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A STUDY ON GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE REACHING PERSONS WITH BLINDNESS IN TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive society is the ultimate goal of any nation; legislation and resources are being allotted to achieve the same. Access to nutrition, healthcare, social security and rehabilitation services are essential aspects of the wellbeing for all, including the persons with disabilities. This study assessed the access of Government-sponsored financial assistance and free food grains schemes by persons with blindness in Tamil Nādu during the time of COVID-19 Pandemic. Study result reveals that many Persons with blindness have lost their income due to COVID-19. 46.8%, 12.9% and 75.8% of the surveyed Persons with blindness have not received the Below Poverty Level (BPL) Grant, Old Age Pension (OAP) and maintenance grant respectively. Despite the mean rice, dal, sugar and oil received by the Persons with blindness being reasonable, 16% of them have not at all got dal, oil and sugar while 15% have not got rice. It is observed that 11% Persons with blindness not having family cards (n=7) have not received these free food grains at all.

Keywords: Persons with Blindness, BPL Relief Fund, COVID-19, Family Cards, Free Food Grains, OAP, Maintenance Grant.

Introduction

Universal health should be inclusive and responsive to issues of people with disabilities. In order to hold our governments accountable to provide universal health that is inclusive and responsive to disabled people; taking cognizance of their different types of impairment, scientific inquiry in this subject matter is essential. This article exclusively discusses on the problems faced by persons with blindness in Tamil Nādu for accessing various welfare measures. Persons with Disabilities is the most underprivileged and poorest of all groups. And it has been found that 20% of the poorest of the people have a disability.

“Disability” refers to any impairment restricting or disabling a person from performing routine activities in the usual course of life. According to Barbotte et al. (2001), “Impairment concerns the physical aspects of health; disability is the loss of functional capacity resulting from an impairment organ; handicap is a measure of the social and cultural consequences of an impairment or disability”. It is common to notice that the disability results in adverse social and economic consequences. Movement of a person with disability in the society gets restricted due to his/her disability. Also, the capacity to earn a reasonable livelihood is also adversely affected due to the restricted movement.

COVID-19 and Disability: COVID-19 has crippled the world economy and its impact on the under-developed and emerging economies such as India has been extremely distressing. Incompatible health mechanism due to very low income available for majority of the people has aggravated the situation even more. The plight of disabled being already miserable, has further worsened due to loss of livelihood caused by lockdown imposed as a response to curb the surge of COVID-19 infections.

Lockdown has restricted access of the persons with disabilities to their customary health care. Limited access to medicines and hospitals due to flooded COVID-19 patients have also made their lives even more miserable. Availing emergency medical care, performing the routine physiotherapy exercises and doing the usual monitoring of Blood Pressure and sugar level were become extremely difficult and often, these services were interrupted. Restricted mobility hampered the disabled accessing even their basic necessities such as clean drinking water and hygienic food. Furthermore, access of rehabilitation services provided by the government and other institutions, NGOs were also hampered due to non-availability of transport facilities. Many of the COVID-19 pandemic preventive measures are physical movement restrictions which led to chronic mental stress and depression among the disabled amidst the fear of catching COVID-19 and losing their potential to sustain their earning. With income of the disabled almost disappearing, they were forced to borrow.

Persons with disability were also exposed to serious social problems due to seclusion. Adequate provisions for psychological counseling along with proper livelihood support is imperative. Hence, when guidelines are formulated during lockdowns, it is imperative for the Government to take into consideration, the special needs of disabled and ensure that their interests are protected.



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UNCRPD Article 11 proclaims that the Persons with Disabilities are vulnerable and they need to be protected in the time of natural disasters, humanitarian crisis as well as in the time of any pandemic. To protect the Persons with Disabilities Governments have taken special initiatives including the provision of special financial package continuing the free food grain distribution etc., With the backdrop of this sensitive situation, the researchers felt the need to survey the persons with blindness in Tamil Nādu and assess whether the government-sponsored financial assistance and free food grains has reached them or not. Access to the following schemes; BPL Grant, Old Age Pension, Maintenance Grant, Welfare board relief fund, Gas subsidy, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), KISSAN annual fund, Access to AMMA food were surveyed. Benefits of 3-schemes the BPL Grant, Old Age Pension, Maintenance Grant were surveyed in detail among the respondents. Under BPL Grant scheme twice; cash transfer of Rs. 2,000 per family is done for all the people having income below the poverty level during the time of COVID-19 pandemic wherein all the persons with disabilities are also included to be benefitted. Old Age Pension (OAP) is the scheme implemented for the old age persons as well as for the persons with disabilities in which the eligible beneficiaries receive a monthly cash benefit of Rs. 1,000. Maintenance grant is given to persons with disabilities needing high support in which the eligible beneficiaries receive a monthly cash benefit of Rs. 1,500.

