

Original Research Article

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS IN ADDRESSING SOCIAL EQUITY AMONG DEPRIVED SECTIONS IN THE CONFLICT VULNERABLE AREAS IN KARNATAKA, INDIA

Abstract

This study assessed the social equity situations in conflict vulnerable areas, and examined the role of 40 community-based organizations (CBOs) spread across the four sub-regions in Karnataka targeting societal change towards social equity. The study employed the survey research design with a sample of 420 beneficiaries of CBO-implemented programs and focus group discussion the officials of each of the CBOs. Data for the study were obtained through the use of survey, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The results indicate that the primary role of CBOs, based on evidence from their vision and mission, is to bridge the social equity gap between marginalized and vulnerable communities and the mainstream society through program initiatives and education. These programs were mainly on skills training, child rights protection, and with other major concerns enveloped as social justice and fairness operationalized through access to livelihood, access to education, participation in the political and cultural life, access to self-determination, and peace building community. Besides the preventive roles played by CBOs, they also provide rehabilitation for the exploited and abused in society. It is hoped that, CBOs in consultation with relevant government agencies, should organize programs in unifying the cultural and religious diversities, widen the scope of their educational programs, and provide the beneficiaries with specialized educational programs along with their skills training to qualify them to bid for contracts in government and non-governmental organizations since there are still visible evidence of social inequalities despite the extensive implementation and awareness education provided thus far.

KEYWORDS: Social equity, CBO, strategic planning, conflict vulnerable group

INTRODUCTION

Since independence, India has shown progressive development and improvement in areas of poverty, providing employment, and improving human development indicators such as levels of literacy, education, health, and poverty, among the people. However, research indicates that socio-economic inequality is still a huge problem in India and a great concern for both the government and the policy makers (Pal and Ghosh, 2007). The high spatial and demographic heterogeneity translate into unequal socio-economic development on the basis of gender, caste, and religion (Sen, 1992; Gayer and Jafferlot, 2012; Miller, 1997; Saxena, 2014). Government policies intended to address the social equity situations as a result of discriminations is complemented by CBOs whose role is to ensure and motivate people relating to their rights and make them participative. They also create public awareness as part of their corporate social responsibilities to establish social equity among people of the society (Ismail, 2009). CBOs are essential development partners and their functions or roles are closely related to the category or type of CBO.

Social equity includes equal opportunities and obligations, and therefore involves the whole of society. Social equity negates discriminations on the basis of sex, race, age, sexual orientation, class, income, language, religion, convictions, opinions or disabilities. According to [Rawls \(1971\)](#), justice should be the primary focus of the society in order to achieve social

equity (cited in Frederickson, 2010). Hence, within communities, fairness and justice is seen as social equity. In other words, social equity is a diverse concept that is based on increased results that benefit the majority rather than the minority of a population. Though the Indian Constitution guarantees equal opportunities for both men and women, Sushma and Pranavi (2009), however, indicated that only a few women participate in politics and other local service developments.

In the community development context, empowerment has been described as a social action process that promotes participation of individuals, organizations, and communities in gaining control of their lives in their community and larger society. Empowerment is a form of theory which originated from a Brazilian humanitarian and educator, Freire (Hur, 2006), and represents the increased capacity of local citizens to make and control decision that affect their lives (Hamilton, 1992). According to the World Bank (2002), empowerment refers to the expansion of freedom of choice and action. In the case of poor people, freedom is strictly curtailed by their voicelessness and powerlessness in relation to achieving their rights and privileges.

In the view of the researcher, social equity requires the absence of enforced class, caste, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, religious, and economic status restrictions, and also having the freedom to express opinions and convictions. Any unequal treatment should not be applied to an individual on the basis of the above-mentioned criteria under the law and should not limit the opportunities unjustly. Social equity can be achieved by the initiatives of the individual, group or with the partnership of external organizations by providing the skills they need for the development. It consists of combined processes which include programs and strategies that make a community sustainable. Here comes the need of CBOs. This can also be called social responsibility, corporate citizenship, responsible business, and corporate social opportunity, but whatever we call it, the purpose of it is the same.

Due to caste, gender and religious discriminations, the share of development opportunities is noticeably unequal, and it has put great pressure on the government to bring all the underprivileged sectors of the society such as Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Backward Class (BC), minorities, women, children, senior citizens, persons with disability, other highly marginalized groups and the poor from among the forward communities into the development process. The Government's posture is reflected in the country's constitution, mandating the Central and State Governments to bring equitable development and empowerment among the socially and economically deprived people in society. As Joshi (2017) noted, social stratifications based on socio-economic indicators were not evident in ancient India. Rather, citizens were classified according to the hereditary roots of a new-born or caste groups.

The current social classification systems have obstructed social justice and empowerment in the societies in India (Maruthi and Peter, 2018; Raju, 2018). The requirement for social justice, according to Raju (2018) ensures fairness and just association between the individuals and society in relation to supply of wealth, impartial opportunities and privileges for the empowerment of the weaker and disadvantaged sectors of the society. In another development, Fook (2002) explained that power is created and used by people which can both be repressive and productive. When power is used in a repressive way by dominant groups from the society, a state of powerlessness is created, with a feeling of being stuck, helpless or victimized (Tew, 2006).

The graded inequality is continued as a fundamental principle of the caste system even after 70 years of independence (Bagde *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, income distribution and resource allocation continued the legacy of caste structure that pushed the underprivileged to social and economic marginalization, segregation and mismatch in the society. The low level of educational attainment, poverty, unemployment, meagre occupation, low wages, financial distress, low esteem due to caste-ism continue to stigmatize the deprived which have direct impact on the substantial differences in the economic performance (Hnatkovska *et al.*, 2012; Anderson, 2011). Besides that, higher castes and capitalists constructively exploited the lower caste and class for their own benefit.

