



जनजातीय कार्य मंत्रालय
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सत्यमेव जयते



IMPACT EVALUATION OF THE SCHEME OF NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP FOR HIGHER EDUCATION OF ST STUDENTS – A REPORT

DR. GADADHARA MOHAPATRA
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Executive Summary

Scholarship and fellowship play an important role in making higher education more accessible and affordable for the students belonging to the deprived sections of tribal society. Generally, students graduate from the higher educational institutions with enormous burden of study loan or limit their education at certain level in an attempt to minimize the costs. Since scholarships do not have a payback model, students availing scholarship focus on their careers rather incessantly bothering about how to repay the educational loans. While removing financial hurdles, scholarship impacts the ease of continuing and achieving higher education and career goals. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal Ministry for overall policy, planning and coordination of programmes meant for development of Schedule Tribes (STs) in the country. Ministry of Tribal Affairs has been implementing the central sector scholarship schemes namely, national fellowship and scholarship for higher education of ST Students in the country through dedicated portals. Since the various components of the national scholarship and fellowship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs covers tuition fees, books and stationery, living expenses, computer and accessories; and the national fellowship scheme for higher education of ST students covers fellowship, contingency, HRA and escort/reader assistance, it has certainly reduced the dropout rates especially among the tribal students from their higher studies. Further, it gives opportunity to the tribal students to pursue their studies in the premier educational institutions in the country. The scholarships and fellowships are sources which raise hopes and aspiration among the students belonging to marginalized sections for perusing their studies at the higher level. On successful completion of studies with the financial assistance in the form of scholarship and fellowship, tribal students have entered into the service sector both in private and public sectors through campus placement agencies in the country. There are 331 Universities where 4794 tribal Scholars are availing fellowship for their higher studies from Ministry of Tribal Affairs. All such Universities have been integrated with Fellowship portal through 'Verification Module', wherein the registered Nodal officer of University can view documents available on Digi-locker and documents uploaded by Scholar and can approve or reject application digitally.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs had entrusted the task to conduct an impact evaluation of the scheme of 'National Fellowship and Scholarship for Higher Education of ST Students' to the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. In this context, the impact evaluation study of the national fellowship and scholarship scheme has been carried out in the selected 18 States and 1 Union Territory (Delhi) which could be classified into six geographical zones/regions, namely: North Zone (Delhi (UT), Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab); South Zone (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana); East Zone (Jharkhand, Odisha); West Zone (Gujarat, Rajasthan); North East Zone (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur); Central Zone (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh). It has covered 13 Universities (State and Central Universities) and 34 Top Class Institutes spread across six NSSO Zones/regions in the country. The study team has reached out to 1091 ST students (617 ST students availing and/or applied for

Scholarships and 474 Scholars availing/applied for fellowships) from 46 educational institutions including State and Central Universities and Top Class Institutes in the country. The methodology adopted for the study is a judicious mix of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Primary data has been collected by using various tools of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) such as FGDs, observations and in-depth interviews. Further, 'before and after approach' has been adopted to capture the impact of the scheme both in financial and physical achievements under the national scholarship and fellowship scheme. The study has been carried out through the 'Survey CTO – real time data generation software'.

Key findings of the National Scholarship Scheme

The scholarship has been provided to ST students, who are seeking for pursuing graduation and post-graduation from top class institutions in India. Students get scholarship for tuition fees, living expenses, computer accessories, etc. These facilities were provided to each and every student who was selected for scholarship programs of Ministry of Tribal affairs. The facilities are varying as per institution status such as government institutions and private institution. The tuition fee in regards of government institutions is non-refundable due to government funding and it is limited to Rs. 2.5 lakh for private institutions. In scholarship program students get financial assistance of Rs. 3000 for books without bills or voucher. The living expenses also provided to student with Rs. 2200 and its maximum ceiling is Rs. 26400 for annual basis. Under scholarship program, student also gets one time financial assistance of Rs. 45000 for computer accessories.

