

GCR SCHOLARLY GUIDE SERIES

Bihar-Jharkhand Inclusion and Rights Guide

ATIKSH SINHA



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—— GCR SCHOLARLY GUIDE SERIES ——

BIHAR-JHARKHAND INCLUSION AND RIGHTS GUIDE

by
Atiksh Sinha



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BIHAR-JHARKHAND INCLUSION AND RIGHTS GUIDE

Author: Atiksh Sinha

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Chapter 1

Early Childhood (Ages 0–6)

The first six years determine whether a child will go to school healthy, documented, and ready to learn, and exclusion during this period is the hardest to undo. In Bihar and Jharkhand, Adivasi/Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, and other caste- and ethnicity-excluded communities have the most difficult time, with the situation being worsened by the presence of caste/tribal exclusion alongside poverty, geographic isolation, seasonal migration, disability, and a mother tongue spoken at home that is not covered by the services.

This chapter is written for parents, community health workers and their aides, ASHAs and auxiliary nurse midwives, local authorities, civil society organizations, and businesses whose supply chains link them to households with young children. Many of the rights discussed here are covered through Anganwadi centers, village health facilities, and civil registration offices, and this chapter focuses on these institutions.

1. Exclusion in practice

Exclusion in early childhood is hardly ever an instantaneous process. It often takes the form of a series of small acts of refusal, postponement, and absence that result in the child being denied food, documents, attention, or a language she may learn. The victim of such exclusion will be a six-year-old girl whose height falls short of that of her peers and who goes to school without any birth certificate or even a language which she understands.

Scenario 1.1: The separate plate at the Anganwadi center

The Anganwadi center is located in the dominant-caste portion of the village in central Bihar. Children from the Dalit tola, a hamlet of landless agricultural laborers, have to walk to the center along the main lane and bypass the houses of families whose members work in the agricultural labor market. Attendance from the tola was lacking and remained steady for years.

This changed when a woman from the Scheduled Caste community was recruited as a helper at the center to prepare the hot meal. In about a month, a couple of main-caste families ceased to send their children. Others continued to send them but with food from home, telling them that their children would not eat what she prepared. The influential families pressured the worker, and he started seating the children of the Dalit tola away from the main dining area, near the door, and he moved the helper from serving food to washing utensils. No one wrote any of this down; no one complained, for the helper had to earn his livelihood and the families of the tolas were deriving from the same families.

p1: "Once the new cook arrived, our kids were told to take a seat on the other side of the room... they knew what it meant, even if they're small."

The repercussions were felt beyond dinner. The parents of the tola were embarrassed and angry, and started keeping their children at home. Fewer children were weighed each month and, as a result, early indicators of malnutrition went undetected. Rations were not collected for younger children and pregnant women. A policy designed to benefit the poorest households largely benefited the least needy households.

Scenario 1.2: A classroom in the wrong language

Most households in a hill block in Jharkhand use Santhali, Ho, or Mundari at home, and many children in the early years of life hear little or no Hindi before they reach the Anganwadi. By contrast, its pre-school activities are conducted in Hindi, with printed charts, rhymes, and an activity kit provided by the state in Hindi.

The Anganwadi worker is from a nearby village and understands a little of the local language, but not enough to sing songs, tell stories, or count in it. She has never been instructed to teach in more than one language, and monthly reports ask about attendance and meals rather than whether children understand what is being taught. Children are recorded as present, enjoy the meal, and sit quietly while they are unable to engage in the activities. Some imitate the rhymes, but cannot fully understand them; others just tune out.

By the time they enter Class 1, these children have been in a pre-school environment for two to three years and have achieved little or no genuine learning. They are frequently classified as "slow" or "shy" by the teachers in the primary school, but in fact no one has ever been able to talk to them in the language they think in. The pattern is harshest for the Adivasi children, and it subtly messages that their home language has no role in schooling.

Scenario 1.3: No certificate, no card, no ration

During the flood season, a mother of a North Bihar Musahar family gave birth at home, with no vehicle access to the village and the road to the health center flooded. The ASHA was on the other side of the river. The birth was not registered.

When the family tried to obtain a birth certificate months later, they were told it was too late to register and that they had to fill out other forms, including an affidavit they didn't have, as well as documents and statements from witnesses. Someone at work suggested it might be quicker if they paid. These fees and the lost days at work were too expensive for the father, who was a daily wage worker. The application was withdrawn.

p2: "The birth paper was always the first thing they wanted to see wherever we went; if we didn't have it, nothing moved."

The one door that missed its registration then stopped the other doors. Without the birth certificate, the family found it difficult to enroll the child for Aadhaar. They were told that not enrolling a child on the ration card or other benefit lists without Aadhaar was against the law, which provides that a child must not be denied a benefit on this basis. These rights existed on paper, but each family lacked the document to access them.

Scenario 1.4: The distant clinic and the delayed payment

The hilltop settlement is home to a pregnant woman from a PVTG, located several kilometers up the hill from a road. The ASHA responsible for the area lives in a larger village below and visits the

settlement occasionally, particularly during the rains. Antenatal check-ups involve a long walk up and down, and sometimes a baby to carry.

She had to go to the government hospital for her first delivery. Staff asked for money before attending to her; however, she is legally entitled to deliver in a public facility without charge. When she gave birth in the hospital, she was promised a cash incentive, which she never got until many months later, and she didn't know if it was the full amount.

p3: "I will deliver at home for the next child - at least they don't ask for money from us."

Her decision is logical based on her experience, but it involves risks. An unassisted home birth increases the risk of complications for mother and baby. It also increases the risk of not receiving the initial vaccines on time, providing breastfeeding support in the first few hours, and registering the birth. A single negative experience at a facility can make an entire community move away from assisted births.

