Questioning Disparity

Quantifying peoples knowledge for public policy advocacy

National Infrastructure Equity Audit 2010

Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices, Secretariat, Social Equity Watch

Social Equity Watch

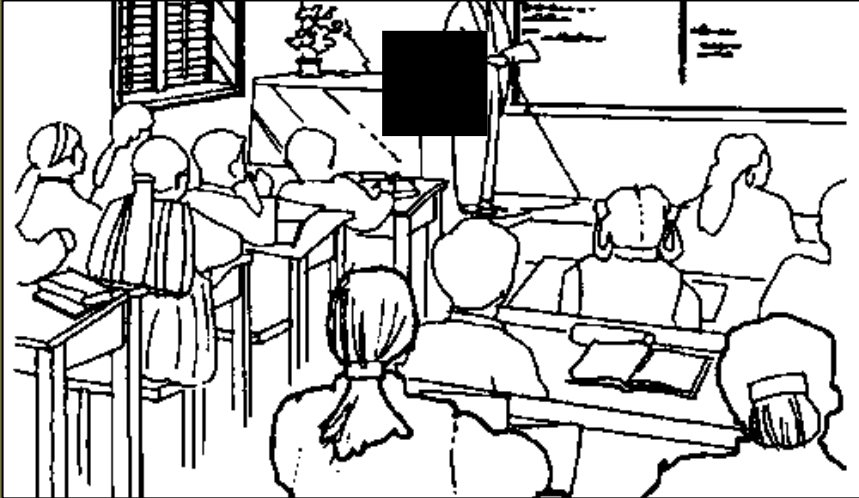## Contributors

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Background and objective

Top-down approach and policy blindness - The top-down approach of government in policy making continues to worry and amaze observers. Simple and widely known facts to people, like village level infrastructure inequity, surprisingly escape the consideration of policy makers

Infrastructure inequity is common knowledge - Countless poverty studies, including many of Praxis' own Participatory Poverty Assessments, show that infrastructure investment is seldom equally located across social groups. It is common knowledge that such concentration of social services in upper caste Hindu habitations leads to exclusion of marginalised groups.

Tools for quantifying community knowledge for public policy advocacy
In order to address this policy blindness, Praxis as secretariat of Social Equity Watch designed a set of tools to enable communities to quantify infrastructure inequity and their exclusionary outcomes.

Objectives of the equity audit
To assess the presence, concentration and access of infrastructure by SC/ST/ Religious minorities/ BCs/General caste groups at the Gram Panchayat (GP) level from an equity perspective.

Step 1 - Training community members and selecting sample GPs

A two-day training programme was conducted by Praxis for community volunteers from community groups and organisation working with Dalits, Tribals and Religious Minorities, which wanted to undertake this equity audit in their working areas.
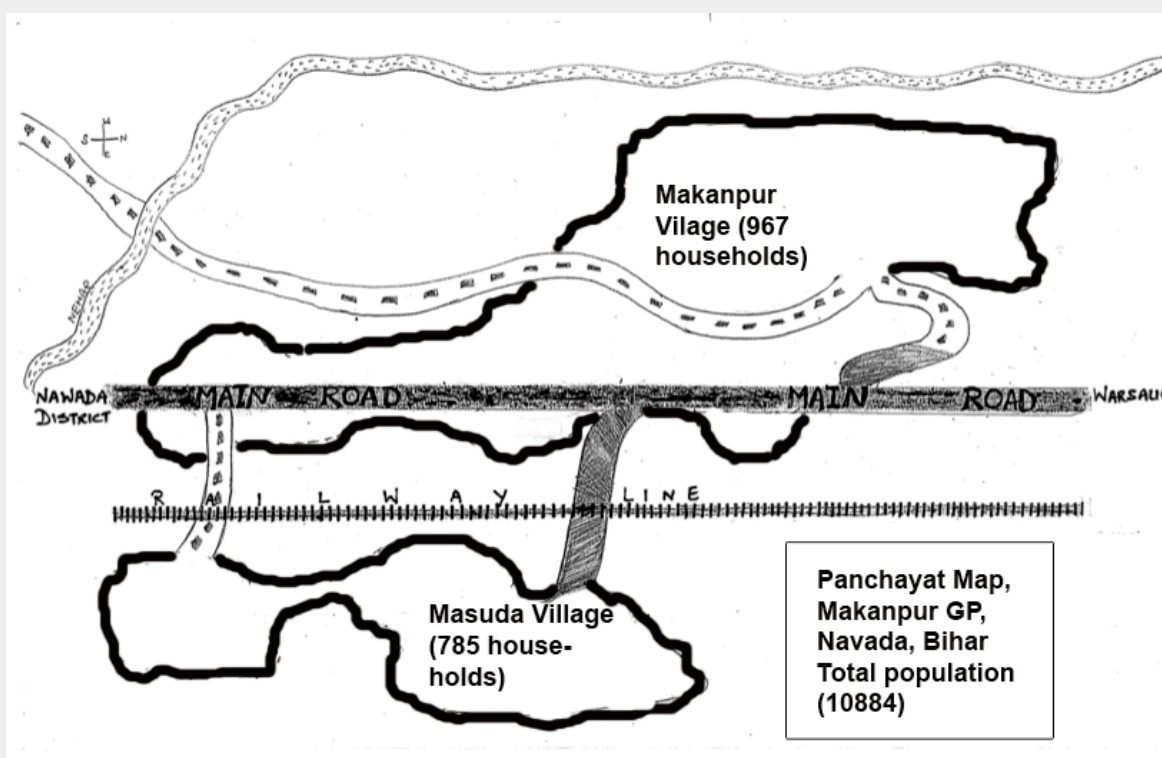
The community groups and organisations selected one hundred and twenty four *Gram Panchayats* [GP] in nine districts in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Odisha and Rajasthan. In each of the states, one backward district and one developed district were selected.

