



जनजातीय कार्य मंत्रालय
Ministry of Tribal Affairs
Government of India

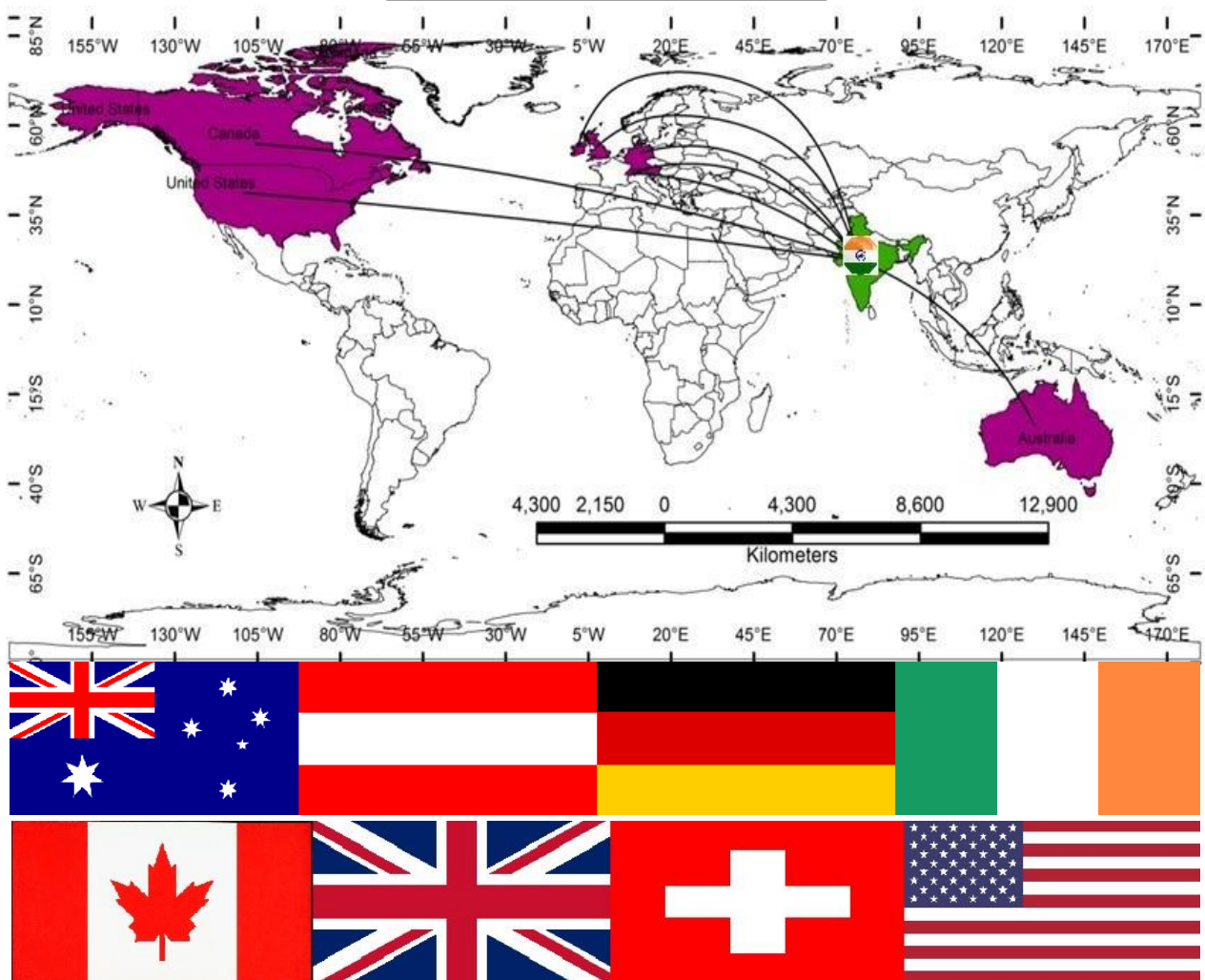
सत्यमेव जयते



EVALUATION OF THE SCHEME OF SCHOLARSHIP TO THE ST STUDENTS FOR STUDIES ABROAD

(A Research Project Sponsored by Ministry of Tribal Affairs)

FINAL REPORT



Dr. Gadadhara Mohapatra
Indian Institute of Public Administration

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scholarship plays an important role in making higher education in abroad 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.