North Zone: The study has assessed the impact of the national scholarship scheme by raising certain pertinent questions to the ST students in general and beneficiaries in particular, for instance, how often the students would have faced financial constraint without the scholarship and how they would have coped up with the financial difficulties. Out of 199 ST students under study in the north zone, 176 students reported that without scholarship, they would be worried about having money for regular expenses and college fees. However, more than four fifth (93.94%) awardees reported that the national scholarship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. It is because of the financial assistance in the form of scholarship from Ministry of Tribal Affairs that they could afford to pursue higher education in the top class institutes in the country. More than four fifth (92.46%) ST students opined that the national scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. The ST students continuing higher studies have registered both in technical and professional courses such as Bachelor of Technology, Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Medical Sciences, and related courses. The ST students are confident that soon after completion of the course, almost all are settled in both public and private sector jobs in the country through campus placements cell. More than half 39 (59.06%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

South Zone: Out of 46 ST students under study in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs notified top class institutes, almost almost 33(71.7%) ST students reported that very often they would have been

worried about having money for regular expenses and educational fees; whereas 52.17% expressed that they would have chosen not to attend higher education due to lack of financial support. Nearly three-fourth (72%) students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (scholarship for their higher studies in the top class institutes in south zone states of India). The opinions of the awardees were taken into account whether the national scholarship is empowering the tribal groups in general and tribal girls in particular. More than four-fifth (87%) awardees reported that the national scholarship is educationally empowering the tribal communities, similarly, more than four-fifth (91%) ST students opined that the national scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantaged groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. More than four-fifth (80.4%) ST student beneficiaries of the entire study sample pursuing higher studies in the top class institutes in the southern region reported that it is because of the national scholarship, they are able to meet their educational expenditure and the scholarship plays a vital role in enhancing prospects for employability. More than half (57%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Eastern Zone: The study results depict that, out of 112 study samples covered from the top class institutes in the eastern zone, nearly two-third (60%) students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance in the form of scholarship for their higher studies in the Indian state of Odisha and Jharkhand. The opinions of the awardees were taken into account whether the national scholarship is empowering the tribal groups in general and tribal girls in particular. More than four-fifth (87%) awardees reported that the national scholarship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. The study also reveals that most of the ST students have registered in the top class institutes in the country, both in technical and professional courses such as Bachelor of Technology, Bachelor of Engineering, Bachelor of Medical Sciences, Nursing, Fashion technology and related courses, soon after completion of the course, almost all are settled in both public and private sector jobs in the country. Nearly two-third (60%) surveyed ST students reported that the courses they are pursuing at present prepares them for better jobs, will help in earning more money, learning things of one's interest, preparing for higher studies, gain general education, the course training them for a specific career and for public service as well. The scheme is instrumental in removing educational backwardness and promoting higher education among the tribal communities. More than four-fifth (91.96%) ST students reported that the national scholarship scheme promotes inclusive education especially among the disadvantaged sections of the society. More than half (55.36%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Western Zone: The study samples covered from the top class institutes in the western zone (Rajasthan and Gujarat) stands at 77 ST students. Nearly three-fourth (74.37%) students of the entire study sample, are receiving financial assistance in the form of scholarship for their higher studies from Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The study has assessed the impact of the national

scholarship scheme by raising few certain pertinent questions to the ST students in general and beneficiaries in particular, for instance, how often the students would have faced financial constraint without the scholarship and how they would have coped up with the financial difficulties. More than two fifth (45.5%) ST student beneficiaries reported that very often they would have worried about having money for regular expenses without the scholarship; whereas 53.2% expressed that they would be worried about paying for college expenses or fee and 28.6% expressed that they would have chosen not to participate in an activity due to financial constraints. The opinions of the awardees were taken into account whether the national scholarship is empowering the tribal groups in general and tribal girls in particular. More than nine-tenth (92%) awardees reported that the national scholarship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. In addition to this, more than one third (39.7%) ST students opined that the national scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. The scheme is instrumental in removing educational backwardness and promoting higher education among the tribal communities. More than two third (71%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