It must be noted that the sample GPs would understate the extent of inequity

## Step 2 - Transact walk and Mapping the boundary and demography of GP

A two-member team started the study with transact walk, mapping village and *Gram Panchayat* boundary and collected information about GP population and caste composition between 21 February and 10 April 2011. In the process the team identified key respondents representing all caste habitations.

Makanpur Village (967 households)

Masoula Village (785 households)

Panchayat Map, Makanpur GP, Navada, Bihar Total population (10884)

Step 3 - Mapping infrastructures and service providers in GPs

Mapping exercise in 124 GPs showed that except for electricity and community centre, most services were available and functional in the sample GPs

**The sample GPs had most infrastructure facilitates**
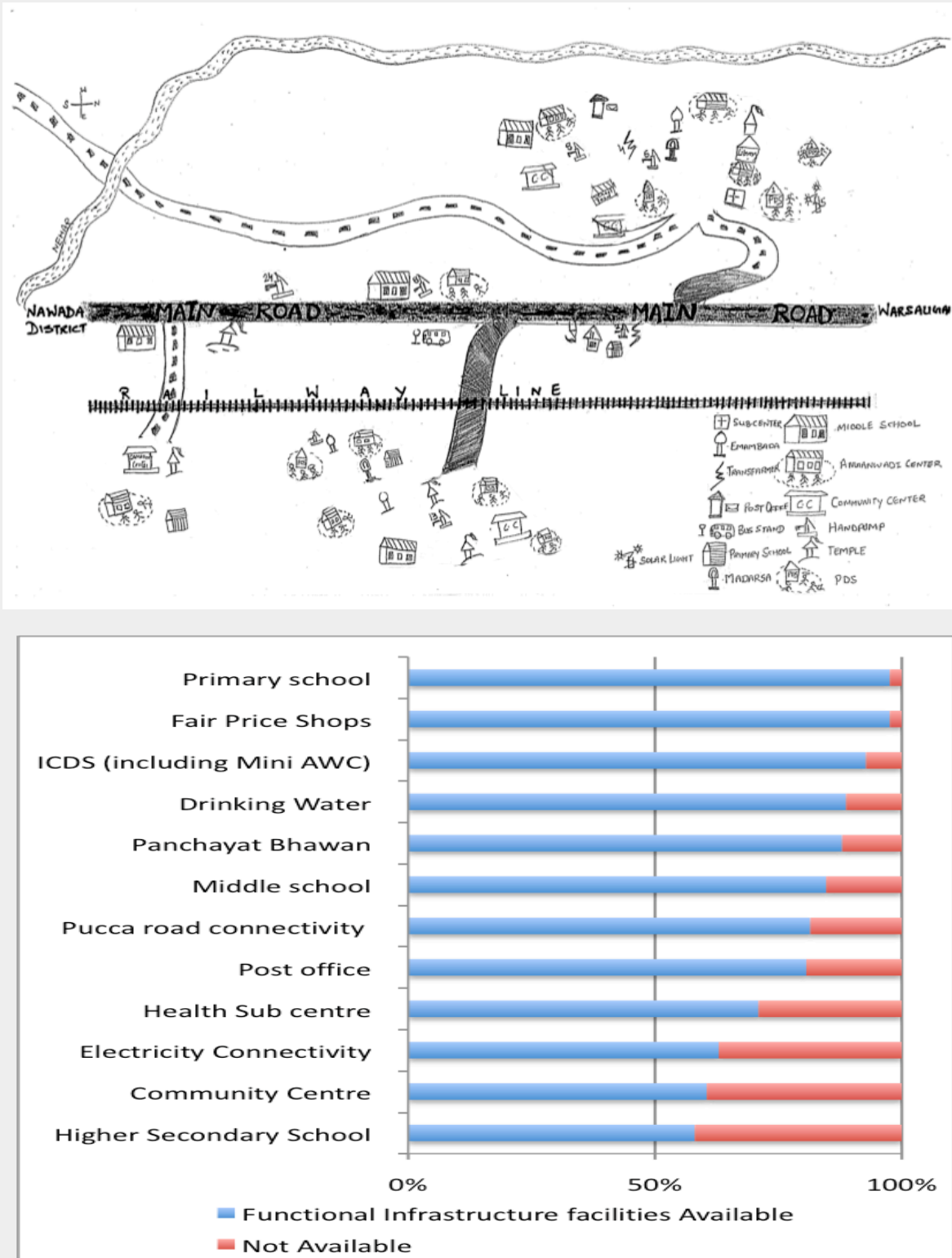
## Step 4 - Mapping different social habitations in GPs