Scenario 1.5: A disability no one records

At three years of age, a boy child of the Scheduled Caste community in Jharkhand is not walking properly and has not started to speak. The AW worker observed this and told his mother to go to the district hospital for evaluation. However, the hospital is far away, and the trip would cost the family two days of work, and they aren't sure what will happen at the hospital.

Meanwhile, some of its neighbors say the child's condition is a punishment, and the child's family has started to keep the child at home when people come. He does not go to the Anganwadi as much as he should, so he is not weighed as often as he should, and he does not get as many play and language activities as he would like.

A developmental delay that is treatable with early help and support becomes a lifelong disadvantage if it is not detected and referred early. Stigma of disability creates a second layer of exclusion upon caste. By the time the child arrives at school, he will have come delayed, if he has arrived at all, with no record of ever needing assistance.

2. Rights and protections

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
1	Free meals for pregnant and breastfeeding women: National Food Security Act 2013, Section 4(a)	Every pregnant woman and breastfeeding mother is entitled to a free meal through the local Anganwadi during pregnancy and for six months after birth, provided it meets set nutritional standards.	NFSA 2013, India Code
2	Maternity cash benefit: NFSA Section 4(b) and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)	The Act promises at least Rs 6,000. PMMVY pays Rs 5,000 for a first child in two installments (after an antenatal check-up, then after birth and early immunization), and Rs 6,000 if the second child is a girl. Anganwadi workers or ASHAs can register women.	NFSA 2013; PMMVY, Vikaspedia
3	Cash for institutional delivery: Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)	Bihar and Jharkhand are "Low Performing States", so every woman delivering in a government facility qualifies, regardless of income. Rural women receive Rs 1,400; urban women Rs 1,000.	Lok Sabha answer on JSY; MoHFW annual report

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
4	Free, cashless delivery and newborn care: Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK)	Normal and cesarean deliveries in public facilities are meant to be free of charge, including delivery-related care. No informal payment should be demanded.	JSY/JSSK scheme summary
5	Paid maternity leave and workplace crèches: Code on Social Security 2020, Sections 59–72	In force since 21 November 2025, replacing the Maternity Benefit Act 1961. Eligible employees receive up to 26 weeks of maternity benefit. Establishments with 50 or more employees must provide a crèche.	K&K guide to 2026 maternity rules
6	Pre-natal and post-natal care as disability prevention: Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016, Section 25(2)(f)	Government must take measures for care of mother and child before, during and after birth, to prevent disability.	RPwD Act s.25
7	Equality, non-discrimination and abolition of untouchability: Constitution of India, Articles 14, 15, 17, 21 and 46	Every child is equal before the law. The state may not discriminate based on caste, race, sex, or place of birth; untouchability in any form is abolished. The state must promote the educational and economic interests of SC and ST communities.	Constitution of India (text on India Code)

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
8	Protection against caste- and tribe-based atrocities: SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, amended 2015	Lists 26 offenses, including denying an SC or ST person access to a place of public resort. Public servants who wilfully neglect their duties under the Act can be jailed. Victims and witnesses have codified rights.	PARI summary of the 2015 amendment
9	Birth registration and a birth certificate: Registration of Births and Deaths Act 1969, amended 2023	Births must be registered. From 1 October 2023, the birth certificate is the single document that proves the date and place of birth for school admission, Aadhaar, and other services.	Business Standard on the 2023 amendment
10	No denial of benefits for lack of Aadhaar: Aadhaar Act, Section 3A(3), and K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2018)	A child cannot be denied any benefit, subsidy or service because they cannot authenticate or produce an Aadhaar number. Identity must be verified through other documents.	UIDAI circular, Nov 2019; LiveLaw on the judgment
11	Early childhood care and education: Constitution of India, Article 45 (substituted 2002)	The state must endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until age six. This is a directive principle, not an enforceable right.	86th Amendment text

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
12	Annual screening for disability risk: RPwD Act 2016, Section 25(2)(c) and (g)	The government must screen every child at least once a year to identify "at-risk" cases, and use pre-schools and Anganwadi workers to educate the public.	RPwD Act s.25
13	Free age-appropriate meals for young children: NFSA Section 5(1)(a)	Every child aged six months to six years is entitled to a free, age-appropriate meal through the local Anganwadi; exclusive breastfeeding is to be promoted before six months. Higher norms apply to malnourished children.	NFSA 2013, PRS
14	Pre-school education and teaching in the home language: National Education Policy 2020	Brings ages 3–6 into the school structure through Anganwadis and pre-schools. Para 4.11 says that, wherever possible, instruction until at least Grade 5 should be in the home language, mother tongue or local language.	NEP 2020 summary, Vikaspedia; Rajya Sabha answer on para 4.11

3. Shortcomings

The gap is not a shortage of law; it is that almost every entitlement for young children must be claimed in person, with documents, at a service point that marginalized families find hardest to reach. The results show in the numbers. In the most recent national survey, 42.9% of children under five in Bihar and 39.6% in Jharkhand were stunted, among the highest rates in India.

Gap 1: Rights that depend on the family finding the service

The rules governing Anganwadi nutrition describe it as a self-selecting scheme: food is available to those who enroll and come to the center during working hours. That design places the burden on the family. A Dalit tola across a hostile lane, a hilltop hamlet with no road, or a mother at a collection site until evening all fall outside it. Nothing in the rules requires a center to find and enroll the children it is missing.

Gap 2: Documents as gatekeepers

In Bihar, 76% of births of children under five were registered, but only 56% of children had a birth certificate. Jharkhand's figures are 74% and 56%. Since the 2023 amendment made the birth certificate the sole proof of birth for school admission and Aadhaar, roughly 44% of children without one face a bigger barrier than before. Home births, flood seasons, late-registration procedures and informal fees fall hardest on Musahar, Adivasi and other marginalized households.