North East Zone: The study team has reached out to 111 ST students pursuing higher studies in the top class institutes in the northeast zone/region. Nearly three-fourth (70%) ST students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (scholarship for their higher studies in the top class institutes in north zone states of India). Over half (54.05%) student beneficiaries have expressed that they are satisfied with the amount of the scholarship. Three fourth(75.7%) ST student beneficiaries from northeast region reported that without scholarship very often they would have been worried about having money for regular expenses; whereas 65.80% expressed that they would be worried about paying for college expenses or fee and 51.40% expressed that they would have chosen not to participate in an activity due to lack of money. Also 18.90% student beneficiaries reported that they would have invested more working hours to pay for the cost. The opinions of the awardees were taken into account whether the national scholarship is empowering the tribal groups in general and tribal girls in particular. More than four fifth (88.3%) awardees reported that the national scholarship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. More than four fifth (92.46%) ST students opined that the national scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. More than half (52.76%) surveyed ST students reported that the courses they are pursuing at present prepares them for better jobs. Nearly one-fifth ST students reported that the course will help them for a better training for specific career. More than two third (67%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Central Zone: The study team has reached out to 72 ST students pursuing higher studies in the top class institutes in the central zone(Madhya Pradesh and Chhattishgarh). Nearly 67 per cent students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (scholarship for their higher studies in the top class institutes in north zone states of India). It is observed during the field visit,

over half (58.33%) student beneficiaries have expressed that they are satisfied with the amount of the scholarship. The opinions of the awardees were taken into account whether the national scholarship is empowering the tribal groups in general and tribal girls in particular. More than three fourth (79.17%) awardees reported that the national scholarship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. More than four fifth (85%) surveyed ST students responded that they are not aware about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-4 of the United Nations that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. More than four fifth (92.46%) ST students opined that the national scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. Slightly more than three fourth (76%) ST student beneficiaries reported that very often they would have been worried about having money for regular expenses; whereas 64.30% expressed that they would be worried about paying for college expenses or fee and 51.40% expressed that they would have chosen not to participate in an activity due to lack of money. Also 18.90% student beneficiaries reported that they would have invested more working hours to pay for the cost. More than two third (68.06%) ST student beneficiaries of the entire study sample reported that it is because of the national scholarship, they are able to pursue higher studies in the top class institutes. Thus, the scholarship plays a vital role towards accessibility to learn, helps in educationally mainstreaming the ST students by covering the educational expenditure. More than two third (72%) surveyed ST students in the region have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Achievements under the National Scholarship Scheme

Success in higher education is commonly defined by a student's persistence (i.e., continued enrollment in the institution), progression (i.e., successful accrual of credit hours), and timely graduation. Scholarships play an important role in making higher education more accessible and affordable for the students belonging to the deprived sections of tribal society.

- The national level analysis of the impact of the scholarship scheme on ST student beneficiaries across six zones/regions confirms that almost 65 per cent students are getting scholarship from Ministry of Tribal Affairs. ST Students with rural background comprising 77 per cent are getting benefits from the scholarship scheme. More than two third (67%) ST student beneficiaries reported of utilising the scholarship amount towards meeting the educational and living expenditure.
- More than half (53%) ST students receiving scholarship have expressed that they are satisfied with amount and 48 percent students admitted that it support their studies significantly. The strength of the national scholarship scheme lies in empowering the tribal students in general and tribal girls in particular as reported by almost 87 percent ST students.
- Almost 91 percent ST student admired that the scheme is instrumental in promoting inclusive education among the tribal groups in the country.
- Since the scholarships component under the top class scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs covers tuition fees, books and stationary, living expenses, computer and accessories; it

has certainly reduced the dropout rates especially among the tribal students from their higher studies. Further, it gives opportunity to the tribal students to pursue their studies in the premier educational institutions in the country.

- On successful completion of studies with the financial assistance in the form of scholarship, tribal students have entered into the service sector both in private and public sectors through campus placement agencies in the country.
- Interaction of the survey team with the concerned officers (including Assistant Placement Officers) in the training and placement cells in the respective top class institutions (IIT, NIT, IIIT etc.) shows that there is 100 percent job assurance for students(including ST students) graduating from their institutes. Most of the students from science, engineering, information technology background are well placed in companies like IBM, Ericson, Sigmoid, Samsung Noida, Huawei etc. However, due to academic underachievement of ST students, the employment rates among the ST students (including PVTGs) are lower in comparison to the general students graduating from the top class institutions.