All habitations belonging to SC/ST/Minority/ GEN/ BC were mapped in the sample GPs and compared in terms of availability of different infrastructure facilities.

Disproportionate location of infrastructure facilities
The mapping exercise in 124 GPs showed that majority of the infrastructure was placed only in the dominant social habitation. People living beyond had to access services from the dominant habitation.
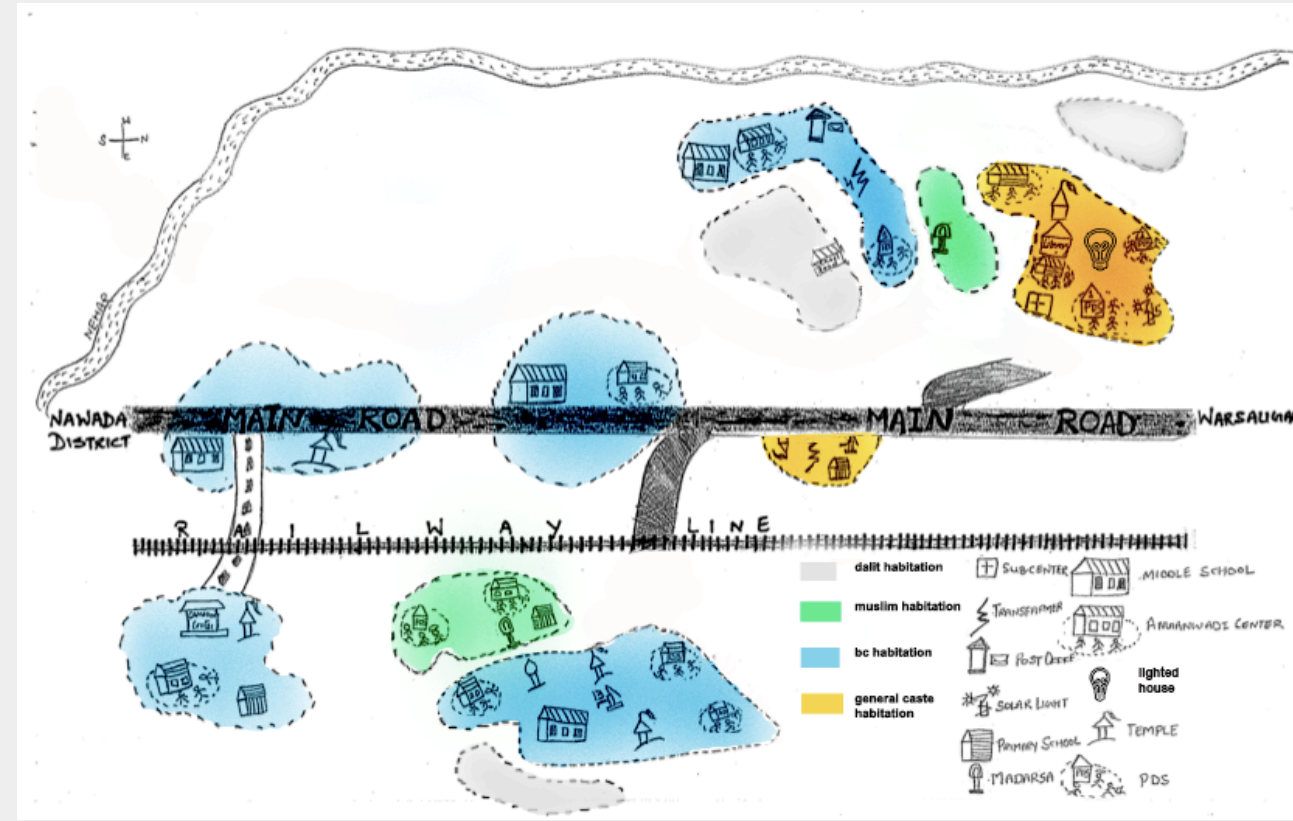