The Aadhaar Act says no child may be denied a benefit for lack of Aadhaar. In practice, front-line staff are measured on digital records and authentication, and many do not know they must accept alternative documents. Families rarely know it either, so the protection goes unused.

Gap 3: Maternity benefits that are narrower than the law

The Food Security Act promises every pregnant woman at least Rs 6,000. PMMVY pays Rs 5,000 for a first child and covers a second child only if she is a girl, so a woman's third pregnancy, or a second son, receives no PMMVY benefit. JSY's Rs 1,400 for rural deliveries has stayed at that level for years; an evaluation found out-of-pocket costs for delivery of Rs 1,400–1,600, largely for transport and drugs, which can wipe out the payment. Delayed or partial transfers, as in Scenario 1.4, discourage the next institutional birth.

Gap 4: Early learning is not accompanied by an enforceable right or provided in the child's language

The state is required to make an "endeavor" to provide early childhood care and education (under Article 45), but this cannot be enforced as is

the right to education from age 6. For the NEP, where possible, the principle means the home language is Hindi. Children go to Anganwadi workers without learning, as they in Santhali-, Ho-, Mundari- and Kurukh-speaking areas are seldom trained and equipped to teach in those languages.

Gap 5: Caste discrimination within services is unnoticed

None of the routine indicators cover seating segregation or refusal of food cooked by a Scheduled Caste helper, or bypassing a Dalit or Adivasi hamlet on home visits. Attendance registers note attendance, but not where a child sat or whether a child's tola was visited. The Atrocities Act can be applied, but it functions through police complaints, and parents whose livelihoods and safety depend on the same village are unlikely to report it to the police. The Anganwadi system has no low-threshold, confidential entry point.

Gap 6: Workplace protections end at formal employer

Employers and employees that exceed the thresholds outlined in the Social Security Code are subject to the 26 weeks of maternity benefit and crèche duty. Women who gather mica, forest produce, or agricultural produce, or work for brick kilns through labor contracts, are generally the lowest layer, below those with a covered employer. They do not receive paid leave or crèche facilities, and companies that purchase the end product have no clear legal responsibility for young children.

4. Tools and guidance routes

Recommendations by stakeholder

Schools

- All children sit together and are fed together, and no child is assigned to a seat, fed, or grouped based on their caste, tribe, or community. Head teachers must conduct mealtime checks in person at least once a month.

- Do not refuse admission to a child without a valid ID, even for pre-primary admission, as they might not have a birth certificate/Aadhaar card. Instead, assist the family to register the birth.
- Utilize the child's home language in the initial years, bilingual volunteers, picture books, and local songs and stories.
- Conduct a joint handover meeting with the Anganwadi worker before Class 1 to ensure the nutrition, disability, and learning notes follow the child.

Nonprofits

- Map all hamlets in the working area and compare the Anganwadi, birth-registration, and immunization coverage by hamlet. Discuss any gaps with the Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) and not just in public.
- Conduct document camps with the local registrar for late birth registration, and follow up on each document through to the issuance of a birth certificate.
- Train community volunteers to identify and document caste-based exclusion in services in a safe way (see "Documenting without exposing families" below).
- Implement a protection strategy for working with young children, including consent and referral for abuse/neglect and photography.

Local authorities

- Ask all Anganwadi to maintain child and mother lists on a hamlet-wise basis and revisit hamlets not served during the monthly block meeting.
- Proactively hire and rotate Dalit and Adivasi helpers/workers, and take remedial measures immediately if a Dalit boycotts a helper or is demoted due to caste.
- Remove fees and make it easy for children from marginalized families to register on time; conduct registration days at Anganwadi.
- Announce delays in payment of JSY and PMMVY and take action in respect of any facility where staff asks for informal payments.

- Establish a basic referral system for screening of disabilities, including travel expenses and loss of work by accompanying adult.

FMCG companies

- Trace the supply chain from collection to processing and farm level in Bihar and Jharkhand, particularly for mica, forest produce, agricultural inputs, and packers.
- Provide or subsidize crèches and day-care facilities at or near collection points and factories, timed to women's working hours.
- Include maternity support, child care access, and work site safety in supplier codes, and verify through worker interviews, not just supplier self-reports.
- Increase the allocation of CSR funds for nutrition and early learning in existing Anganwadis, rather than parallel programs, focusing on unserved hamlets.

Suppliers

- Ensure young children do not work in hazardous areas; ensure a safe, supervised area for children where no crèche is available.
- Communicate maternity and crèche commitments to sub-suppliers/traders in writing and record when commitments are not met.
- Provide women workers time off without loss of wages for antenatal visits, immunization days and Anganwadi visits.

Contractors

- Get migrant families with young children registered in the Anganwadi and health center in the destination state on arrival.
- Make safe crèche facilities and clean water available at workplaces; connect pregnant workers to the closest health center for antenatal and childbirth services.
- Provide written information to families on work dates to explain child absence to home state centers.

Community groups (self-help groups, tribal councils, youth, faith groups)

- Identify each hamlet's trusted female contact with knowledge of Anganwadi activities and entitlements as an early-childhood contact.
- Defend public protest against the boycott of Anganwadi staff belonging to the Scheduled Tribes or Adivasis and encourage the families who complain.
- Conduct Gram Sabha and social audits to audit attendance at the Anganwadi, meal provision, and home visits, hamlet-wise.