Under the National Overseas Scholarship Scheme for Higher Studies Abroad, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs provides financial assistance to students selected for pursuing higher studies abroad for Post-Graduation, Ph.D and Post-Doctoral research programmes. The Ministry has revised the scheme of National Overseas Scholarships (NOS) for ST candidates for implementation from the year 2017-18 onwards. 20 awards per year are sanctioned to ST students, out of which 17 numbers of awards are for the Scheduled Tribes (STs) in general and 3 awards are for the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Six awards (30%) are earmarked for girls. Priority is given to candidates who have already secured preliminary letter/offer of admission; second priority is given to those who cleared GRE/GMAT/TOEFL etc. and have started applying to various universities and thereafter other candidates. The jurisdiction of the Scheme extends only to providing prescribed financial support to the selected candidates for pursuing higher education in the specified subjects. The scheme does not ensure employment opportunities for the awardees after his/her having availed the award. The subject/disciplines in which courses may be undertaken for grant of award are such as Engineering, Management, Economics/Finance (07); Pure Science and Applied Science (03); Agriculture and Medicine (05) Humanities and Social Science (05). Grants are given to the selected candidates on 100 per cent basis directly by the Ministry through the Indian Mission. Ministry of Tribal Affairs conducts interview every year to select and award ST students for studies abroad. The Indian Mission abroad plays an important role in obtaining quarterly progress/performance reports from the universities/institutions where the Indian ST student is pursuing his/her studies for which the award has been given under the National Overseas Scholarship scheme and sends the report to Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs had entrusted the task to conduct an impact evaluation of the scheme of 'Scholarship to the ST Students for Studies Abroad' to the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. In this context, the impact evaluation study of the national overseas scholarship scheme has been conducted among 29 student awardees who are pursuing their studies (M.A., PhD and Post-doctoral research) in 27 Universities/Institutions spread across eight countries in the continent of Europe, North America, Australia etc. The study analyses the achievements, key bottlenecks and actions needed to improve the service delivery mechanism of the scheme more effective. The methodology adopted for the study is a judicious mix of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Primary data has been collected through administering questionnaires digitized in google forms among the awardees

students abroad supplemented with the basic information provided by the Education Wing, High Commission of India in the select countries where the ST students are continuing their higher studies.

The impact evaluation study findings in the report reflects socio-economic profile of the ST students' and analysis of the achievements, key bottlenecks and immediate actions needed to improve the service delivery mechanism of the scheme more effective.

Profile of the Awardees

- The average age of the ST student beneficiaries continuing higher studies abroad is 30 years.
- Over two third (69%) awardees availing scholarship under national overseas scholarship scheme are male students; whereas nearly one third (31%) awardees are female students. Thus, the numbers of ST male awardees under the study are twice in number in comparison to the ST female awardees. Although all the students availing the national overseas scholarship are from tribal background, however there is an absence female PVTG student continuing higher studies under study in abroad.
- The awardees belong to 21 different tribal groups spread across 12 Indian States and UTs (Union Territory of Ladakh).
- More than three fifth (69%) of the ST students under study availing national overseas scholarship of the total study sample belong to the rural areas; whereas nearly on third (31%) student beneficiaries are from the urban areas.
- The domicile state of the 29 ST student awardees pursuing higher studies in abroad shows that highest number of ST student beneficiaries belong to the Indian state of Nagaland (6) in Northeast India followed by Telangana (5) in the South.
- More than half (51.73%) awardees revealed that the main wage earner in their family is engaged settled cultivation and other related activities. However, more than one fourth (27.59%) awardees reported that the main wage earner in their family is in government service.

Achievements

- Over half (51.72%) ST student beneficiaries from the total study sample are pursuing higher studies in the Universities/Institutions in United Kingdom and another one fifth (20.69%) student beneficiaries under study are studying in United States of America with financial assistance under the national overseas scholarship sponsored by Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The student awardees have registered in 27 world class Institutions in top 8 countries (Australia, Austria, Canada, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States of America) through financial for higher studies with financial assistance from Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Out of the total study sample, more than three fifth (69%) of the student beneficiaries availing national overseas scholarship of the total study sample belong to the rural areas and nearly one third (31%) student beneficiaries belong to urban areas.