GP level Infrastructure services placed only in General/BC habitations
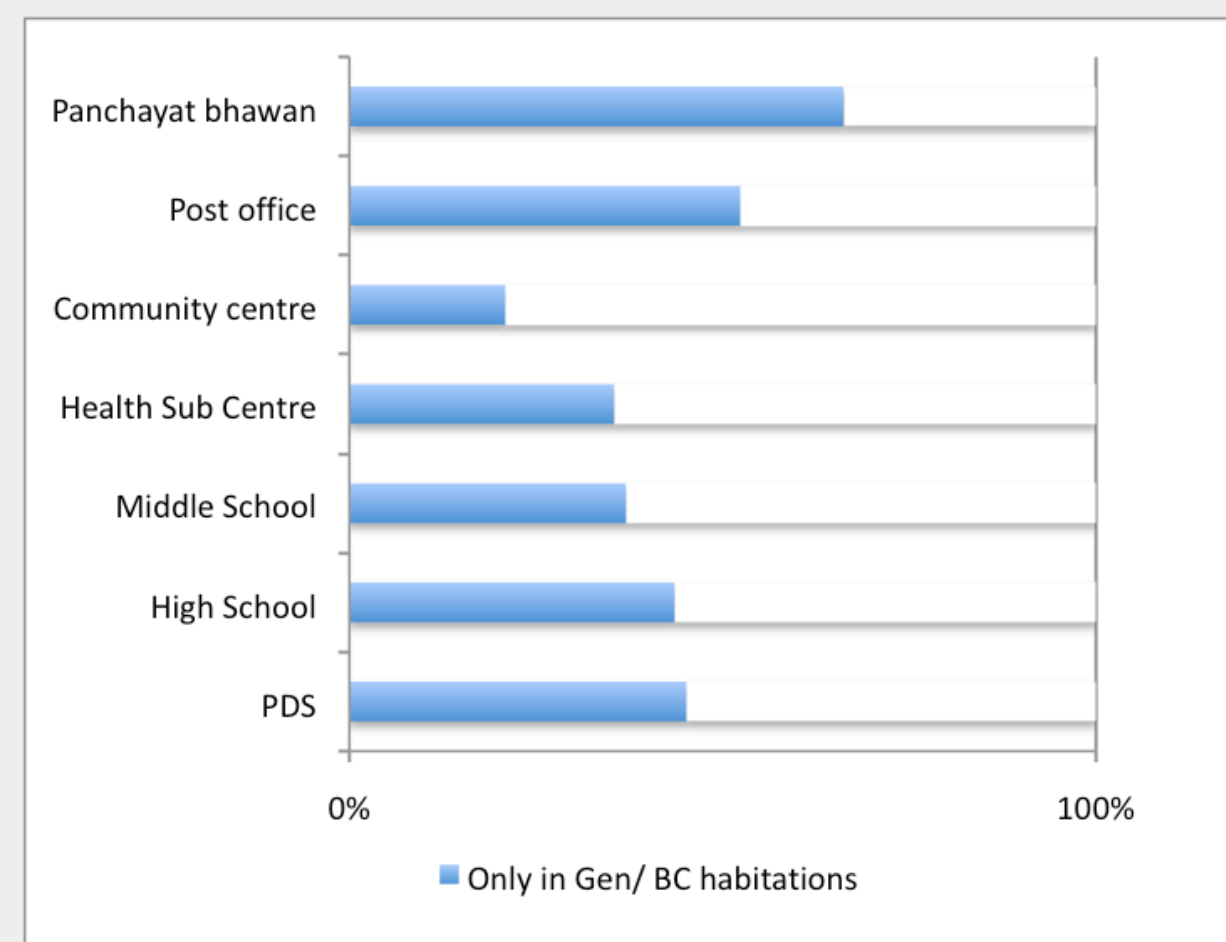
Findings showed that three-fourths of the GPs had located the *Panchayat Bhawan* in a socially undesirable way. Health sub centres, higher secondary schools, *Panchayat Bhawans* and post offices were also placed in a socially inefficient manner in more than 60% of the GPs. Similarly, in 46% and 44% of GPs, the Fair Price Shops and Middle Schools were placed in a socially inefficient way.