Policy recommendations for ages 0–6

1. Let Anganwadi search for children. Make the Supplementary Nutrition Rules more flexible, ensuring that all children in an eligible hamlet area are enrolled in a center rather than relying on families to request enrolment proactively.
2. Implement local, on-the-spot, free birth registration. Register births at Anganwadi and on ASHA registration for home deliveries, waive late registration fees for families below the poverty line, and issue a certificate in one visit.
3. Bring maternity cash in line with the Food Security Act. Expand the scope of PMMVY to all pregnancies and increase the amount to the statutory Rs 6,000; index JSY to inflation and pay on time within a fixed period.
4. Make early childhood care a right and enforce it. Make early childhood care and education a legal right for ages 3 to 6; ensure a home-language requirement for pre-school and Anganwadi in the Scheduled Areas; and provide materials in local languages, including Santhali, Ho and Mundari, Kurukh, and others.
5. Establish a confidential system for reporting discrimination within ICDS. Include a caste/tribe indicator in Anganwadi monitoring and create a complaint system that bypasses the local center.
6. Extend crèche and maternity support to informal and supply-chain workers. Establish crèches in Mining, Forest Produce, and brick kiln

areas, funded by unorganized workers through the Social Security Code and co-financed by buyers.

7. Portable young children's entitlements. Set up an inter-state transfer process for Anganwadi and immunization records for seasonal migrants between Bihar, Jharkhand, and destination states, with employer responsibility for registering children on arrival.
8. Provide disability screening at the child's home. Provide screening annually, using mobile teams in remote blocks and traveling to pay for families.

Chapter 2

School Years (Ages 6–14)

From 6 to 14 years of age, all children in India are entitled to free and compulsory education, and the school becomes the primary public institution in a child's life. It is also the place where children are formally introduced to the caste and tribal hierarchy — in where they sit, who serves the food, who cleans the toilets, which language is correct, and whose names are on the lists of scholarships. Children from SC, Adivasi (ST), and other marginalized communities are more likely to be first-generation learners, attend under-resourced schools, and drop out before Class 8 in Bihar and Jharkhand.

This chapter is intended for students and parents, teachers and head teachers, School Management Committees, hostel wardens, nonprofits involved in education, local municipalities, and companies in their supply chains that rely on child and family labor in agriculture, mining and forest produce.

1. Exclusion in practice

Exclusion can be embedded in everyday school routines that adults don't notice during the school years. A seating chart, a cleaning roster, a serving line, or a scholarship form can all convey the same message to a child: She is not as much a part of the class as other children are. Over more than eight years, these messages lead to decreased attendance, poorer learning, and ultimately dropping out.

Scenario 2.1: The back rows and cleaning roster

In a government middle school in the village tola of Dalits, approximately one-third of the children are Dalits. No written rule separates them, but any passerby can see a clear pattern. When benches are full, the children of dominant castes sit in the front rows close to the teacher, while Dalit children sit at the back or on the floor near the door. Usually, when the school needs its toilets and classrooms cleaned, Dalit children, and particularly Dalit girls, are sent to do it.

This is not discrimination against teachers in the school. Some have said that the children 'get to choose' their seat; others have said that the cleaning is 'just a way of helping the school'. However, the children see it differently. Having to do chores like cleaning toilets while class members study is an education about their status in the village, learning in the institution that ought to help them escape from it.

p1: "Teacher asks questions and looks at front seats; we only get called when it's time to sweep."

The results show this effect. A child in the back of the class is less likely to be called on or heard. By the end of Class 5, it is still difficult for many to read, and teachers cite low scores as evidence that "these children are not interested in studies", and the circle is closed.

Scenario 2.2: The mid-day meal line

A woman from a Scheduled Caste community (as per the program guidelines) is cooking the mid-day meal in a primary school in Jharkhand. A few days after her appointment, a group of parents from the dominant caste community declared that their children would not eat the meal. Some kids started bringing their own tiffin for school; others were instructed to have tiffin only if served by another cook.

The head teacher, wanting to prevent conflict, set the children up in two lines and assigned a different staff member to serve each line. The cook kept her job, but everyone in the school understood the lines were there for a reason. Children from Scheduled Caste and Adivasi families learned to stand in their own line and eat without mixing with others. Many of them depended on the meal as the chief food of the day.

This is not a common type of arrangement. Attendance is adequate, and the meal is provided on paper every day. This discrimination becomes visible only when a parent, a journalist, or someone from a non-profit organization is there at lunchtime.

Scenario 2.3: Words they do not know

Most of the children speak Ho at home in a hill block of West Singhbhum. In Class 1, their books, lessons, and tests are in Hindi. The

teacher is from another district and does not speak Ho. Many children copy the letters on the board for the first two years without understanding the words' meaning; when asked a question, they reply by guessing based on the teacher's tone.

Parents find their children unhappy in school, and some keep them at home during the agricultural busy season, treating the missed lessons as unimportant. As children return, they fall even further behind. In turn, teachers say that they are slow learners. By Class 4, some are quietly moved to the back of the class and await the end of the day.

p2: "My son says a lot at home, but not in school because he doesn't want to say it incorrectly."

It doesn't mean the children are incapable. It is a failure to teach them in their language of thinking and to teach them to read before they are given a second language to learn.

Scenario 2.4: Slurs, bullying and silence

A young Musahar girl who studies in a school, along with very few other children from her community, faces bullying in school by her classmates who call her a caste-based nickname and jeer at her clothes and food. When she complains to the teacher about the bullying, she is told to "not care about it and focus on studies". The teacher does not even talk to the other children.

Bullying continues on the way to school, and in addition to her classmates, other older boys also join them. Fearing for her safety, her parents, daily-wage laborers working for the children's families, decide she should stay at home. Within a year, she stops going to school and starts helping her mother with work.

No complaints are registered, and the school records her as a dropout for "family reasons".

Scenario 2.5: The hostel far from home

A tribal boy from an extremely isolated village in Jharkhand is enrolled in a residential school meant exclusively for tribal children. His parents

are proud of him, and the school has resources that his village school lacks. However, too many students live in the dormitory; the food is often poor quality, and the warden is rarely present at night.

