The findings indicate that the existing inequitable distribution is socially undesirable and highly inefficient from an ‘implementation point of view’, due to the social distance and control of dominant caste ‘gatekeepers’. Some emergent recommendations are:

1. Define and officially recognise habitations/settlements for SC/ST/Minorities
2. Map these habitations/settlements, in a way that enables different schemes to assess the extent of coverage of settlements belonging to the marginalized community.
3. Undertake participatory mapping of infrastructure gap by Panchayat and community members from SC/ST/Minority habitations.
4. Working out practical guidelines for each infrastructure to prioritise officially uncovered SC/ST/Minority habitations and service providers from these habitations.
5. Working out guidelines for having a quota for coverage at the level of Block, GP and village. Periodically monitor the progress and publish it transparently in website.

Quantifying peoples knowledge for public policy advocacy