Habitation level infrastructure services placed only in General/BC habitations
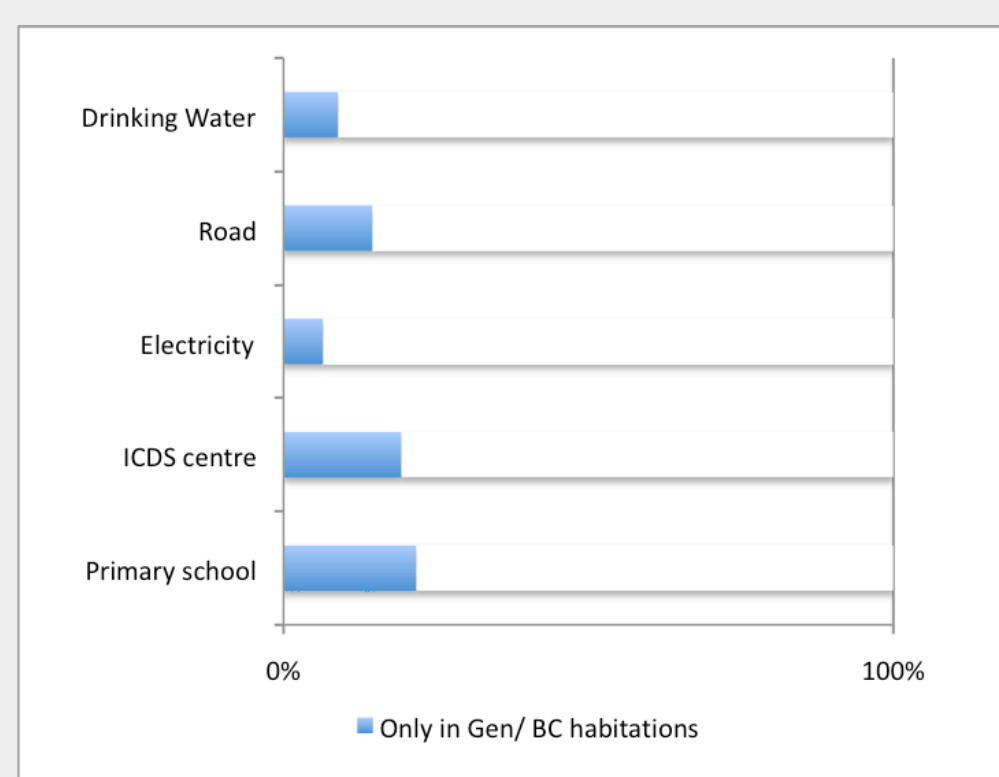
There are some infrastructure facilities, like ICDS, primary school, road, drinking water and electricity, which can be located in multiple locations as these infrastructure services have smaller population norms. However even in these cases, a significant percentage of GPs have concentrated the infrastructure facilities, in dominant caste habitations

## Step 5 – Mapping officially excluded SC/ST/Minority habitation

After locating the disparity in the location of village level infrastructure services, an exercise was undertaken to identify number of infrastructures which officially do not cover SC/ST/Minority habitations. Official population or distance norms for each infrastructure was taken and compared with the actual distance (or population coverage) of the same from the SC/ST/Minority habitations. This process led to identification of SC/ST/Minority habitations which are officially excluded from the infrastructure coverage.