- Taking a before and after approach, the study shows that out of 29 students under study, the highest number of 10 ST students who joined the Universities/Institutions for higher studies in the overseas goes back to the year 2017-18, followed by 8 students in 2018-2019 and 7 students in 2016-17. In the year 2014-15 through 4 students were selected for the overseas scholarship, however, none of them could join the universities in abroad due to several reasons. Despite of being selected for nationalscholarship for a particular year, ST student's face difficulties in getting admission in the host universities and they also face difficulty in qualifying for GRE/GMAT/TOFEL etc.
- Nearly three fourth (72.41%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample are pursuing Ph.D.; whereas one fifth (20.69%) students are doing Masters level courses and less than one tenth (6.90%) students are engaged in post-doctoral research.
- More than two fifth (45%) ST student beneficiaries of the study sample have taken admission in the field of engineering and medicine; whereas little less than one fourth (24.14%) students have enrolled in the pure and applied sciences. Little more than one tenth (13.79%) ST students have enrolled in the humanities and social sciences, similarly one tenth (10.34%) ST students have enrolled in agriculture and applied field. Hardly, 6.90% ST students have enrolled in finance and management field. Thus, it is evident that majority of ST students are pursuing their higher studies in the field of engineering and medicine.
- More than half (58.6%) students from the study sample are availing scholarship for less than one year; whereas more than one third (37.9%) student beneficiaries are availing scholarship since last two years.
- More than four fifth (93%) student beneficiaries of the study sample informed that the application for national overseas scholarship process is transparent as the application is through online portal developed by Ministry.
- More than half (58.6%) awardees reported that the document verification by the Ministry was faster and within one month time all their documents got verified.
- Nearly three fourth (72%) student beneficiaries of the total study sample reported that they come to know about the national overseas scholarship through official website of Ministry of Tribal Affairs. Thus, the major source of information about the scholarship is from official website of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- Nearly two third (62.07%) students have applied for the national overseas scholarship through offline mode from 2014-2017. However, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has developed the online portal for national overseas scholarship from 2017-18 onwards. Nearly two fifth (37.93%) student beneficiaries reported that they had applied for the scholarship through online mode in the national overseas scholarship portal managed by Ministry of Tribal Affairs from the year 2017-18 to 2019-20.
- In the national overseas scholarship, the Embassy of State where student awardee take admission, transfers fees to students account in DBT Mode and later Embassy will send the bill to the Ministry and Ministry will send the amount to the Embassy. All (100%) ST student beneficiaries are receiving national overseas scholarship from Ministry of Tribal Affairs through direct benefit transfer.

- The national overseas scholarship has led to asset creation among the ST student awardees while studying abroad. All most all (96.55%) student beneficiaries have purchased laptop with the annual contingency and equipment allowance component of overseas scholarship; all 29 student beneficiaries have purchased mobile with the help of contingency.
- Nearly two third (62.07) ST student beneficiaries from the entire study sample reported that they are satisfied with the amount of the scholarship provided under the national overseas scholarship scheme for higher studies; however nearly two fifth (37.93%) student beneficiaries informed that the mount of national overseas scholarship is very less and it should be increased further taking into account the education fees and cost of living involved while pursuing studies in abroad.
- Over four fifth (82.76%) student awardees pursuing higher studies in abroad under the national overseas scholarship of Ministry of Tribal Affairs reported that they have not taken any loan for study, for them the scholarship amount is sufficient towards meeting the requirements.
- While assessing the impact of the overseas scholarship scheme, the study reports that half (51.72%) of the student beneficiaries from the total study sample have reported that very often they would have been worried about paying for college/university expenses or fee; similarly, more than two fifth (44.8%) of the student beneficiaries out of the total sample have told that they would have very often chosen not to buy required academic materials due to their cost in the absence of scholarship.
- Similarly, more than two fifth (44.8%) students of the entire study sample informed that they would have not taken part in any activity due to lack of money. Another half (51.72%) of the student beneficiaries from the total study sample informed that in the absence of financial assistance in the form of scholarship, they would have invested more hours to work to pay for the tuition fee, living expenses and other essential cost. More than two fifth (44.8%) of the student beneficiaries reported that in the absence of scholarship, very often they would be worried about having enough money for regular expenses.
- Nearly two fifth (37.74%) ST student beneficiaries informed that they will search for research based jobs either in the host country or homeland to settle-down after the completion of the course; whereas one third (33.96%) student beneficiaries reported that they would explore opportunity to teach in a College/University in the host country or in the homeland. One fifth (22.64%) student beneficiaries who are presently pursuing M.A. and Ph.D. would like to like to pursue post-doctoral study and research in the host country.
- While highlighting the role course in achieving future goals in life, three fourth (75.86%) student beneficiaries revealed that the course helps them in preparing for better jobs, learning more about things of interest, training them for a specific career, helps them in gaining general education, make more money, prepares them for higher studies/research and also helps them for preparing for public services.
- Almost all (96.55%) student beneficiaries send their semester progress to Ministry of Tribal Affairs probably through Indian Missions abroad.