The older boys control the bathroom facilities and the meals provided, and if one tries to lodge a complaint about this situation, he will be brutally punished. The boy does not have a mobile phone and can call his parents only on visiting day, when the warden or a teacher is usually present. He does not know whom else he should talk to.

When he runs away and walks home during his vacations, his parents are told that he is an ungrateful child who does not appreciate the chances he has been given.

Scenario 2.6: Scholarships that do not arrive

A Scheduled Caste family in North Bihar. They have been informed that their daughter qualifies for scholarship money and a uniform. The school demands that the child have a bank account in their name, as well as an Aadhaar number, caste certificate, and income certificate. Acquiring the certificates involves several visits to the block office. The man has to return repeatedly to the block office.

By the time he has all the papers ready, the online submission deadline has passed. While some children from the same village, whose families have better contacts, get their money on time, this girl gets an old uniform and sometimes even has to return home because of it.

For families that earn daily wages, each trip to the office means losing a day's wages. The benefits, meant to help poor children stay in school, mostly benefit families who can handle the paperwork.

2. Rights and protections

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
1	Right to free and compulsory education: Constitution Article 21A and RTE Act 2009, Sections 3 and 8	Every child aged 6–14 has a right to free education in a neighborhood school until Class 8. The government must ensure admission, attendance, and completion, not just enrolment.	PARI summary of the RTE Act
2	No screening, capitation fee or denial for lack of documents: RTE Sections 13 and 14; Puttaswamy (2018)	Schools cannot test children or parents for admission, charge capitation fees, or refuse admission for lack of an age certificate. Aadhaar cannot be made compulsory for school admission.	PARI RTE summary; LiveLaw on the Aadhaar judgment
3	Reserved seats in private schools: RTE Section 12(1)(c)	Unaided private schools must fill at least 25% of entry-class seats with children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups (including SC and ST), free of charge, with the government reimbursing the school.	PARI RTE summary

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
4	Freedom from discrimination in school: RTE Sections 8(c) and 9(c), and Section 35(1) guidelines	Government and local authorities must ensure that children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups are not discriminated against or prevented from completing school on any ground. Central guidelines require schools to prohibit discrimination and harassment, including in seating, meals and use of facilities.	Vikaspedia on legal basis; Section 35 guidelines
5	Protection from corporal punishment and mental harassment: RTE Section 17	No child may be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment, which includes caste slurs and humiliation by teachers. Violations lead to disciplinary action.	Vikaspedia on legal basis
6	Teaching in the child's language: RTE Section 29(2)(f) and NEP 2020 para 4.11	The curriculum is to use the child's mother tongue as the medium of instruction as far as practicable. NEP 2020 recommends home-language instruction until at least Grade 5 wherever possible.	Rajya Sabha answer on para 4.11
7	Free mid-day meal: National Food Security Act Section 5(1)(b) (PM POSHAN)	Every child up to Class 8 in government, local-body and aided schools is entitled to one free cooked meal on each school day, meeting set nutritional standards.	NFSA 2013

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
8	No expulsion and a second chance before detention: RTE Section 16 (amended 2019) and RTE Amendment Rules 2024	No child may be expelled before completing Class 8. Bihar and Jharkhand have ended automatic promotion in Classes 5 and 8, but a child who fails must receive extra teaching and a re-examination within two months before being held back.	Business Today; Arunachal Times list of states
9	Grievance redress and monitoring: RTE Sections 31 and 32	Parents can complain to the local authority about any violation of RTE rights. The National and State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights monitor implementation and can inquire into complaints.	PARI RTE summary
10	Ban on child labor: Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, amended 2016	No child aged 6–14 may be employed in any occupation or process. The only exceptions are helping in a family enterprise in non-hazardous work after school hours or in vacations, and supervised work as an artist, provided education is not affected.	PARI summary of the 2016 amendment

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
11	Protection against caste- and tribe-based atrocities: SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, amended 2015	Covers insults, humiliation, denial of access to public places, and other offenses against SC and ST children and families, including by teachers or classmates' families. Public servants who neglect their duties under the Act can be punished.	PARI summary of the 2015 amendment
12	Inclusive education for children with disabilities: RPwD Act 2016, Sections 16 and 31	Government-funded and recognized schools must provide inclusive education, reasonable accommodation, and support. Children with benchmark disabilities have a right to free education from age 6 to 18.	PARI summary of the RPwD Act

3. Shortcomings

The RTE Act has put almost every child in Bihar and Jharkhand on a school register, but it has not ensured that every child is treated equally, taught in a language she understands, or kept in school through Class 8. In 2024–25, Bihar's upper-primary dropout rate was 9.3%, against a national rate of 3.5%, with boys leaving at almost double the rate of girls.

Gap 1: Non-discrimination without a way to see discrimination

The RTE Act, along with its rules, prohibits discrimination in seating arrangements, food, and facility use. But school inspections, UDISE+ reports, and visits do not measure seat assignments, toilet cleanliness, or classroom calling of students. Unmeasured discrimination cannot be

managed. The head teachers, under pressure from powerful parents, as described in Scenario 2.2, have no guidelines to guide their actions and no official support if they reject a request.

Gap 2: Complaint routes that children and parents cannot safely use

Complaints under RTE law go to the “local authority,” where the local authority in villages is typically a panchayat controlled by the same families whose children’s rights have been violated. School Management Committees should involve parents of children from marginalized communities but do not exist or are run by dominant-caste representatives. Child Rights Commissions are located in state capitals. The parent working for his livelihood at the mercy of landowners, as mentioned in scenario 2.4, would never complain formally, and there is no confidential channel within the education department.