Caste habitations	Fair price shops	Health sub centre	Higher secondary school	Primary school	Middle school	ICDS (including Mini AWC)	Habitations without any electricity	Habitations not electrified as per norms	Habitations not connected by Pucca roads	Habitations with no quality drinking water source§
SC (N=299)	85 (28%)	227 (76%)	39 (13%)	50 (16%)	46 (15%)	50 (17%)	84 (28%)	175 (59%)	138 (46%)	46 (15%)
ST (N=378)	219 (58%)	107 (28%)	156 (41%)	139 (36%)	195 (52%)	38 (10%)	230 (61%)	281 (74%)	197 (52%)	29 (8%)
Minority (N=50)	19 (38%)	33 (66%)	10 (20%)	6 (6%)	5 (10%)	11 (22%)	12 (24%)	28 (56%)	22 (44%)	11 (22%)

Step 6-Assesing access difficulties by different social groups-

In the sample GPs, separate group exercises were conducted for 8-12 members from 121 SC habitations, 100 ST habitations, 99 BC habitation, and 82 general caste habitations. These groups rated each infrastructure on a ten-point scale, defined in terms of poor performance (1 to 4), moderate performance (5 to 7) and good performance (8 to 10).

Same infrastructures has different access ratings by SC/ST/Minority Groups

Combined Access ratings of eight service by different Caste and Religious
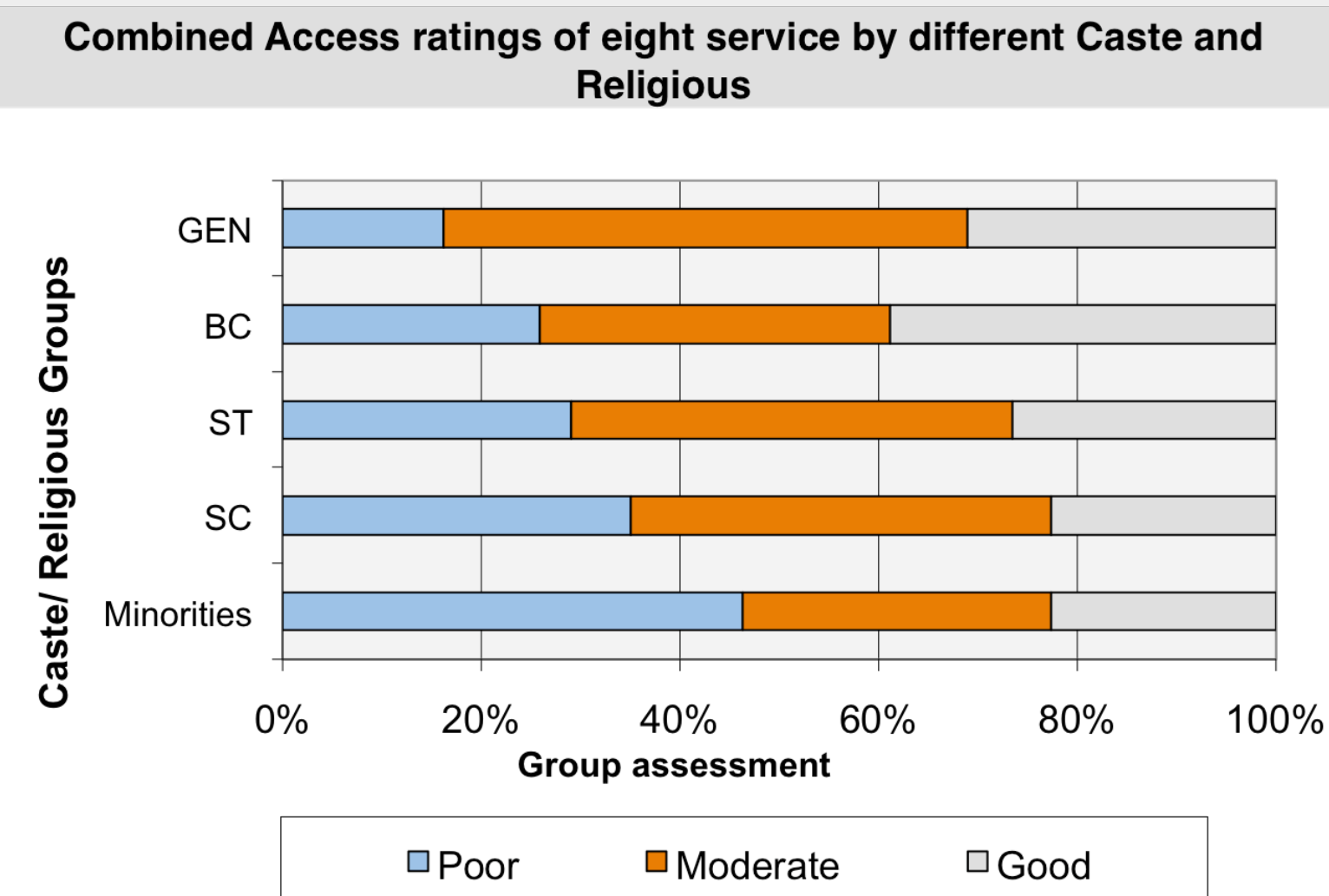
The figure shows low aggregate ratings given by SC/ST/ Minority groups in comparison with BC and General caste groups for eight infrastructure services, that were commonly available in the GP