Key bottlenecks and challenges

The National Scholarship portal opens for about 5 months for inviting applications. Simultaneously, the top class institutes notified by Ministry of Tribal Affairs verifies the application as per the timeline given by DBT Mission and thereafter, the institute forwards applications to the Ministry. Further, the Ministry verifies the application as per the timeline. The merit list is generated for 1000 students. Ministry sends the list of 1000 selected students to NSP and NSP verifies all students account details, beneficiary code and Token No is generated by PFMS. Thereafter, Ministry put up the file to IFD for concurrence of scholarship amount. After that final bill is prepared, it is sent to PAO level for approval and then finally the amount is sent to SBI Bank. Finally, through SBI Bank, scholarship amount is transferred to student's account. Thus, the selection process and disbursement of scholarship is quite lengthy.

- Majority of the ST students come from deprived sections and they often face financial constraints as timing of disbursement is very odd and uncertain. This situation creates a financial burden on ST students and their parents. Thus, it is suggested that the time period of releasing the amount of scholarship needs to be disbursed in and around the month of August/September.
- Due to delay in receiving amount of the scholarship and fellowship, some of students had taken loan for their education which increased economic burden on them and their family.
- Students reported that Ministry of Tribal Affairs takes lot of time to disburse the scholarship, which is troubling for most of students because they belong to BPL or economically weaker sections. Therefore, this is difficult for them to manage their expenses during this period.

- In Top Class scholarship Scheme, MoTA prepares instructions manual for Institutes and for students in PPT and in Excel format and explain them the meaning of every column in the application form. Moreover through telephone calls also Ministry clear the doubts of Institutes and students pertaining to application form.
- During field visit to the top class institutes, many students reported that while filling the online application, they face issues like language of the application form not easy, and very frequent error occurs on website while uploading the documents.
- Most of the students reported that the amount earmarked is not sufficient for purchasing a high end programming supported computer (hardware and software) and equipment for study like engineering, architecture & planning and medical science.
- The ST students reported that a mass number of applications for scholarship gets rejected every year. After rejection from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, many of eligible students also failed to get other scholarship including scholarship from state governments because as per the guidelines of the national scholarship of the Ministry of tribal Affairs, they can only apply for one application from any source. Thus, the guidelines of national scholarship should be flexible in terms of allowing ST students to apply for more than one scholarship.
- There is an issue arose on Performa of Income Certificate which is not similar or identical in every state. ST Students coming from Rajasthan are not able to produce proper income certificate from Tehsildar while applying for the scholarship. Ministry of tribal Affairs also face similar issues from so many students and from institutes. Most of the students belonging to Rajasthan can't obtain Income certificate signed by Tehsildar or by Competent Authority. Students always produce income certificate signed by Notary officer only.
- Although Ministry of Tribal Affairs gives training to Nodal officers of the notified Institutes and Universities through regional workshops on the process of Scholarship once in the year. However, few students from some institutions under study reported that due to untrained staff and problems in dealing with administration, they had some issues in getting proper information about the scholarship.
- Students informed that there is helpline number for queries related to scholarship of NSP portal but most of time queries of students have been unanswered. Students also informed that whenever they email or call in order to seek information, the helpline number never responds. However, the MoTA team always picks up the phone and respond to the student's queries through dedicated grievance portal.

- Under the Top Class Scholarship Scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, only 1000 students are awarded under fresh category. Because of limited seats, ST student reported that many of their batch mates, who belong to ST category, are not receiving scholarship despite of their qualifications. Thus, it is suggested that the number of scholarship should be increased in every institution to ensure inclusion of more ST students in higher studies.
- There is a provision under the scheme that the ST candidates who are in the merit list but not selected for the award of scholarship are also eligible to apply for Post-Matric Scholarship (PMS) administered by Ministry of Tribal Affairs as a centrally sponsored scheme. The rate of scholarship varies from Rs. 230/- per month to Rs. 1200/- per month. Besides the compulsory fees are being reimbursed. However, the rate fixed for Post-Matric scholarship is very less as the tuition fee and living expenses of the students in the top class institute is higher than the amount of Post Matric Scholarship.
- Respondents reported that the selection should be on the basis of JEE entrance rank and not on the basis of intermediate marks because marks of board examination vary from one state board to other.
- Although MoTA has reserved the 50 slots for PVTG students in scheme guidelines and gives scholarship. However, the meritorious students belonging to the poorest tribal region (BIMAROU States), districts and PVTG background should be given priority while awarding scholarship.