The inadequacy of Government's efforts to mitigate the rising social equity situations has resulted in an increasing establishment of community-based organisations to help in this regard. The purpose of this research is, therefore, to describe the conflict situations in Karnataka and to examine the role played by CBOs as a complement to Government's effort in attaining social equity among the vulnerable people of Karnataka. Since social equity has different components, the current article is limited to social justice, fairness and empowerment operationalized through access to livelihood, access to education, participation in the political and cultural life, achievement of self-determination and peace building initiatives.

Comment [JM1]: Rising social equity or rising social inequity?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed the survey research design with a sample of 420 beneficiaries of CBO-implemented programs. Additionally, focus group discussions were conducted with 240 officials of 40 CBOs spread across the four sub-regions in Karnataka. The 40 CBOs were selected based on the geographical area and coverage, situated in different parts of Karnataka within the last five years. Primary data were gathered through survey interviews, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The survey participants were selected randomly using a stratified sampling method. The research instrument for the study was pre-tested and revised accordingly to generate accurate data for the study. The research instrument was translated into Kannada, which is the local language in the villages to facilitate the interview process. This research used a combination of both open ended and close ended survey questions in the collection of data from the target population. It provided the respondents the opportunity to provide their own answers to questions without any restriction.

Secondary data, on the other hand, were gathered from the CBOs' profile documents; reports on trainings and programs organized by the CBOs in the communities or the organizations themselves; documents on performance and attendance; number and category of beneficiaries; policy issuances; and other sources of information about the CBO activities and programs relative to interventions targeting social equity outcomes.

The results were analyzed using descriptive and correlation (Chi-square) statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequency counts, percentages whereas the chi-square analysis was used to test the statistical relationship between social equity situations and the number of educational supports provided by the CBO to the community, number of ways community member's access educational opportunities and the number of livelihood activities in the communities attributable to the CBOs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the Conflict Situations in Karnataka

In Karnataka, one of the causes of conflict is the existence of caste system, differences in religion and development opportunities. Figure 1 (a) shows that the prominent religion in the

Comment [JM2]: Conflicts must be about these. Label them according to these three.

study area is Hinduism and the presence of Christians and Muslims is very minimal. The parallel Figure 1 (b) shows that the Forward Caste dominates the other castes. Forward Caste and prominent religion occupy the upper most rungs in the social ladder with high position and power and they enjoy many privileges in society as compared to the other caste groups.

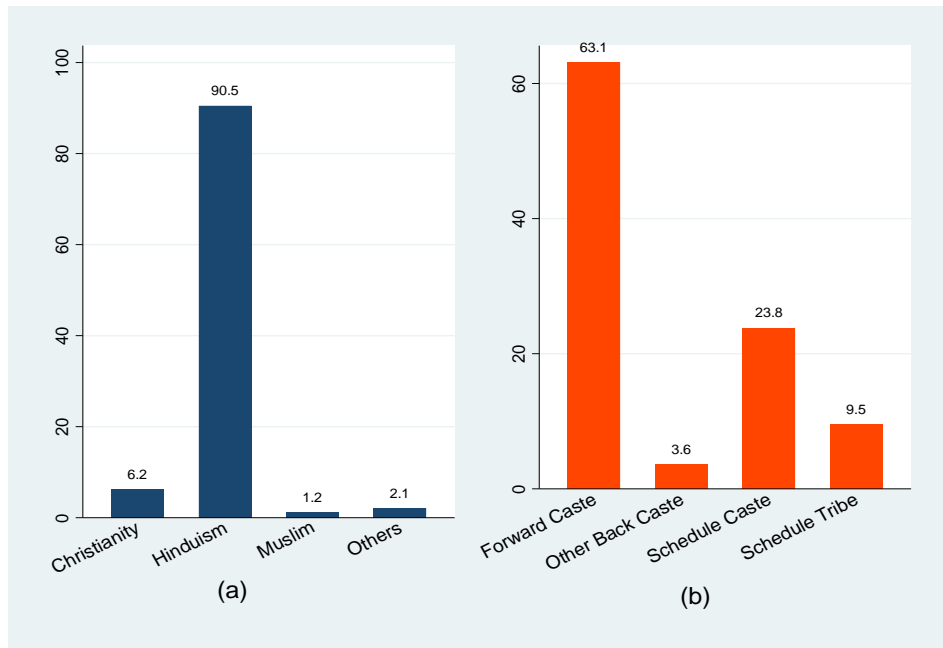


Figure 1. Distribution of religion (a) and caste systems (b)

It is apparent from Figure 2 that the most visible discriminations in society are social disempowerment (65%), deprivation of education (62%) and economic disadvantages (58%). Other lesser discriminations in society are domestic violence (41%), political invisibility (35%), sexual oppression (34%), among others. Most often, women are weaker and more objectified in society.

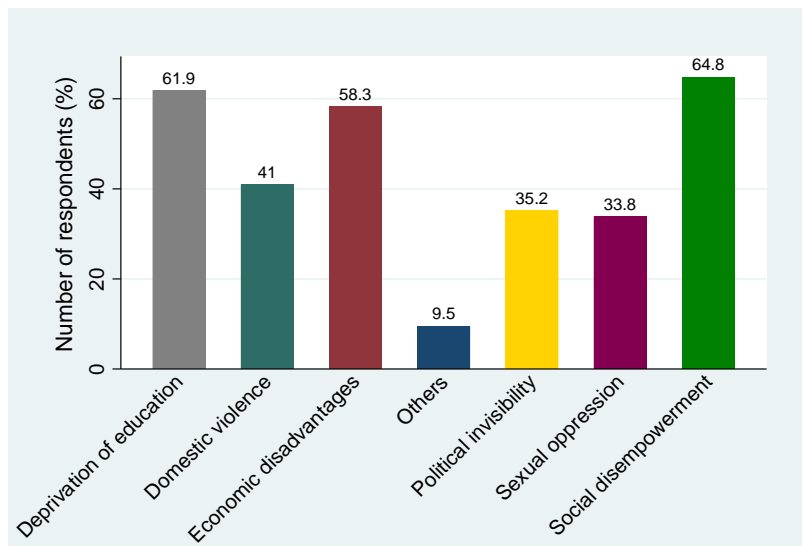


Figure 2. Ways of discrimination due to caste system in Karnataka, 2019.

