



**Sustainable Development
Goals Disability Tracker II**
“Nothing About Us, Without Us”

Exploring experiences of Persons with Disabilities in conflict/post-conflict situations in Kokrajhar and Chirang of Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District vis-à-vis the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030

Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) comprise an estimated 15 per cent of the world's population, of whom 80 per cent live in developing countries¹. As per Census 2011, in India, out of a total 121 Cr population, about 2.68 Cr constitute PwDs which is 2.21% of the total population². Often, due to discriminatory norms and practices, inaccessible environments and non-inclusive policies, PwDs face oppression and continue to remain a marginalized category. The attempt in this research endeavour has been to specifically look at the intersections of disability in the context of conflict with special reference to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) that lays emphasis on inclusive development that is sustainable in the long run.

The northeastern region of India comprising of eight states- Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Tripura and Sikkim, has historically been a fertile ground for a multitude of conflicts³. However, when it comes to locating disability within the context of conflict in relation to access of rights and entitlements, the discourse is absolutely missing. The study thus specifically sought to look at the intersections of disability and conflict with special reference to the UNSDGs that lay emphasis on inclusive development for all. Within the geographical landscape of Kokrajhar and Chirang district in Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD)⁴, the study highlights and tracks the current status of SDG 5, 6 and 8 in this location, its implementation gaps and furthermore the barriers in achieving equal rights and an enabling environment for PwDs in conflict areas. As a distinct feature of the study, the Washington Group of Questions⁵ which is a series of question-sets on disability was used. Also, keeping PwDs at the centre-stage, the entire process was made participatory by including PwDs all throughout the process of conceptualising the research, engagement for data collection and other interventions.

	Total Population	No. Of PwDs	Male	Female	Respondents for Study
Kokrajhar	887142	11661	6447	5214	100
Chirang	482162	8101	4316	3785	101
Total male respondents: 104 Total Female respondents: 97					

Key findings

Washington Group Questions- The use of Washington Group Questions proved significant as a process in receiving the basic necessary information on disability and estimate the level of functional domains among people with disabilities. From the observations of the study, it is apparent that a few or more respondents have multiple disabilities such as mobility of lower limbs and hearing, speech and hearing, mobility of upper limbs and vision. The WGQs were helpful in

¹High Level Political Forum Ensuring that no one is left behind : Position paper by Persons with Disabilities 2016

²http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Disabled_persons_in_India_2016.pdf

³<https://in.boell.org/2009/02/28/conflict-northeast-india-issues-causes-and-concern>

⁴<https://www.epw.in/journal/2015/31/reports-states-web-exclusives/bodoland-territorial-area-district-elections-2015.html>

⁵Mainstreaming Disability Data: The Washington Group on Disability Statistics, 2017, Mitchell Loeb National Centre for Health Statistics, USA and Chair, Washington Group on Disability Statistics

concluding that a significant number of respondents are experiencing disabilities in mobility (60% lower limbs, 40% upper limbs) and speech (34%).

SDG 5: Gender Equality- Findings of the research highlight the lack of accessibility to basic rights, particularly for girls/women with disabilities. This is seen across aspects of accessing education, enrollment in schools, facing discrimination and abuse both within the family and outside, neglect and social exclusion and violence in nuanced forms. Statistical analysis in the study reveal that women' accessibility to rights and entitlements is always outnumbered by that of men.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation- The study highlights that more than half of PwDs who participated in the study do not have an accessible toilet (in their school, house and community). There continue to be gross lack/inaccessibility of drinking water facilities for PwDs, both government constructed (as per schemes under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) for households and communities) as well as those in schools. During times of conflict, relief camps are not equipped with accessible water and sanitation facilities for PwDs – an astounding 99% of the respondents who stayed at relief camps expressed the same. Despite being declared Open Defecation Free (ODF) in September, open defecation continue to be practiced by a major bulk of the population.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth- The research highlights that only about 2% of the total respondents have permanent employment and none of them have got the job under the statutory reservations for persons with disabilities, in vacancies for jobs in Govt. The workplace of the respondents working on permanent and temporary/ contract positions are not fully accessible as only few of the places reportedly have ramps. The potential for contribution towards economic growth from persons with disabilities has not sufficiently been tapped into.

- Accessibility continues to remain a major problem across all three SDGs.
- There is a lack of training for officials at various levels to enhance their understanding on disability perspectives and thereby improve service delivery.
- Certification is often an arduous process for PwDs.
- Vulnerability of women to various types of violence ranging from domestic violence within the private space of the family, within the community, social ostracisation and neglect, cruelty by husband and in-laws, being branded as witches and trafficking was highlighted through the narratives of the women in the study.

The current study has not only highlighted the existing gaps and challenges in ensuring accessibility and services to PwDs living in conflict areas, but it has very importantly also given space to listen to voices of PwDs, who often remain unseen and unheard. Through this effort, the aim is to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities in tracking the progress towards SDGs and initiate discourse at a larger level. This study will also give a way forward for policy interventions and advocacy.