Review of Literature: Estimates reveal that almost one billion people around the world live with some type of disability (WHO, 2011). However, research on disability has been scarce in India due to complexities in identifying disabled persons (Kumar & Das, 2009). Though the WHO (1989) has put the disabled as consisting of almost 10% of the global population, estimates in India have been more conservative with the National Sample Survey Organization report (2003) and Census data of 2011 stating that only 2% of India's population comprise of Persons with Disabilities. However, one of the studies in India exposed that around 6.3% of Indians have some form of disability with mentally disturbed persons occupying almost a third (Ganesh et al., 2008). Disabled population is highly concentrated on the rural areas of the country with more prevalence among the old-aged people. Study conducted by Joshi (2003) revealed that 87.5% of old-aged people in Chandigarh had some kind of disability while study by Khan JA and Khan (2001) revealed that almost three-quarter of the elderly population suffered from visual impairment. Study by Goyal (1998) has exposed that almost 7% of Rajasthani infants had some kind of disability while study by Mathur et al. (1995) revealed that 7.6% of children aged less than 6 years in Gorakhpur had some form of impairment. The NSSO Survey of 2003 revealed that more than half of the disabled population (54.7%) were illiterates. This dearth in education among disabled serves as an important impediment for rehabilitation services reaching the disabled, health issues with regards to how it affects disabled people. And that during the COVID-19 pandemic the response disproportionately affected disabled people, they were left behind. Only if the actual disabled population can be properly identified, they can be medically, socially and economically rehabilitated.

However, rehabilitation services in India seldom reach the disabled (Kumar et al., 2008) and Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) may be effective in rehabilitating disabled as they themselves try to exploit their capabilities to the optimum extent and gain fullest access to rehabilitation services and openings, thereby integrating in their disabled society to the utmost possible extent (Sharma & Praveen, 2002). State, Central Government & different Ministries have implemented door delivery of essential services to persons with disabilities during the time of COVID-19 lockdown. But the fact is that these services are not adequately reaching them. According to the survey done by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCEPEDP) in April, 2020 & published in Times of India 24-May-2020; 67% had no access to doorstep delivery of essentials, and only 22% confirmed that they have access to essentials.

According to the book, Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) in India –a Statistical Profile: 2021 published by Government of India, Ministry of Statistics & Program Implementation on 31-Mar-2021; only 35.4% of persons with disabilities in Tamil Nadu have received their disability certificate and 32.4% have received aid/help from Government. This book depicts situational analysis of disabled persons in India mainly on the basis of the results of the NSS 76th round Surveys on Disability conducted from July-December 2018) & Census of India conducted in 2011. With this backdrop, this study attempts to assess whether the Government-sponsored assistance to the persons with disabilities have reached the them in the southern state of Tamil Nādu in India?

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess whether financial assistance and free food grains scheme implemented by the Government reached the persons with blindness;
2. To identify the importance of the persons with blindness possessing family card in availing the Government-sponsored assistance;
3. To formulate a policy decision which could be implemented by the Government to ensure that all it's assistance packages reach the persons with disabilities.



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Methodology: This study is descriptive in nature, based purely on primary data, collected by administering an interview schedule among 62 persons with blindness. All the 62-study samples were selected using Purposive Snowball Sampling technique. Data collected were analysed using SPSS, employing the statistical tools of Frequency, Mean, ANOVA and Chi-square analysis.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Profile		N	Percentage
Gender	Male	43	69.4
	Female	19	30.6
Age	21-30	3	4.8
	31-40	15	24.2
	41-50	17	27.4
	51-60	20	32.3
	61 and above	7	11.3
Marital Status	Married	51	82.3
	Unmarried	11	17.7
Education	Illiterate	6	9.7
	Primary	15	24.2
	Middle School	10	16.1
	High School	17	27.4
	Higher Secondary & Technical	6	9.7
	Under Graduation	1	1.6
	Post-Graduation	1	1.6
	Graduation with Professional Degree	6	9.7
Residence	Urban	19	30.6
	Rural	43	69.4
Occupation	Nil	4	6.5
	Self-Employed	44	71.0
	Paid Employment	14	22.6
Total		62	100.0

Table 1 displays that majority of the blind respondents are males, married & self-employed, belonging largely to rural areas, predominantly possessing school-level education.