- Nearly two third (62.07%) ST student beneficiaries from the total study sample have reported that they are aware about the various activities of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The ST student beneficiaries were asked to reply imagining as if they were not selected for the national overseas scholarship, what they would have they done to study abroad. Half (55.17%) ST student beneficiaries reported that if they were not awarded the national overseas scholarship, they could not have enrolled in the university they are pursuing their study at present in the overseas.
- One fifth (20.69%) awardees reported that it would have been uncertain for them to take admission for higher studies in abroad without the national overseas scholarship. One tenth (10.34%) student beneficiaries reported that it would have been likely to enroll in the programme without the scholarship.
- However, another one tenth (10.34%) students reported that they would have definitely enrolled in the programme in the university/institution even if they were not awarded the national overseas scholarship. It is because getting admission in such prestigious university is rare opportunity; therefore they would have either taken loan to study abroad or work on part time after joining the course to earn to meet the expenses.
- More than four fifth (89.66%) awardees reported that the national overseas scholarship is educationally empowering the tribal communities. It is because of the financial assistance they could come out of the far-flung remote areas to pursue higher education and that is in the overseas.
- Nearly two third (65.52%) awardees 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.
- Almost all (96.6%) awardees opined that the national overseas 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 in the country.
- Almost all (93.1%) student awardees reported that national overseas scholarship scheme of Ministry promotes inclusive education for socially disadvantage groups in the country in terms of ensuring affordable and quality education and promoting tertiary education including University.

Key Bottlenecks & Challenges

- The impact evaluation study reveals that all the students availing national overseas scholarship are from tribal background. However, representations of PVTG students are almost nill under the scholarship scheme. In this typical case of non-availability of PVTG students, the award earmarked for them are generally converted for non-PVTG candidates. Thus, exclusion in the very selection process occurs due to high cutoff of marks of (55%) especially for the PVTG candidates who are characterized by very low level of literacy.

- It is suggested that the minimum qualification to be eligible for applying for the scholarship should be revised and scaled down to 50% marks or equivalent grade in relevant Masters degree and Ph.D. for tribal students in general and with special reference to PVTG students in order bring a proper representation of PVTG and female students under the national overseas scholarship encouraging them for higher studies. It is for information that the eligibility criteria set by University Grant Commission (UGC) is 50% for the SC/ST and PWD candidates to be eligible for applying for UGC –NET/JRF Scholarship.
- Six awards (30%) are earmarked for girls and in case the earmarked slot remains in-filled, these slots are transferred to boys generally. The study results reveal that over two third (69%) awardees availing scholarship under national overseas scholarship scheme are male students; whereas nearly one third (31%) awardees are female students. Thus, there is lack of representation of female ST students in general and absence female PVTG students in particular while awarding overseas scholarship.
- Income limit of parents is a major criterion for the ST students to be eligible to apply for the overseas scholarship. At present, it is fixed at Rs. 6 lak per annum. Nearly one fifth (16.67%) awardees informed that the above income limit is a major hurdle for many deserving ST students to be eligible for applying for the overseas scholarship.
- Despite of being selected for national scholarship for a particular year, ST students face difficulties in getting admission in the host universities in the Overseas and they also face difficulty in qualifying for GRE/GMAT/TOFEL etc.

Immediate Actions Needed

- The national overseas scholarship plays a vital role in promoting higher education among the ST students in the overseas. Most of the ST students continuing higher studies in the overseas are from poor family background and are entirely dependent on the national overseas scholarship. It is, therefore suggested that the scholarship should be continued with certain modifications and change under the national overseas scholarship scheme of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- As per the guidelines of the scheme of national overseas scholarship, only 20 ST students are awarded national overseas scholarship every year. It is suggested by all the awardees under study that the number of seats should be increased keeping the aspiration and interest among the scheduled tribe students in the country towards higher education in the overseas.
- Over one third (37.93%) awardees of the entire study sample informed that the amount of national scholarship is less and it should be increased further taking into account the education fees and cost of living involved while pursuing studies in abroad.
- More than four fifth (86%) awardees under the study reported that the scholarship should also provide student reallocation allowances in addition to the existing provisions.
- The income limits of Rs. 6 lakh per annum of the parents/guardians of the students under the scheme is a constraint for many deserving candidates to be eligible to apply;

hence income limit should be increased to Rs. 8 lakh as is the case with the economically backward classes in the country.

- Ministry should organize workshops in rural and tribal areas to generate awareness about the various schemes and programmes meant for the tribal community in general and tribal students in particular. Through the dissemination workshops, Ministry should share the success stories of ST students who were awarded scholarship to study abroad, successful completion their study and future prospects.