Moreover, caste-based inhuman discriminations are still prevalent in many parts of India but with varying degrees as was established by Maruthi and Peter (2018). For instance, the August 23, 2019 issue of Deccan Herald (newspaper) reported that in Tamil Nadu the dead body of a 55-year old Scheduled Caste (SC) man had to be lowered from a 20 feet high bridge into the river bed and carried through the river bed to the burial place because the upper caste Hindus did not allow the dead body belonging to the Scheduled Caste community to be carried through their fields (Sivapriyan, 2019).

In India, there are certain dehumanizing tasks that are assigned to certain low castes and they are bound to perform them, e.g., the practice of manual scavenging. Such people are excluded from public places, water bodies and also from engaging in other profession for their livelihoods. Women from some lower caste communities become highly vulnerable to caste-based slavery and forced prostitution with religious sanction. The lower castes face discrimination in different spheres of life, e.g., access to education, access to public places and livelihoods opportunities, social and economic mobility, in the choice of a marriage partner, in the choice of a career, the list is long. This study highlights some areas in which people are discriminated.

The visible acts of discrimination as practiced by higher caste people towards their subordinates and low caste people are presented in Figure 4. The study illustrates how low caste people are victimized by both systemic and structural discriminations and are subjected to violence from dominant castes. The respondents noted discrimination regarding entering the temple as very high with 62% of the respondents positively affirming it.

Further, the restrictions on low caste people entering marriage places and houses, as reflected in Figure 4, are alarmingly high with 52% and 40%, respectively. Furthermore, restrictions on low caste people's access to educational institutions (39%), hotels (35%), and shaking hands with higher castes (31%) are unjust and inhuman. This study attempts to show that in the name of caste system, people are unjustly victimized, tortured and deprived of their basic

human rights. Varied forms of harassment and violence against the lower castes are prevalent in many parts of India. The study gives insight into the blatant negation of the human rights of a large segment of society.

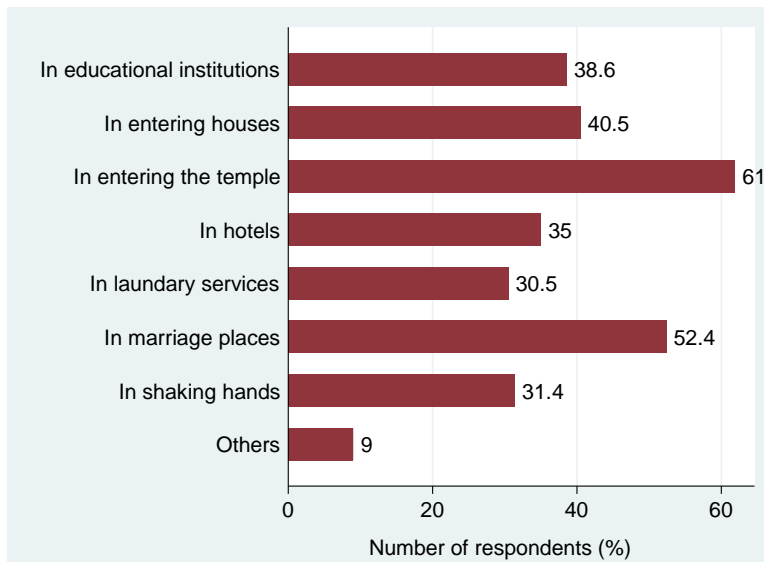


Figure 3. Acts of discrimination against the lower caste in Karnataka, 2019.

Differentiating between racism and caste-ism and relating that to ways and/or acts of discrimination remains a subjective matter to most people in India. For instance, 'CBO J and S' explained that some CBOs and the people of India in general, failed to distinguish between racism and caste-ism. In the present study, racism was a questionable issue based on the discussions with the KII and FGD; but caste-ism was very obvious. In the Indian system, every individual was born into a caste and was identified and valued (graded) according to his/her caste origin. The CBO officials interviewed were conscious of that aspect. They agreed that caste system unjustly criminalized, tortured and deprived the lower castes and the out-castes of their human rights. That was in agreement with the perception of the respondents. CBO officials said that they created awareness both among the victims of caste-ism and among the general public. But overcoming caste discrimination was a herculean task because it was accepted by the community members and reinforced by religion and economic status. Caste discrimination would be reduced only when the affected population, and the perpetrators, the general public, the government and the law enforcing agencies and the CBOs doggedly worked together. A casteless, equitable society was still a distant dream.

An important phase of a development process is to assess and understand people's attitude. A society's success to a large extent depends on the attitude of its people towards the female gender. The results as presented in Table 1 looks into the society's and family's attitudes with respect to gender equality. Responses in Table 1 indicate that 52% of the respondents feel that the attitude of the family members towards male and female is the same/equal and 25% feel that males are respected more than females. But while assessing the community people's attitude towards gender, 44% of the respondents feel that the community's attitude towards male and female is the same/equal, and 30% of them feel that males are respected more than

females. When it comes to the indicator “no respect for women”, 13% of the respondents feel that community people have no respect for women and 12% of them feel that family members have no respect for women. Analyzing the overall picture presented in Table 1, one may conclude that both the society and family still have a preferential attitude towards/respect for the male.

It shows that communities and families’ attitudes towards gender equality need to change. Such a change would result in seeing more women pursuing higher education, engaging in lucrative employment and business and occupying centres of authority and power. Society needs to promote women empowerment and give wings to women’s dreams and aspirations. A good place to begin with is change in attitude towards gender equality, safety and mobility.

Table 1. Respondents’ level of attitude towards gender in Karnataka, 2019.