And around 90% respondents belong to the employable age group (21 to 60 years).

Number of Disabled Persons in Family: The number of disabled persons in the family of the blind surveyed is displayed in table 2.

Table 2: Number of Disabled Persons in Family

No. of Disabled	N	Percent	Males	Females
Only Self	40	64.5	27	13
Two	22	35.5	16	6
Total	62	100.0	43	19

Table 2 depicts that more than one-third of the surveyed (35.5%) persons with blindness families have another disabled person in their family while the rest of them do not have any other person with disabilities in their family.

Possessing Family Card (Ration Card): Possessing Family Card is indispensable for anybody to get the free ration benefits provided by the Government. Details about the persons with blindness possessing Family Cards is displayed in table 3.



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Table 3: Possessing Family Cards

Possess Family Card	N	Percent	Males	Females
Having Family Card	55	88.7	39	16
Not Having Family Card	7	11.3	4	3
Total	62	100.0	43	19

Table 3 depicts that 11.3% of the responded persons with blindness do not possess Family Card which is quite large.

Number of Earning Members in Family: Number of earning members in the family of the blind persons surveyed is displayed in table 4.

Table 4: Number of Earning Members in Family

No. of Earning Members	N	Percent	Males	Females
Nil	3	4.8	3	0
One	39	62.9	27	12
Two	19	30.6	12	7
Three	1	1.6	1	0
Total	62	100.0	43	19

Table 4 portrays those three persons with blindness reported that their family doesn't have even one earning member while little under two-third of them (62.9%) have a solitary earning member. A shade above three-tenth of the blind (30.6%) have couple of earning members in their family while just a solitary blind has three earning members.

Nature of Assistance Required: Nature of assistance needed by the persons with blindness are displayed in table 5.

Table 5: Nature of Assistance Required by the persons with blindness

Assistance Required	N	Percent	Males	Females
Education Support	25	40.3	14	11
Technical assistance	14	22.6	9	5
Loan	23	37.1	15	8
Total	62	100.0		

Table 5 highlights that larger number of persons with blindness (40.3%) are requiring adequate support from the Government to gain good education which is closely followed by those who are in need of financial support in the form of loans and advances (37.1%). A little above one-fifth of the blind (22.6%) require technical support from the Government.

Monthly Rent Paid: Table 6 showcases the monthly rent paid by the persons with blindness.

Table 6: Monthly Rent Paid by the persons with blindness

Rent Paid	N	Percent
Own House	36	58.1
UptoRs. 500	2	3.2
Rs. 501 to Rs.1500	16	25.8
Rs. 1501 to Rs.2500	6	9.7
Rs. 2501 to Rs.3500	2	3.2
Total	62	100.0

Table 6 highlights that majority of the blind have their own house (58.1%) while a shade above one-quarter of them (25.8%) of them live in houses bearing a monthly rent of Rs. 501-1500. Couple of the persons with blindness pay rent of less than Rs. 500 and Rs. 2501-3500 while a shade less than one-tenth of them (9.7%) pay a monthly rent of Rs. 1501-2500.

Monthly Income Before and After Lockdown: Lockdown imposed by the Government due to COVID has rendered many people jobless while many have got their income reduced. The monthly income earned by the blind before and after the imposition of lockdown is depicted in table 7.

Table 7: Monthly Income Before and After Lockdown

Monthly Income	After Lockdown		Before Lockdown	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
No income	20	32.3	3	4.8
less than 2000	38	61.3	30	48.4
2001-4000	1	1.6	19	30.6



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4001-6000	2	3.2	8	12.9
6001-8000	1	1.6	1	1.6
8001-10000	0	0	1	1.6
Total	62	100.0	62	100.0

Table 7 highlights that larger number of persons with blindness have lost their income due to COVID-19 as the number of persons with no income and lower income of less than Rs. 2000 has risen significantly after the imposition of lockdown. One of the persons with blindness managing reasonable income of Rs. 8001-10000 before lockdown has lost his income after

lockdown while the number of blind persons without income has shot up after lockdown. However, the number of blind persons with income of up to Rs. 2000 has witnessed an upward trend after the imposition of lockdown whereas the number of blind persons with income of Rs. 2001-4000 and Rs. 4001-6000 is displaying a slump.