Gap 3: Scholarships and entitlements that depend on paperwork

Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts, caste certificates, and income certificates have become prerequisites for scholarships, uniforms, and other benefits for SC/ST and poor students. These certificates require visits to block offices and cost workdays. The poorest in the community suffer most from delays and denials, often receiving fewer benefits than others in the same community.

Gap 4: Residential schools and hostels with weak oversight

For children living far away from towns or cities, residential schools and hostels for SC and ST children become a lifesaver. However, monitoring usually focuses on enrolment and facilities, while neglecting security issues. Very few trained counselors and supervisors monitor the children at night. These institutions also lack visitors' programs and ways for the child to lodge complaints against abuse without the knowledge of the warden.

Gap 5: The family-enterprise exception and supply-chain blind spots

Child Labor Act permits the use of children in family business enterprises during off-school time.

In agriculture, mica waste, brick making, and forest products industries, it may be hard to distinguish between “assisting the family” and activities detrimental to learning. Enforcement relies on raids that rarely reach scattered, informal work areas. Companies purchasing mica, agricultural commodities, and other items have no legal obligation to trace their supply chains back to where children are working.

Gap 6: Digital learning built for connected households

The shift to mobile phones and portals for homework, notifications, and application forms assumes every family has a mobile phone, internet connectivity, and someone literate enough to use it. Dalits and Adivasis in rural areas of Bihar and Jharkhand stand the poorest chance of meeting these presumptions. There is no obligation that each notification sent digitally should also be communicated physically.

4. Tools and guidance routes

Recommendations by stakeholder

Schools (head teachers, teachers, School Management Committees, hostel wardens)

- Develop a written non-discrimination policy on seating, grouping, meals, drinking water, toilets, cleaning tasks, physical activities, and cultural functions, and post it in the local language.
- Rotate seating and classroom responsibilities so no particular group of children is always placed behind or always responsible for cleaning. Children must never clean toilets.
- Caste abuse and humiliation cases must be treated as mental harassment cases under the Right to Education Act (Section 17), and each case must be documented and communicated to the parents of both children.
- Serve mid-day meals to all children together, and openly support cooks from the SC community if anyone complains.
- Use the language of the children in early grades through bilingual teachers, locals, and pictorial content.

- In hostels, ensure night supervision, a female warden for girls, a weekly one-to-one counseling for each child, and a complaint box maintained by someone other than the warden.
- Before retaining any child in Classes 5 or 8, document the additional teaching provided and meet the parents.

Nonprofits

- Open community learning centers and run bridge classes in their language for lagging children.
- Help families get caste certificates, income certificates, and residential certificates and fill scholarship forms on time.
- Conduct periodic, confidential audits of the school atmosphere by asking children where they sit, who cleans, and how they are spoken to.
- Prepare parents belonging to SC and ST groups to be part of the School Management Committee.

Local authorities (district education officers, block resource centers, panchayats)

- Introduce inclusion checklists into the inspection process: seating observations, mealtimes observations, cleaning logs, and incident logs.
- Assign teachers fluent in local tribal languages to schools dominated by local tribal languages and provide for multilingual resources.
- Create a confidential complaints hotline at the district level that operates outside the school and panchayat, headed by an assigned officer.
- Conduct scholarship and certificate camps at schools before portal deadlines, and monitor refused applications through completion.
- List vulnerable children at risk of migration for work or seasonal labor each term, and monitor any absence beyond two weeks.

FMCG companies

- Trace the supply chain of mica, agri-produce, forest products, and packaging to the collection stage in Bihar and Jharkhand, and report the findings.
- Have a zero-tolerance policy towards the use of child labor by children below 14 years, along with a remediation program where the child goes back to school instead of just terminating the contract.
- Provide funding for bridge schools, transportation, and mid-day meals at the schools in sourcing locations through CSR activities in collaboration with government schools.
- Pay prices that help adults earn sufficient income without involving children.

Suppliers

- Document each employee's age and ensure it is correct. Do not purchase from collectors who bring children to the workplace during school hours.
- In writing, communicate child labor and school-attendance requirements to sub-suppliers and dealers.
- Help employees' children attend school with transport or study materials.

Contractors (labor contractors, kiln operators, agricultural intermediaries)

- Do not recruit or pay money for children's labor.
- Help migrant families send their children to schools where they work, or organize temporary schools in their home districts.
- Provide migrant workers with records of days worked to prove that absence from school is legitimate.

Community organizations (self-help groups, tribal councils, youth groups, faith groups)

- Refuse caste-based seating and food arrangements and insults in school, and support parents who protest.

- Create parent groups to escort children to school when the route is dangerous.
- Create community centers for reading and studying, where children have access to shared telephones and computers for studying.

Policy recommendations for ages 6–14

1. Include inclusion in all schools. Introduce caste- and tribe-specific indicators (seating, food habits, cleaning routines, incident logs) to UDISE+ and school inspection and social audits in Bihar and Jharkhand.
2. Provide a confidential school complaints mechanism. Set up a district-level RTE grievance cell with a toll-free helpline and anti-retaliation provisions, independent of the school and panchayat.
3. Provide for funding mother-tongue-based education. Hire and deploy teachers based on language in Scheduled Areas and produce materials in major tribal languages.
4. Provide remedial teaching before detention. Fund dedicated remedial teachers in Classes 4 to 8 in high-dropout blocks, and monitor detentions and dropouts by social group.
5. Automatic scholarships. Pay scholarships automatically through school data and existing caste certificates without annual applications.
6. Safety standards for residential schooling. Set minimum standards for safety and safeguarding of all SC and ST hostels and residential schools, with independent monthly visits and complaint mechanisms accessible to children.
7. End child labor loophole in the chain. Require large users of mica and other high-risk products to conduct child labor due diligence from the collection point onward and to have funds available for remediation efforts to ensure children return to school.
8. Educate teachers about caste/tribe inclusion. Incorporate anti-discrimination training in teacher pre-service and in-service training, and clearly define codes of conduct.