Description	All are equal n (%)	Good n (%)	Average n (%)	Males are respected more than females n (%)	No respect for women n (%)	Total
Attitude of the community people towards gender	187 (44)	73 (17)	81 (19)	126 (30)	55 (13)	420
Attitude of the family members towards gender in their home	218 (52)	74 (18)	56 (13)	106 (25)	50 (12)	420

The study examined the extent of change in attitude towards the role and status of women. As demonstrated in Figure 4, there is greater discrimination and unequal distribution of responsibility in the household management in the hands of women as 55% of the respondents declared. The findings indicate the need for corrective measures through gender mainstreaming practices, advocacy, and educational inputs. The second highest disparity (53%) is regarding jobs. Males struggle to get white collar jobs while females accept the leftover. Even though women demonstrate greater professionalism and competence, they are denied matching employment, responsibilities and social roles due to gender discrimination. Third important indicator of discrimination (49%) is unequal educational opportunities. The respondents do not give much importance to power representation in public and private sectors (38%). They may be saying, “What one cannot get at home and in one’s community, one cannot expect to get from the public sector”.

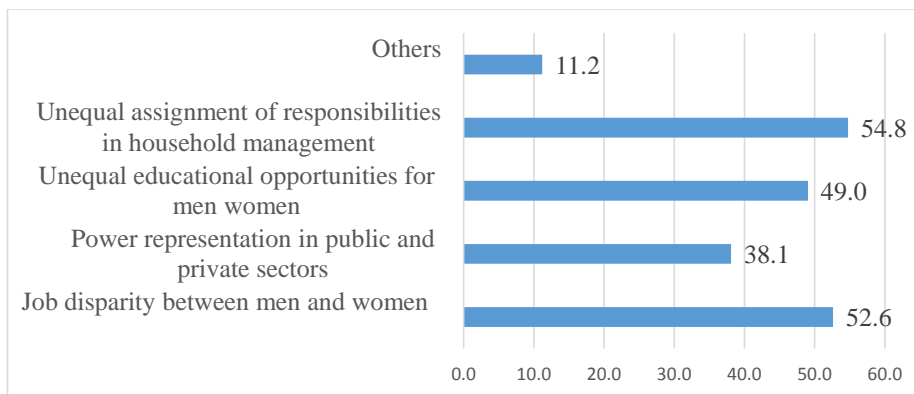


Figure 4. Perceived gender inequality among the people of Karnataka, 2019.

The desired changes have not taken place in economic opportunities and that creates conflict among the people in the community (Figure 5). The respondents identified job disparity among men and women as the topmost issue (68%). About 67% of the respondents identified lack of job opportunities as second issue and 64% of them identified lack of skills as the third issue. Some 48% of the respondents identified lack of modern technology as another reason for the unequal economic status which can cause conflict among the people in the community.

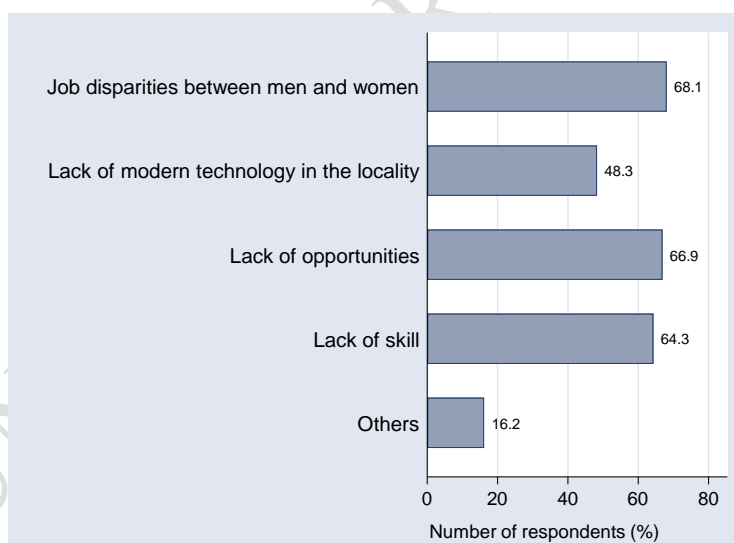


Figure 5. Unequal economic opportunities which create conflict among the people in Karnataka, 2019.

The study revealed that some circumstances make women insecure and the ways by which women experience insecurities differ from person to person. However, in this study one of the insecurities which ranked high is offensive work environment. The offensive work environment does not necessarily refer to professional career environment, rather it could refer to home, work place and other places. The researcher, while doing the survey, had a

recent example which shows how women experience insecurity inside and outside the work place and timing (Table 2). An Ola Cabbie driver murdered a female model near Bangalore's Kempegowda International Airport on July 31, 2019. The driver bludgeoned her to death for money. Bangalore police identified the woman a resident of Kolkata, who worked as a model-cum-event manager. She had come to Bangalore on July 30 for an event and was returning to Kolkata when the gruesome incident happened (Yadav, 2019).

Table 2. Women's insecurity issues in Karnataka, 2019.

ISSUES WITH WOMEN INSECURITY	RANK
Ways women experience insecurities in their career	
Offensive work environment	4
Quid pro Quo	3
Hostile work environment	3
Unsafe commuter facility	3
Rape	3
Description of self-worth	
Self-esteem	5
Fear, frustration	5
Isolation	5
Inferiority complex	4
Feeling of powerlessness	4
Self-blame, shame or guilt	4
Depression, shock or denial	4
Anxiety	4
Sexual harassment and violence create career related side effects	
Resignation or loss of job	4
Decreased interest in job performance	3
Termination or loss of promotion	3
Demotion	3
Change in career goals or path	3
Withdrawal form work/ social environment	3

In measuring self-esteem, Table 2 shows that women have low self-esteem due to various reasons, firstly, women are treated unequally, they are abused, they live in fear, they feel frustrated and they try to escape from the situation by isolating themselves. Other points that the respondents highlighted as the second highest are: inferiority complex, feeling of powerlessness, self-blame, feeling of shame or guilt, depression, shock or denial, and anxiety. Hence, the study suggests that self-esteem to be the woman's most important asset. It enables her to live a better life in the face of all odds.