A Precise Comparison of Income of the by the persons with blindness Before and After Lockdown: A precise comparison of monthly income of the blind before and after the imposition of lockdown is attempted using Crosstabs and the results are depicted in table 8.

Table 8: Comparison of Income of the Blind Before and After Lockdown

		Income after lockdown					Total
		No income	less than 2000	2001-4000	4001-6000	6001-8000	
Income before	No income	2	1	0	0	0	3
	less than 2000	6	24	0	0	0	30
	2001-4000	6	9	1	1	1	18
	4001-6000	4	4	0	1	0	9
	6001-8000	1	0	0	0	0	1
	8001-10000	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total		20	38	1	2	1	62

Table 8 highlights that couple of persons with blindness who remained without income before the imposition of lockdown are remaining without income even after lockdown while a solitary person without any income before lockdown has got the income enhanced to up to Rs. 2000. However, one blind with monthly income of Rs. 6001-8000 and Rs. 8001-10000 has totally lost their income after the imposition of lockdown. Similarly, 6 blind each with income of up to Rs. 2000 and Rs. 2001-4000 have also lost their income totally while 24 blind have retained their income of up to Rs. 2000 even after the imposition of lockdown. 9 blind who were managing an income of Rs. 2001-4000 before lockdown have got their income reduced to up to Rs. 2000 while one blind with income of Rs. 2001-4000 has retained the same income. However, one each blind person with income of Rs. 2001-4000 before lockdown have got their income enhanced to Rs. 4001-6000 and Rs. 6001-8000.

Further, four each blind with income of Rs. 4001-6000 before lockdown have lost their income totally or got their income reduced to up to Rs. 2000 while a solitary person with income of Rs. 4001-6000 has managed to retain the same income even after the imposition of lockdown.

Grants Received by the persons with blindness: The Government provides many grants to physically challenged persons and details about such grants having reached the blind is depicted in table 9.

Table 9: Grants Received by the Blind

Grant	N	Percent	Males	Females
BPL Grant	33	53.2	26	7
Old Age Pension	54	87.1	37	17
Maintenance Grant	15	24.2	7	8
Welfare board relief fund	2	3.2	2	0
Gas subsidy	10	16.1	8	2
MGNREGA wage	0	0	0	0
KISSAN annual fund	1	1.6	1	0
Access to AMMA food	1	1.6	1	0

Table 9 suggests that just more than half of the persons with blindness (53.2%) have got the BPL Grant provided by the Government while bulk of them (87.1%) are managing to get the Old Age Pension (OAP) from the Government. A shade less than one-quarter of the persons with blindness (24.2%) are getting maintenance grant while little above one-sixth of them (16.1%) are availing LPG (gas) subsidy. Only one person with blindness has availed the KISSAN annual fund and got free food under the Amma Food Scheme, who happens to be a male. None of the persons with blindness



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have been benefitted from the 100-day MGNREGA Wage scheme while just a couple of the male persons with blindness have succeeded in getting the Welfare Board Relief Fund. Larger proportion of the males have succeeded in availing LPG subsidy while larger proportion of females have availed Maintenance grant, Old Age Pension an BPL Grant.

Comparison of Recipients of OAP and Maintenance Grant: A comparison between persons with blindness who have availed OAP and Maintenance grant has been attempted using Cross table and the outcome is displayed in table 10.

Table 10: Comparison of Recipients of OAP and Maintenance Grant

		Maintenance Grant		
		Yes	No	Total
Old age pension	Yes	15	39	54
	No	0	8	8
Total		15	40	62

Table 10 highlights that all the 8 persons with blindness who have not availed OAP have not availed the Maintenance grant also, while 15 persons with blindness have availed both the Maintenance grant and OAP. However, 39 persons with blindness who have availed OAP have not received the Maintenance grant.

Comparison of Recipients of BPL Relief Fund and Maintenance Grant: A comparison of persons with blindness who have availed BPL Relief Fund and Maintenance grant has been attempted using Cross table and the outcome is displayed in table 11.

Table 11: Comparison of Recipients of BPL Relief Fund and Maintenance Grant

		Maintenance grant		
		Yes	No	Total
BPL relief fund	Yes	2	31	33
	No	13	16	29
Total		15	47	62

Table 11 highlights that only 2 persons with blindness have availed both Maintenance grant and BPL relief fund, while 16 of them have not availed both the assistance. 13 persons with blindness have succeeded in availing the Maintenance grant but not the BPL relief fund while 31 of them have availed the BPL relief fund but not the Maintenance grant.

