

A Study of the Disability Movement in India: Trajectory, Tensions, Future

Funding Agency: IDSK

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The primary aim of this study is to examine and explore the ways in which the local/regional/national struggles of groups of persons with disabilities is taking the shape of a social movement that seeks to alter the ways in which disabled people are viewed and treated by the society at large.

The research study proposes to examine the different strands of the localised disability advocacy struggles in various parts of the country in order to gain a better and contextualised understanding of the key issues, important events and strategies being used to carve out a disability rights movement, based on development of collective identity for all persons with disability.

The objectives of the research are:

Objective 1: To gain a deeper understanding of the processes through which alliances of persons with disabilities are being forged at the local levels – the reasons and ways in which agencies are promoting formation of disabled people’s organisations at the grassroots level, the reasons why disabled people are forming groups, and the ways in which they are organising themselves.

Objective 2: To explore the processes by which the groups are identifying key issues as concerns for their advocacy, the strategies used by these groups to negotiate the major challenges they face in terms of inclusion in the community with respect to education, health and livelihood as well as in other domains of social life.

Objective 3: To evaluate the extent of impact the efforts of these groups has had on the lives of persons with disabilities in terms of changes in structures, systems and processes, and to determine their role in stimulating the disability rights movement at the local, regional and national level.

Objective 4: To gain a deeper understanding of the processes of identity formation and reinforcement of certain identity markers for persons with disabilities brought about by the participation in the groups and in the larger movement.

Data collection is under way with visits made to Orissa, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. The data is now being transcribed and analyzed with plans for further data collection in the coming few months.