The study illustrated that sexual harassment and violence which create career related side effects such as resignation or loss of job gets high ranking. Majority of the respondents expressed that once a person experienced sexual harassment in the work place, she will not like to work in the same place but prefers to walk out the place and lose her job.

The Role of CBOs

A review of the objectives of selected CBOs in the study area indicates that the major concentration of program areas is mostly geared towards equality and helping the

marginalized, women and children in the societies. The CBOs' interventions bring about some positive changes in people's lifestyle, yet many more changes are needed to make a real difference. The attitude towards the female gender still needs to be improved drastically. The CBOs working at the grassroots directly or indirectly for gender equity explain that executing a gender-integrated program for school-going children, youngsters and women is fraught with challenges. The educationalists, mentors, and other concerned persons often support and perpetuate the same societal gender prejudices and gender-inequitable norms that come in the way of making changes in the society. Yet, the CBO programs have succeeded to some extent in sensitizing various stakeholders in the education system and in the community.

Majority of the CBO officials expressed that gender equity needed to be contextualized according to the socio-economic background of the households in Karnataka. They agreed that society at large consider men to be superior. That validated the perception of the respondents of this study too. Some of the CBO officers said that such superiority was visible in the ownership of property and in major decision making; but it was more difficult to assess gender superiority and discrimination in the day to day women-men relationships in the households. The results of this study confirm Sumanjeet (2016)'s conclusion that the gender gap still exists in India despite measures taken by the Government and other concerned organisations.

When asked about the CBO's assistance to the community in accessing economic opportunities, 42% of the respondents said that the CBO hardly assisted them to access economic opportunities/benefits. However, some 32% of them said that the CBO always assisted the community to access economic opportunities, and 18% said that CBO assisted sometimes (Table 3). But the respondents told the researcher that the community benefitted from the training and capacity building sessions conducted by the CBO. Training and capacity building of the target communities and social groups have been the hallmark of every CBO. The CBOs across Karnataka have taken it upon themselves to train and build the capacity of their stakeholders. As a result, many stakeholders have formed active self-help groups with their own savings and capacity to mobilize finances and other resources from the banks and government departments for income generation initiatives. Their group solidarity and united action help them to access government entitlements and poverty alleviation schemes.

Table 3. CBOs' assistance in accessing economic opportunities in the community in Karnataka, 2019.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Always	135	32
Sometimes	75	18
Hardly	176	42
Never	34	8
Total	420	100

From the discussion with the CBO officials, it was discovered that training and capacity building for the members of the weaker sections was the hall mark of every CBO. The measures taken by the CBOs up-skilled the stakeholders across Karnataka and improved their livelihoods and gender mainstreaming. Self-help groups promoted small savings of their members and enhanced their access to institutional finances, and mutual help and group solidarity to solve their problems. The CBO officials, unlike the respondents in the survey, realized that training and capacity building slightly enhanced economic opportunities, but it failed to achieve the desired changes to prevent or reduce conflicts in society.

The interview with the CBO officials confirmed that women felt insecure due to offensive and hostile work environment, and unsafe travel facility and fear of sexual assault. There were numerous ways in which women were harassed at the work place and their promotion was prevented. The recent economic survey pointed out that the female labour force's participation had dropped from 33% in 2011-12 to 25.3% in 2017-18 (Prabhavathi and Naveena, 2014). Besides the feeling of inferiority, powerlessness and fear, and lack of self-esteem, the criminalization of victims of rape and sexual violence by society made them more insecure and live with feelings of shame and guilt. The CBO officials further agreed that women empowerment was very important in order to realize the dream of a just and equitable society. Hence, they engaged in activities for empowering women and enhancing their family and societal status.

The role of community-based organizations in addressing the social equity situations in conflict vulnerable areas were accessed with the help of such indicators as access to livelihood, access to education, participation in the political and cultural life, access to self-determination, and access to peace building initiatives. The results are presented in the respective subsections below.

Access to Livelihood

Among the livelihood activities in the communities, the members of the community are able to access tailoring, farming, poultry production, cosmetology and electronics (Table 4). Whilst tailoring is the dominant activity which 79% of the respondents indicated, 44% of them believed that farming was accessible by all members on the average whilst 32% indicated that members have access to electronics/cell phone repair in the community. A clear examination of Table 4 shows that the only dominant activities in the communities which the women are likely to engage are tailoring and cosmetology.

Table 4. Program beneficiaries' level of access to livelihood activities in Karnataka, 2019.

LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITY	LEVEL OF ACCESS (%)			
	None	Low	Average	High
Tailoring	8	8	79	3
Auto mechanic	47	26	17	1
Electronic/cell phone repair	41	17	32	3
Farming	31	16	44	1
Cosmetology	47	15	29	2
Fishing	50	19	18	0
Vending/ marketing	38	19	32	0
Poultry production	42	18	30	2
Flower vending	31	15	41	2

The CBO officials from Belagavi and Bagalkote said that the main livelihood activities in the regions were agro-based, viz. farming, and care of livestock and poultry. All the CBOs in all four sub-regions of Karnataka stated in their interviews that they imparted skills in tailoring and garment making, repairs of electronic gadgets and vehicles, and management of petty shops. The CBOs provided access to finances and soft skills training and created linkages with potential job providers. The CBOs were able to contribute to the economic wellbeing of the people in their target area through people's movements, viz. to access work under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and other entitlements of the Government

Reporting on the number of livelihood activities that the CBOs are engaged within the community, 90% of the respondents disclosed tailoring as the single major activity that the CBOs supported in the study community. The next major activity primarily undertaken by the CBOs within the community is farming with 52% of the respondents confirming the activity. Figure 6 presents the activities that the community members are engaged in decreasing order of availability.