Comparison of Recipients of OAP and BPL Relief Fund: A comparison of persons with blindness who have availed OAP and BPL Relief Fund has been attempted using Cross table and the outcome is displayed in table 12.

Table 12: Comparison of Recipients of OAP and BPL Relief Fund

		OAP		
		Yes	No	Total
BPL Relief Fund	Yes	27	6	33
	No	27	2	29
Total		54	8	62

Relief Fund.

Table 12 showcases that 27-persons with blindness have availed both the OAP and BPL Relief Fund while another 27 of them have availed only the OAP but not the BPL Relief Fund. Furthermore, 6 persons with blindness have availed only the BPL Relief Fund and not OAP while couple of them have not availed both the OAP and BPL

Comparative Outlook on Grants Received and Possession of Family Cards: A comparison of persons with blindness possessing family cards and them having received different grants provided by the Government namely, OAP, Maintenance grant and BPL Relief Fund has been attempted using Crosstabs and the results are portrayed in table 13.

Table 13: Comparative Outlook on Grants Received and Possession of Family Cards

Allowance		OAP		Maintenance Grant		BPL Relief Fund	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Possession	Yes	49	6	14	41	31	24
	No	5	2	1	6	2	5
Total		54	8	15	47	33	29



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Table 13 highlights that 49 persons with blindness possessing family cards have availed OAP while 6 of them have not availed OAP despite having family cards. 5 persons with blindness without family cards have availed OAP while 2 of them without family cards have not availed OAP.

In addition, only 14 persons with blindness possessing family cards have availed Maintenance Grant while 41 of them have not availed Maintenance Grant despite possessing family cards. Furthermore, a solitary blind person without family card has availed the Maintenance grant while 6 of them do not have family cards and have not availed Maintenance grant. In respect of BPL Relief Fund, 31 persons with blindness with family cards cards have availed BPL Relief Fund and couple of them without family cards have got it, while 24-with family cards and 5-without family cards have not received it.

Free Food Materials Availed: The Government is offering free food materials such as rice, dal, sugar and cooking oil and an attempt has been made to assess whether the blind persons manage to get these items and the outcome is depicted in table 14.

Table 14: Free Food Materials Availed

Food Item	No. Availed	No. not Availed	Mean
Rice	53	9	35.02 kgs.
Dal	52	10	1.68 kgs.
Sugar	52	10	1.71 kgs.
Oil	52	10	1.66 Lit.

Table 14 showcases that 10 respondents with blindness have not got the Government-sponsored free dal, oil and sugar while 9 of them have not got rice. The mean rice provided to the 62 blind persons is 35.02 kilograms which is quite sufficient while the mean sugar, dal and oil provided is 1.71 kilograms, 1.68 kilograms and 1.66 liters respectively which sounds quite good.

Relationship Between Free Food Items Availed and Possession of Family Cards: It is quite true that few of the persons with blindness have not got access to the free food items of rice, dal, sugar and oil, provided by the Government and an attempt has been made to find whether there is any substantial relationship between the persons with blindness availing such free food items and possession of family cards using ANOVA and the outcome is depicted in table 15.

Table 15: Relationship Between Free Food Items Availed and Possession of Family Cards

Item	Mean		F	Sig.
	Family card-holders	Family card non-holders		
Rice	39.4364	0.2857	33.544	0.001
Dal	1.8909	0.000	99.822	0.001
Sugar	1.9273	0.000	58.370	0.001
Oil	1.8727	0.000	107.909	0.001

Table 15 clearly portrays that there is substantial relationship between blind availing free food items provided by the Government and possession of family cards as the F values in respect of all the four food items are significant at one per cent level. It is clearly evident that the blind not having family cards have not availed these food items at all while those with family cards have been provided quite sufficient food items by the Government.