Immediate actions needed

- MoTA has grievance portal through which they resolve the issues of the student. MoTA gives training through regional workshops to Institutes and to Universities Nodal Officer on the process of Scholarship once in the year. However, it is suggested by the ST students that such training programmes should be imparted frequently for the nodal officers covering all Ministry of Tribal Affairs notified Universities and top class institutions so that they can help each and every student regarding technical problems they face and their guidance program should be focus on supportive direction for tribal students.
- The Ministry should try to reduce the time from registration to disbursement of the scholarship. It should be maximum period of two months.
- Number of seats for scholarship should be increased so that maximum number of students can take benefit from such schemes of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for higher studies.
- There should be contingency component in scholarship.
- Students also requested that the amount of scholarship should be increased as sanctioned amount is not sufficient for some courses like Medical sciences, architecture & Planning, Engineering for both Master and Research level.

- There should be proper awareness campaign about eligibility, mode of applying, demo of application form in you tube, solution of frequently asked questions, problems and benefits of the scholarship through social media like Facebook, you tube, instagram and other popular platform that maximum students can understand the process and facts of the scheme.

Key Findings of the National Fellowship Scheme

The fellowship has been provided to the students who are seeking for pursuing M.Phil or PhD from Universities and top class institutions notified under Ministry of Tribal Affairs. The fellowship has been given to the students through Ministry's guidelines. The selected students are getting fellowship of Rs. 25000 for M.Phil program and Rs. 10000 contingencies for humanities and arts research students and Rs. 12000 for science and technology and engineering students. Similarly, for PhD student getting Rs. 28000 fellowship amount and Rs. 20500 for humanities and Rs. 25000 for science and technology and engineering students. The physically handicapped student in both research categories also getting 2000 extra amount from Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

North Zone: The study team has reached out to 18 ST students pursuing higher studies in the Indian Universities and top class institutes. More than four-fifth (94.44%) students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (fellowship for their higher studies in the Universities and top class institutes notified under Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the north zone). More than three fourth (77.28%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample have qualified UGC-CSIR NET in the north zone/region (Delhi). Majority of 94.44% ST students under study in the north zone are pursuing their higher studies in the Ministry of Tribal Affairs notified Universities in the field of Humanities & Social Science. More than half (55.56%) ST students have informed that they have published some article/research paper. Nearly two third (66.67%) ST student beneficiaries reported that without fellowship, very often they would have been worried about having money for regular expenses; whereas 55.56% expressed that they would be worried about paying for college expenses or fee and 61.11% expressed that they would have chosen not to participate in an activity due to lack of money. All (100%) of ST students reported that the national fellowship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. It is because of the financial assistance in the form of fellowship from Ministry of Tribal Affairs that they could afford to pursue higher education in the top class institutes in the country. More than half (55.56%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. More than one third (55.56%) surveyed ST students responded that they are well aware about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-4 of the United Nations that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

South Zone: The study team has reached out to 153 ST students pursuing higher studies in the Universities and top class institutes notified under Ministry of Tribal Affairs. More than four-fifth (96.08%) students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (fellowship for their