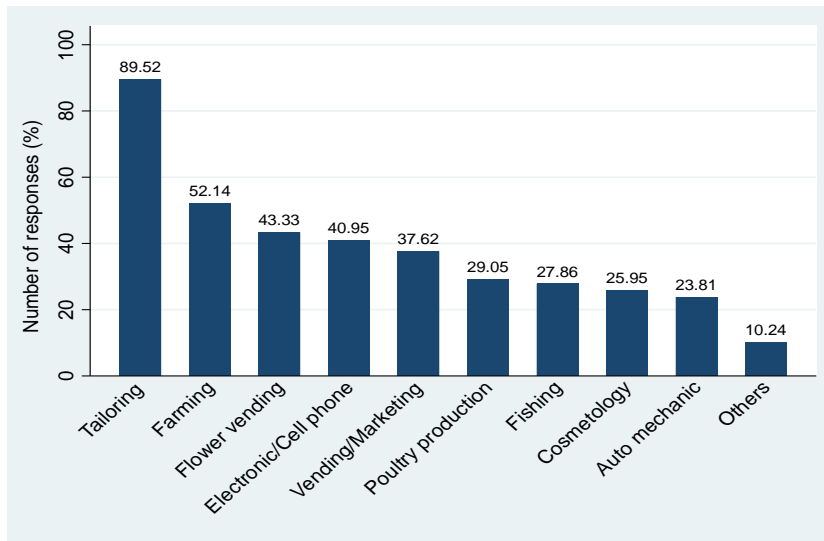


Figure 6. Availability of livelihood activities in the communities in Karnataka, 2019.

Access to Education

Access to educational opportunities in the communities is largely through direct contact with the sponsor organization as reported by 75% of the respondents (Figure 7). It is surprising therefore to discover that the media (26%) play little role in accessing educational opportunities as well as political influence (17%) in the current technological and politically driven economy. Though there are other ways (11%) that community members access education in the community, 30% of the respondents added that the community also had access to educational opportunities through scholarship schemes (Figure 7).

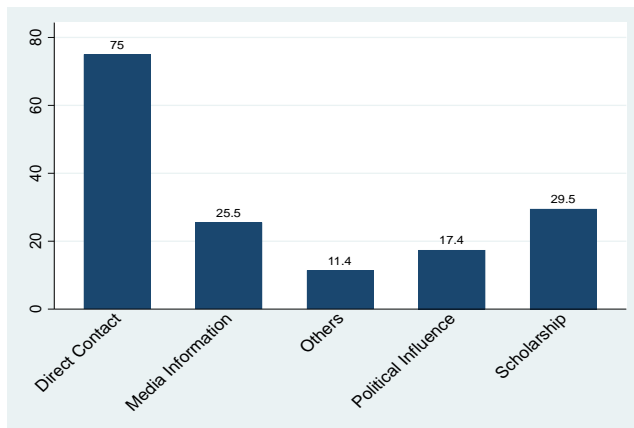


Figure 7. Means of access to educational opportunities in Karnataka, 2019.

From the FGD, all the CBO officials with whom the researcher interacted stressed the need for education. They said that equity, *education* and economic development must *go hand in hand*. They tried to get children enrolled in schools under the Right to Education Act. They created awareness regarding the importance of education among the target population. They believed that education helped the low caste and the out-castes to withstand the *stigmatization* based on the concept of purity and pollution. The CBOs helped the children to get admission to the government hostels and they helped many children by providing them tuition and boarding fees or travel allowance. The survey respondents vouched that the CBOs impacted the community in realizing the importance of children's education and that the CBOs financially supported children's education and convinced the parents that their future, along with that of their children, depended on good education.

It is evident from the results in Figure 8 that education is a greater factor in helping the people gain influence in societies with 43% and 32% rating it as high and average, respectively. Due to its greater influence, 44% of the respondents highly affirmed that the community prioritized their children's education and the formation of their behaviour and attitudes. Some 31% of the respondents rated the community's support on prioritizing children's education as high.

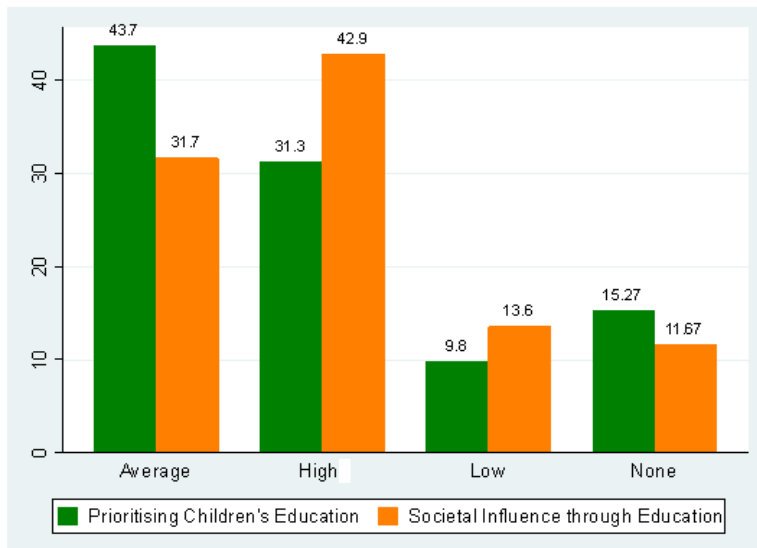


Figure 8. Prioritizing children’s education and societal influence through education in Karnataka, 2019.

Having established how the community accessed educational opportunities and with full understanding of the importance of prioritizing children’s education, the results in Figure 9 show the level of commitment in terms of providing support towards achieving their educational desires. It was discovered that the most highly ranked component that was executed by the organization for the purposes of promoting social equality is access to education especially in supporting tuition fees with a percentage ranking of 75%. Also, feeding received second highest ranking from the respondents, indicating that the organization gave preference for feeding which nourishes and keeps the children healthier and fit to continue their studies.