Inferences from the Study: 35.5% of the persons with blindness have another person with blindness in their family while 62.9% have only one earning member in their family. This suggests that most of the persons with blindness surveyed have limited source of income and they have to support sometimes, other disabled members in their family which would be very difficult. To add salt to the wound, larger number of persons with blindness have lost their income due to COVID as the number of persons with no income and lower income of less than Rs. 2000 has risen significantly after the imposition of lockdown. It is unfortunate to note that persons with blindness who were earning reasonable income before the imposition of lockdown due to COVID have lost their income totally have got their income reduced substantially. Under such a scenario, government’s assistance only can save them. Government also provided three types of direct financial assistance in the form of OAP, BPL and Maintenance Grant of Rs. 2000, 1000 and 2000 respectively to the persons with blindness. However, 46.8%, 12.9% and 75.8% of the persons with blindness surveyed have not received the BPL Grant, OAP and maintenance grant respectively. Only 2 persons with blindness have got all the three grants.

Among the persons with blindness possessing family cards, 6, 41 and 24 have not received OAP, Maintenance grant and BPL Relief Fund. However, among the persons with blindness not possessing family cards, 5, 1 and 2 have received OAP, Maintenance grant and BPL Relief Fund respectively. Hence, it can be observed that the persons with blindness are struggling to receive the Maintenance grant and BPL Relief Fund irrespective of possessing family cards. None of the blind have been benefitted from the 100-day MGNREGA Wage scheme while just a couple of the male blind have succeeded in getting the Welfare Board Relief Fund. Just



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one person with blindness has got the free food under the Amma Food Scheme despite the Government's order that disabled should be given priority in providing the free food.

Despite the mean rice, dal, sugar and oil received by the persons with blindness being reasonable, it is disheartening to note that 10 of them have not at all got dal, oil and sugar while 9 have not got rice. It can be observed that all the blind persons not having family cards have not received these food items at all. This is quite understandable as these food grains have been distributed by the Government only through the Fair Price Shops to beneficiaries possessing family cards. Hence, the persons with blindness without family cards have not received the food grains. 11.3% of the persons with blindness do not possess Family Card which is quite large. Formalities needed to be complied for getting a family card has been explained by few persons with blindness as the impediment for them to get a family card.

Considering the persons with blindness being most vulnerable to lockdown, it is important to ensure that all the persons with blindness receive all the financial and other assistance provided by the Government. How can this be ensured? Government must exclude possession of family cards as the criteria for receiving free food grains and grants for disabled persons. All grants provided to family cards should be treated different. All disabled possessing disability identity cards should be provided free food grains and grants irrespective of whether they possess family cards or not. The Unique Disability Identity Card (UDID) is a good initiative. The UDID Card should be linked with the bank account of the persons with disabilities and all financial assistance of the Government should be directly credited to this bank account without any conditions such as income background etc., Governmental assistance to persons with disabilities should be non-discriminatory, irrespective of income, residence or family card availability. The practice of opening a bank account and linking this with the UDID Card may be slightly difficult in the initial phase but once the process is completed, none of the disabilities would be denied of the Governmental financial support.

Similarly, UDID Cards should be also considered by Fair Price Shops to distribute the free food grains to persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities should be provided free food grains, irrespective of them possessing family cards or not. Even if the disabled families get double the food grains allotted, the Government should consider such additional allocation as exclusive benefit for the persons with disabilities in addition to the benefit provided to their families. This might be slightly expensive for the Government but it may be shouldered for the sake of benefitting the persons with disabilities. The need of the hour is having inclusive basic services, personal assistants and communication being accessible to people with disabilities in order to have an inclusive society. The need to access healthcare services cannot be over emphasised and people with disabilities are at risk of contracting diseases more than non-disabled people. Article 25 of the CRPD on the right to health requires health professionals to provide healthcare to persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others The Article 12 specifically highlighting the universal legal capacity right which should be accorded to disabled people, regardless of their impairments. Government of India being a signatory of the CRPD, it is the duty bound to fulfill the enshrined commitments with respect to implement the welfare schemes and empowering the people with disabilities.

Conclusion: This study has revealed that the Government has made sincere effort to provide services to persons with disabilities during the time of COVID-19 pandemic's turmoil by offering free food grains and financial assistance. There are some practical difficulties impeding the persons with disabilities; from accessing these services. It is inevitable for the Government to come out with a policy decision to ensure that all the persons with disabilities get all assistance aimed at them. For this, the Government should remove all conditions restricting persons with disabilities availing such services and use the concept of UDID Card linked with bank account to reach the services to them. Zero-balance accounts with absolutely free ATM service should be opened for all disabled and this account should be linked with the UDID Cards so that none of the disabled are denied of Government sponsored financial assistance. Similarly, UDID Cards should be also considered by Fair Price Shops to distribute the free food grains to persons with disabilities



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