Adolescence (Ages 15–18)

Between ages 15 and 18, youth in Bihar and Jharkhand take decisions that will impact the rest of their lives, such as staying enrolled in school, migrating for work opportunities, marrying, and developing specific skills. The Right to Education Act (RTE) guarantees children free schooling until age 14, and most laws protect them as children until age 18. But between those ages, youth belonging to Scheduled Caste, Adivasi/Scheduled Tribe, and other marginalized groups are subject to the greatest stress of leaving education to enter into low-paying, hazardous jobs away from home; girls in particular become vulnerable to early marriages and trafficking and sexual violence.

This chapter is targeted to adolescents and their parents, secondary school teachers, vocational institutions, recruiters and contractors who employ young workers, non-profit organizations, and local administration bodies.

1. Exclusion in practice

During their teenage years, such exclusion may take the form of a choice which is no real choice. An individual drops out of school because the closest secondary institution is too far away. After all, debts have to be paid off or an arranged marriage has occurred. In each case, it may seem like a voluntary decision, but there will always be missing schools, missing papers, dangerous paths, and no adult around to assist them.

Scenario 3.1: The secondary school too far away

An Adivasi girl aged 15 completed Class 8 at the middle school in her village in a forest block of Jharkhand. The nearest high school is 11 km away on a road without regular bus service, and it goes through forest land. Her parents had promised her a bicycle under a state scheme, but it came after her enrollment, and they were unsure about the safety of the trip on that road.

For some months, she went to school with other girls. Two of them stopped coming, and then her parents became apprehensive and kept her at home. The family began discussing her marriage. No teacher from the high school contacted her parents, and her name remained on the school register for the rest of the year.

This is a common case where school enrolment for Classes 9 and above depends on access, transportation, safety, and the availability of hostels and female teachers. Where these facilities are absent, girls from the most disadvantaged and isolated families drop out first.

Scenario 3.2: Recruited from the village

A 16-year-old boy from a Dalit background in north Bihar, picked up by a labor agent from his region and offered work at a garment unit in another state, says his father received an advance payment and promises of a monthly salary, along with food and accommodation. The boy, having dropped out of school after failing Class 9, believed he was a liability to his family.

At work, he worked long hours in overcrowded rooms, sleeping alongside other boys on the factory floor. His wage was withheld as he repaid the advance money and transportation costs; in addition, his supervisor also held all his documents. The boy did not sign any agreement and could not identify his employers - the agent, the contractor or the owner of the factory.

p1: "Whenever I asked about my salary, they used to tell me that I owed them some money. I did not know how long I would have to stay there."

This is not just migration for work. This is rife with the characteristics of child labor, bonded labor, and trafficking: recruitment of a minor, use of an advance to hold hostage the worker, withholding of identity documents, and no ability to quit.

Scenario 3.3: Harassment on the way and in class

An adolescent girl from the Scheduled Caste community in Bihar goes to a higher secondary school located in a nearby market town. On the way

to the school, a few boys from a dominant caste family stalk her and make derogatory remarks about her caste and body, as well as threatening to teach her a lesson if she complains. In school, the teacher makes derogatory remarks about girls belonging to “those families” and about their nature.

She tells her mother, who advises her not to tell anyone, as they depend on those boys' families for agricultural labor. The school has no committee against sexual harassment, and she has no female teacher she can trust. Within months, she stops attending school regularly. Her family is considering marriage as a way to “protect” her.

Here, when caste and gender intersect, it is not merely a form of sexual harassment; rather, it is also an assault on the position of her community within the village.

2. Rights and protections

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
1	Pre-matric scholarships for SC and ST students	Central schemes support SC and ST students in Classes 9 and 10 with a scholarship to reduce dropout at the start of secondary school; states implement them and may add their own support.	MyGov scheme overview
2	Limits on adolescent work: Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, amended 2016	Adolescents aged 14–18 may work, but not in hazardous occupations and processes such as mining. The Act sets hours, rest days, and safety rules for permitted work, and a district fund to rehabilitate children and adolescents rescued from illegal work.	PARI summary of the 2016 amendment

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
3	Protection from caste- and tribe-based atrocities: SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, amended 2015	Covers insults, intimidation, sexual humiliation, and denial of access to public places aimed at SC and ST adolescents and their families. Special courts and victims' rights apply.	PARI summary of the 2015 amendment
4	Protection from sexual abuse and harassment: Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act 2012	Every person under 18 is protected from sexual assault, sexual harassment (including stalking and sexual remarks), and exploitation. Schools and institutions must report offenses they learn of, and children are entitled to child-friendly procedures.	POCSO Act 2012 (India Code)
5	Care and protection for children at risk: Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015	Children who are trafficked, working illegally, at risk of child marriage, or without safe care are "children in need of care and protection" and can be brought before the district Child Welfare Committee for rescue, shelter and rehabilitation.	Juvenile Justice Act 2015 (India Code)

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
6	Protection from trafficking: Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Section 143	Recruiting, transporting, or receiving a person for exploitation through force, fraud, inducement, or payments to someone controlling them is trafficking. Exploitation includes forced labor and servitude. The victim's consent is irrelevant, and trafficking a child carries a minimum of 10 years' rigorous imprisonment.	BNS s.143
7	Freedom from bonded labor Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act 1976	Any arrangement forcing a person to work to repay an advance or debt is abolished and punishable. District Magistrates must identify, release, and rehabilitate bonded laborers	Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act 1976 (India Code)
8	Protection from child marriage: Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006	The legal minimum age for marriage is 18 for women and 21 for men. Adults who arrange or conduct a child marriage can be punished. A child marriage can be annulled at the child's request, and Child Marriage Prohibition Officers can act to prevent it.	Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 (India Code)