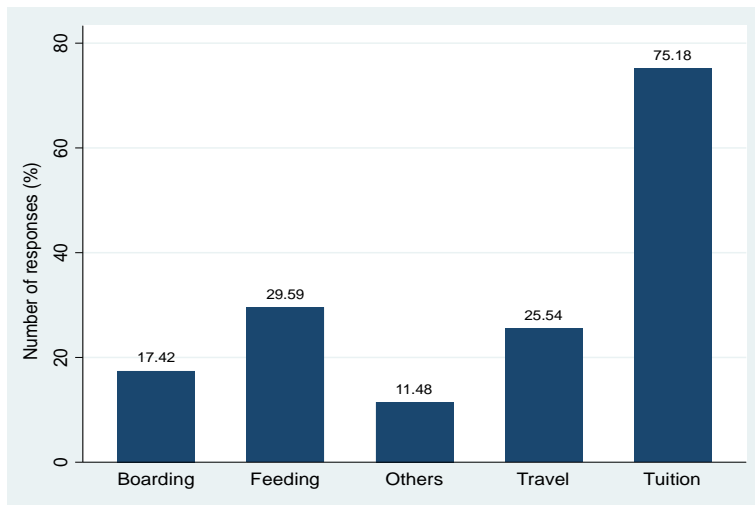


Figure 9. Education as a component in promoting social equity in Karnataka, 2019.

Participation in the Political and Cultural Life

The results in Table 5 show the level of agreement (%) of the respondents with the people's participation in the political and cultural life in the community. In the first half of the table, the respondents were asked to rate the community's contribution in policymaking towards resolving conflicts in the vulnerable areas. Some 42% of the respondents reported that on average, the community helped to promote gender equality in terms of participation, whilst 40% said the community's participation in this regard was low. In terms of encouragement in decision making, 42% of the respondents indicated that the community contributed on average to decision making within the community level. Whilst 35% of the respondents reported that the community, on average, ensured the representation of people in policy-making and in leadership, 41% indicated that the community encourages the participation in decision-making process involving policies, and priority projects, among others.

Table 5. Community participation in political and cultural life in Karnataka, 2019.

INDICATORS	LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION (%)			
	None	Low	Average	High
Contribution of community in policymaking in resolving conflicts in vulnerable areas				
Promotes gender equality in community participation	5	40	42	5
Encourages decision making in community participation	8	28	42	6
Ensures People's representation in policy making and in leadership	7	50	35	4
Encourages people's participation in decision-making process involving policies, priority projects, activities, etc.	5	34	41	5
Extent to which CBO activities have promoted people's participation and tackled conflict management				
Lobbying and advocacy about social equity	6	42	47	3
Publication about equal rights of education	8	43	42	4
Increased civic education, health service, economic standard	4	39	50	5
Awareness creation on Justice and fairness	8	46	42	4
Attain technical training	6	47	42	5
Networking and alliance building for job opportunity	6	45	44	4

The respondents had mixed emotions with respect to the contribution of CBOs through their activities towards promoting people's participation and to tackle conflict management. The results show almost an equal amount of "low" and "average" responses. For instance, whilst 42% of the respondents rated the CBOs' contribution towards lobbying and advocacy about social equity as low, 47% said the extent to which CBOs activities promoted people's participation was high. In terms of publication about equal rights of education, there was a 43% and 42% split between low and average rating of the respondents. Except for increased civic education, health services and economic standards which 39% of the respondents scored as low; awareness creation on justice and fairness; attainment of technical training as well as networking and alliance building for job opportunity had at least 45% of the respondents rating them as low. On the contrary, whilst 50% of the respondents rated the extent to which CBOs helped in increasing the civic education, health services and economic standard as average, a slightly lower percentage of respondents also rated the awareness creation on justice and fairness by CBOs as average. In terms of attaining technical training, networking and alliance building for job opportunity, 41% and 45%, respectively, scored the CBOs as average.

Generally, all the CBO officials were in agreement that the CBOs' work to some extent impacted the different areas covered under the term social equity – viz. *social* status, civil rights, freedom of expression, property rights and access to *social* goods and *social* services. There were remarkable changes in people's awareness in the areas of gender mainstreaming, cultural and political participation and decision-making process. The CBOs' presence in the community enlightened the community regarding various components of social equity, e.g., right to education, right to basic amenities and right to socio-economic justice and fairness and empowered the community, at least to a limited extent, to voice their grievances and to

participate in redressing their woes and thereby manifesting their determination to face and to tackle conflict vulnerable areas (Table 5).

Access to Self-Determination

Access to self-determination formed part of the core activities of the CBOs in their quest to empower the people in the communities to tackle conflicts. Whereas 30% of the respondents reported that they observed a high change in the community's ability to make their own choices, 21% rated the community's ability to make their own choices as low.

Effective problem solving was also rated by 32% and 16% of the respondents as average and high, respectively. The performance of the community after receiving activities relating to self-determination as rated by the respondents in taking control and responsibility for one's life as well as being able to face the consequences of choices made was not significantly different from making own choices and effectively solving problems (Table 6).

Besides the changes observed by the respondents, the research also sought to describe the extent to which the CBOs helped the community achieve self-determination to tackle conflicts in vulnerable areas. One of such indicators was building confidence within and in their neighbourhood. According to Table 6, 41% and 46% of the respondents indicated that the extent to which CBOs helped the community in terms of building confidence within and in their neighbourhood was low and average, respectively.

Table 6. Program participants' access to self-determination.