higher studies in the top class institutes in north zone states of India). One fifth 25 (16.34%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample have qualified UGC-CSIR NET in the southern zone especially in Osmania University in Telangana state. Majority (65.36%) of ST students under study are pursuing their higher studies in the field of Science, Engineering and Technology in the Universities and Top Class Institutions in the southern region/zone. Over two third (72.55%) student beneficiaries have expressed that they are satisfied with the amount of the Fellowship. More than four fifth (92%) awardees reported that the national fellowship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. Over half (62.88%) of the ST students are of the opinion that the national fellowship plays a vital role in empowering the girl students to pursue their career in male dominant field. More than four fifth (92%) ST students opined that the national fellowship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. More than four fifth (85%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. More than four-fifth (86%) surveyed ST students responded that they are well aware about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-4 of the United Nations that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Eastern Zone: The study team has reached out to 67 ST students continuing higher education in the Universities and top class institutions notified by Ministry of Tribal Affairs in the eastern zone(Jharkhand and Odisha). There 88.1% students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (fellowship for their higher studies in the top class institutes in the eastern zone. Only 6 (9%) ST students pursuing higher education in the Universities and Top Class Institutions in the eastern zone belongs to PVTG (Kandha and Saora). Only 5 (7%) ST students continuing higher studies in the Universities and Top Class Institutes in the eastern zone have qualified UGC or CSIR NET-JRF. Majority (91.04%) of ST students pursuing their higher studies in the eastern zone are in the field of Humanities & Social Sciences. There 80.60% student beneficiaries have expressed that they are satisfied with the amount of the scholarship. There 91.04% awardees reported that the national fellowship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. It is because of the financial assistance in the form of fellowship from Ministry of Tribal Affairs that they could afford to pursue higher education in the top class institutes in the country. More than four fifth (94.03%) ST students opined that the national scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. Majority 61 (91.0%) of surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Nearly four fifth (95.52%) surveyed ST students responded that they are well aware about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-4 of the United Nations that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all

Western Zone: The study team has reached out to 86 ST students pursuing higher studies in the top class institutes in the western zone (Gujarat and Rajasthan). More than four-fifth (90.70%) ST students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (fellowship for their higher studies in the top class institutes in north zone states of India). More than one fifth (20.93%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample have qualified UGC-CSIR NET. In the western zone, more than four fifth (96.51%) ST students are pursuing their higher studies in the field of Humanities & Social Science. Nearly one-tenth (8.14%) ST students have informed that they have published some article/research paper. Over two third (68.60%) student beneficiaries have expressed that they are satisfied with the amount of the fellowship. More than four fifth (96.51%) ST students opined that the national fellowship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. More than half (53.48%) surveyed tribal students reported that the national fellowship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs helps in promotion of inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups in the country. More than two third (75.58%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities such as tribal talent pool and mentor and mentee programme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. More than two third (66.28%) surveyed ST students responded that they are well aware about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-4 of the United Nations that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. More than one fifth (20.93%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample have qualified UGC-CSIR NET. In the western zone (Rajasthan and Gujarat) more than four fifth (96.51%) ST students are pursuing their higher studies in the field of Humanities & Social Science.

North East Zone: The study team has reached out to 98 ST students pursuing higher studies in the Universities and top class institutes in the northeastern region (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Manipur). Nearly one fourth (71%) ST students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (fellowship for their higher studies in the top class institutes in the north east zone. More than half 52 (53.06%) ST students pursuing higher studies in the Universities and Top Class Institutions have qualified UGC or CSIR-NET. More than half 52 (53.06%) ST students pursuing their studies in the Universities and top class institutes in the north east zone are in the field of humanities & social sciences; whereas 38 (38.78%) students are in Science and less than 5 percent students are pursuing studies in engineering and technology, commerce and others. Only 3.06% responding ST students informed that they have few publications and published research papers. Majority (95.92%) awardees reported that the national fellowship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. More than four fifth (94.90%) ST students opined that the national fellowship scheme of Ministry of tribal affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. Majority 71 (72.45%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of tribal affairs. More than three fifth (95.52%) surveyed ST students responded that they are well aware about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-4

of the United Nations that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Central Zone: The study team has reached out to 52 ST students pursuing higher studies in the top class institutes. All (100%) students of the entire study sample are receiving financial assistance (fellowship for their higher studies in the top class institutes in north zone states of India). More than one fifth (21.15%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample qualified UGC-CSIR NET belong to Central Zone (Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh). More than two third (69.23%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample have taken admission in the field of Humanities & Social Sciences; hardly over one fourth (26.92%) ST students have enrolled in Science. Thus, it is evident that majority of ST students are pursuing their higher studies in the field of Humanities & Social Science. Over four fifth (84.62%) student beneficiaries have expressed that they are satisfied with the amount of the fellowship. All (100%) awardees reported that the national fellowship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. More than four fifth (96.15%) ST students opined that the national Fellowship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. More than three fourth (76.92%) surveyed ST students have reported that they are aware about the various research activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. More than three fourth (78.85%) surveyed ST students responded that they are well aware about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)-4 of the United Nations that ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Achievements under the National Fellowship Scheme