Social distance leading to inefficient service provision to marginalised groups

The relatively higher dissatisfaction among SC/STs was largely due to social distance they faced due to location of services in powerful dominant caste habitations (the figure above shows this result for one of the infrastructure facilities)

Powerless to make dominant caste service providers accountable
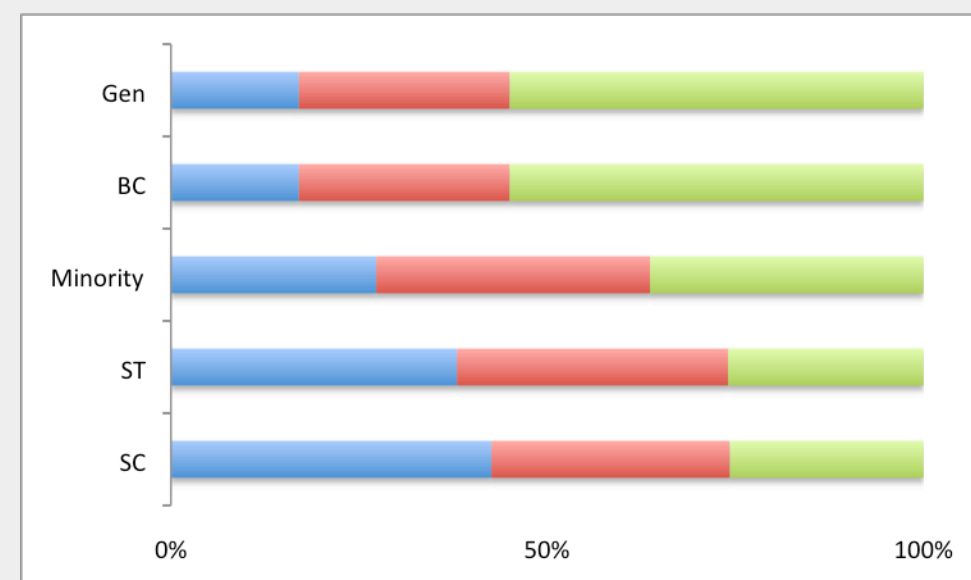
Apart from social distance, the relatively higher dissatisfaction among SC/STs was largely due to attitude of service providers. The figure above shows this result for one of the infrastructure facilities (PDS).

Recommendation

There is an urgent need to make infrastructure planning and location more efficient. The findings indicate that the existing inequitable distribution is socially undesirable and highly inefficient from an 'implementation point of view', due to the social distance and control by dominant caste 'gate-keepers'. Some emergent recommendations are:

1. Define and officially recognise habitations/ settlements for SC/ST/Minorities.
2. Map these habitations/ settlements, in a way that enables different schemes to assess the extent of coverage of settlements belonging to the marginalized community.
3. Undertake participatory mapping of infrastructure gap by Panchayat and community members from SC/ST/ Minority habitations.
4. Working out norms/ guidelines for each infrastructure to prioritise officially uncovered SC/ST/ Minority habitations and service providers from these habitations.
5. Working out guidelines for having a quota for coverage at the level of Block, G.P and village.
Periodically monitor the progress and publish it transparently in website.