INDICATORS	LEVEL OF ACCESS (%)			
	None	Low	Average	High
Observed changes in the community after receiving activities relating to self-determination				
Able to make own choices	27	21	21	30
Effectively solve problems	12	39	32	16
Taking control and responsibility for one's life	20	32	32	14
Able to face the consequences of made choices	25	25	27	22
Extent to which CBO help community to achieve self determination to tackle conflict management				
Builds confidence within and in their neighborhood	6	41	46	5
Raises awareness to encourage community participation in owning the program implemented	4	53	38	4
Trains members to upgrade knowledge and skills and capacitates the community to govern their made choices	5	36	50	8
Enhances leadership skills to tackle conflict situations on their own	5	53	37	3
Cooperation of people in peace building initiatives in the community				
Creates consensus-building through democratic involvement and strengthening of civil society	9	38	47	5
Encourages cooperation among different community groups	6	45	44	3
Prevents disputes caused by political influence and jealousy (national, provincial or local)	10	47	38	4
Builds the capacity of the people to initiate a dialogue with each other	6	38	50	4
Enhances the negotiation skills of the people to enter dialogues between parties based on principles of mutual gain.	6	37	50	3

Also, there was a high percentage of respondents (53%) who scored the CBOs as low in terms of raising awareness to encourage the community in participating and owning the program implemented. Training members to upgrade their knowledge, skills and capacities to govern their own choices was generally rated as average by 50% of the respondents whilst as high as 36% still maintained the CBOs assistance in this regard was low. Also, enhancing leadership skills to tackle conflict situations on their own was also not highly rated by the respondents.

Access to Peace Building Community

In terms of rating the cooperation of people in peace building initiatives in the community, there was another split in scores between low and average. Considering the individual indicators, building the capacity of the people to initiate a dialogue as well as enhancing the negotiation skills of people to enter dialogues between parties were rated by 50% of the respondents as average, whilst preventing disputes caused by political influence and jealousy was rated low by 47% of the respondents. Inasmuch as the strive made by CBOs is to bridge the gap between the different groups, as high as 45% of the respondents rated them low in their attempt to encourage cooperation among the different community groups. However, as indicated by 47% of the respondents, the CBOs on average created a consensus-building through democratic involvement and strengthening of the civil society (Table 6).

A CBO should be considered as a civil society because it created space for collective action around shared interests, purposes and values, which were generally distinct from the interests and values of the government and commercial for-profit actors. It could and would enhance the participation of communities in the provision of services and in policy decision-making and in the peace building process of fragile, conflict vulnerable and deprived sections of society. For that, the CBO needed to adopt a range of measures necessary to transform conflicts towards sustainable and peaceful relations and outcomes. The FGDs with the CBO officers in the study area showed that the CBOs had strategies and initiatives to cultivate peace and healing among the members of the community and larger society, but they were not of much significance when one considered the immensity of the problem of oppression, exploitation, subjugation and denial of basic human rights that the vulnerable communities in the study area faced. The assessment of CBO staff reliability during conflict situation got a poor grading from the respondents. That, for certain, was an indicator that the CBOs' contribution to the peace building process among the conflict vulnerable and deprived sections of society was not very effective. Both the CBOs and the members of the conflict vulnerable community knew that there was still a huge distance to cover, that the vision of an equitable society was still at the distant horizon (Table 6).

The most highly ranked component that was perceived to have been used by the CBOs for the purposes of communicating peace building in the community was the advocacy for gender equality (APC26) with a percentage ranking of 58% (Figure 10). Also, social interaction (APC21) and political involvement (APC25) received the same ranking from the respondents, implying that the organization equally employed these two strategies in communicating peace building among community members. However, dialogue between groups (APC23) received the lowest ranking as evidenced by the results in Figure 10.

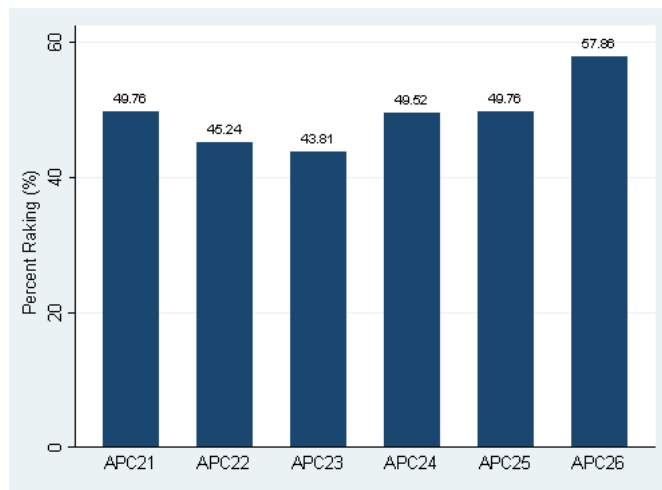


Figure 10. Components used for peace building in the communities in Karnataka, 2019.

Table 7 seeks to assess how social equity situations in the community relates to the number of livelihood activities, the number of educational opportunities and the number of ways that community members can have access to the educational opportunities all attributed to the intervention of the CBO. The analysis indicates statistically significant results for all comparisons. This implies that the number of livelihood activities available in the community, the number of educational opportunities, and the number of ways that these educational opportunities can be accessed is associated with the social equity situation created in the community by the CBO.

Table 7. Chi-square test between social equity and access to education and livelihood.

ATTRIBUTES	df	$\chi^2 - statistic$	<i>p</i> -value
Social equity vs. number of educational supports provided by the CBO to the community	5	18.769	0.002**
Social equity vs. number of ways community members access educational opportunities	5	15.739	0.008**
Social equity vs. number of livelihood activities in the community attributable to the CBO	10	32.730	<0.001**

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

CONCLUSION

The conflict situation in the communities has been reduced due to the intervention of the CBOs. The general focus of the CBOs was to promote social change in favour of the poor, marginalized, and deprived community-based equality and social justice. However, their mode and scope of operations differed by the target population within each community. A clear examination of the vision, mission, and programs initiated by the CBOs indicates that their major concerns were education, health, livelihood, and the protection of the rights and security of women and children in the communities. The different programs as implemented

by the CBOs were mainly through capacity building, empowerment, and skills training, along with other strategies for rescuing and sometimes rehabilitating victims of discrimination and rights abuse. However, the CBOs recognized the potential of the caste and religious group's differences in causing conflicts among the people in the communities, and therefore strive to mediate in terms of peace building processes.

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