The national level analysis of the impact of the fellowship scheme on ST student beneficiaries across six zones/regions confirms that out of 474 ST students interviewed, 450 (94.94%) students are availing fellowship for higher studies under the national fellowship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

More than half 261 (58%) ST students receiving fellowship are male; whereas nearly half 189 (42%) students are female. The study also reveals that 4 per cent ST students belong to Person with disability and 17 (3.8%) student's represents from the PVTGs those who are getting fellowship from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

The National Fellowship scheme plays a major role in the higher studies and promotion of quality education among the ST students in the country. Out of 450 awardees, 171 (38.0%) ST students opined that the fellowship helps in mainstreaming and bringing ST students to the mainstream of society. More than half 213 (52.4%) ST student beneficiaries informed that the fellowship supports their educational expenditure and fellowship helps towards the enhanced employability.

All (100%) ST students pursuing higher studies in the North and Western zone have reported that the national fellowship scheme plays a vital role in educationally empowering the ST students in general and tribal girls in particular. The financial assistance extended to the ST students in the form of fellowship inspires and enables the tribal girls to pursue higher studies in the premier

educational institutions in the country, promoting gender equality in access to education, community service and extra-curricular activities.

Majority of 425 (94.5%) ST students opined that the national fellowship scheme of Ministry of tribal affairs certainly helps in promoting inclusive education among the socially disadvantage groups, especially among Scheduled Tribes in the country. The scheme is instrumental in removing educational backwardness and promoting higher education among the tribal communities.

Key bottlenecks and challenges

- In the fellowship scheme, payment is done based on completion of difference process like mapping, linking, and validation account by PFMS, uploading documents by PFMS, uploading documents by university, authorization document by university etc. Thus, it takes at least four to five months to complete the entire process in selecting and awarding the fellowship.
- Most of the ST students reported that it takes lot of time to disburse the fellowship from Ministry end, which is troubling for most of students because they belong to BPL or economically weaker sections. Due to delay in receiving amount of the fellowship, some students had taken loan for their education which increased economic burden on them and their family as well.
- Although Ministry of Tribal Affairs gives training to Nodal officers of the notified Institutes and Universities through regional workshops on the process of Scholarship once in the year. However, Some of PhD Scholar also faces problems in continuation of fellowship while transferring from MPhil to PhD. Similarly, students come from other University after completing MPhil is struggling to get fellowship in University which they are enrolled at present. It happens because the staffs who deal with such issue have no knowledge of the process and solution to such problems.
- Under the national fellowship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, only 750 students are awarded under fresh category. Because of limited seats, ST student reported that many of their batch mates, who belong to ST category, are not receiving fellowship despite of their qualifications. Thus, it is suggested that the number of fellowship should be increased in every institution to ensure inclusion of more ST students in higher studies.

Immediate actions needed

- The ST students suggested that number of fellowship should be increased so that maximum number of students can take benefit from such schemes of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The ST student beneficiaries availing fellowship in the selected universities and institutes reported that the amount of national fellowship should be increased as the UGC fellowship (Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) & Senior Research Fellowship (SRF) has increased by 10%. The amount of JRF of UGC in Science, Humanities and Social Science has been increased from Rs. 25,000/- per month to Rs. 31,000/- per month. Similarly, the SRF of

UGC in Science, Humanities and Social Science has increased from Rs. 28,000/- per month to Rs. 35,000/- per month.

- The students also requested that the amount under contingency of the fellowship should be increased.
- The income limits of Rs. 6 lakh per annum of the parents/guardians of the ST students is a limitation for the students to be eligible for applying for the fellowship; hence the income limit should be increased to Rs. 8 lakh as is the case with the economically backward classes in the country.