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
9	Post-matric scholarships for SC and ST students	SC students from families earning up to Rs 2.5 lakh a year receive fee reimbursement and an allowance from Class 11 onwards, including diplomas and vocational courses at recognized institutions. A parallel scheme serves ST students.	Post-Matric Scholarship for SC
10	Inclusive education for adolescents with disabilities: RPwD Act 2016, Sections 16 and 31	Adolescents with benchmark disabilities have a right to free education until age 18, with reasonable accommodation in schools and training institutions.	PARI summary of the RPwD Act

3. Shortcomings

Adolescents fall between two systems: too old for the RTE Act's guarantee, too young for adult labor and social-security protections. The result is visible in both states. Bihar's gross enrolment ratio at the secondary level was 51.1% in 2024–25, and Jharkhand's 72.6%, compared with 78.7% nationally. Among women aged 20–24, 40.8% in Bihar and about 32% in Jharkhand had been married before 18.

Gap 1: No right to secondary education

This law has ended only at the level of class eight. The right to a nearby secondary school, transport, and hostel facilities for girls is missing. For Adivasi girls in forest blocks, as in Scenario 3.1, the lack of a nearby secondary school becomes the reason their education ends. The bicycle and uniform schemes come after the child has been admitted to school.

Gap 2: Trafficking and forced labor disguised as migration

Engaging adolescents via agents who give advance payments to the parents, transport them from one state to another, and retain their earnings and documents qualifies as a case of trafficking and bondage under the law. However, such recruitment practices are often treated as normal labor migration. Source villages keep no records of the youth who migrate, who they migrate with, or where they go. The destination state never verifies the age of migrating youth in garment factories, construction sites, or households.

Gap 3: The hazardous-work list and informal work

This law on adolescent labor regulates only the hazardous occupations specifically mentioned.

Much of what adolescents do – for example, long hours spent working in small garment manufacturing workshops, domestic work performed inside people’s private houses, agricultural work, or even mica mining – is difficult to categorize, falls beyond the scope of official inspections, or takes place at locations that are not accessible to labor inspectors.

Gap 4: Child marriage laws with weak prevention

Although child marriage is prohibited by law, the prevention of child marriage depends upon the functioning of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers who are normally government servants having multiple responsibilities. Teachers, Anganwadi workers, and panchayat members who know about it in advance may find it difficult to prevent the marriage due to social pressure. A lack of birth certificates makes it difficult to verify children's ages. There is no immediate support, such as monetary rewards linked to schooling and safe shelters.

Gap 5: Sexual harassment of adolescent girls, sharpened by caste

The POCSO Act deals with stalking and sexually abusive comments against any individual below the age of 18 years, while the Atrocities Act deals with caste-based sexual abuse. However, marginalized adolescent girls do not come forward to report because the families of their tormentors dominate the economic activities and social status in the

locality, as seen in Scenario 3.3. Secondary schools lack female teachers, counselors, or a complaints committee. As a result, families remove them from school or marry them off.

4. Tools and guidance routes

Recommendations by stakeholder

Schools and vocational institutions

- Track all children who complete Class 8 in the local catchment area and join Class 9, and visit those who do not enroll or attend school for two weeks.
- Create an internal committee for sexual harassment comprising at least one woman teacher and a student, and let students know how to contact the committee.
- Designate a teacher as career and scholarship contact person, and organize scholarship and certificate camps before portal deadlines.
- At vocational institutes, conduct classes in local languages whenever possible, release placement results by gender and social category, and reject placements that provide hazardous accommodations and documents.

Nonprofits

- Set up safe migration desks in source villages that track all those migrating, who they're with and where they're going, and provide a toll-free telephone number to adolescents before migration.
- Back adolescent girls' clubs that promote life skills, legal literacy, and peer counseling against child marriage and sexual harassment.
- Assist in rehabilitation, making compensation claims, and re-enrolment in education or training for rescued adolescents.
- Help families acquire caste, income and residence certificates well before the Class 10 examinations.

Local authorities (district administration, labour department, child protection units, panchayats)

- Register migrants in the age group of adolescents, coming from every panchayat, and associate it with a district team against human trafficking.
- Appoint trained officers against child marriage at block level, and take action whenever an advance notice comes regarding a proposed child marriage.
- Do joint inspection of the garment industries, construction sites and recruitment agencies operating from Bihar and Jharkhand state in collaboration with destination states.
- Release the rehabilitation amount to rescued child/adolescent labourers on time, and refer them to school, vocational education or bridge course.
- Ensure safe transport or girls' hostels in secondary schools beyond 3 kilometers from the settlement.

FMCG companies

- Establish a minimum employment age and prevent adolescents from participating in dangerous activities and night shifts at both their own and suppliers' workplaces.
- Make sure that suppliers and labor contractors provide proof of age through proper documentation and discourage any recruiters who advance payments to the families of adolescents.
- Support apprenticeship and training programs for adolescents aged 17 to 18 from disadvantaged communities, providing safe accommodations and a path to permanent employment.
- Inspect suppliers' dormitories and hostels.

Suppliers

- Maintain an age register for all child laborers, and never hire anyone below 18 for dangerous occupations.
- Never pay the money directly to the agent or parent of the young worker and never keep their identification documents.

- Provide a grievance redressal mechanism that young workers can access independently of the contractor/supervisor.

Contractors and recruiters (labor agents, placement agencies)

- Register with the labor department and record the final employer and working conditions before recruiting.
- Do not recruit anyone below the age of 18 for outside work without verified age, contract, and employer.
- Do not give advances to families that would bind children into work.

Community organizations (self-help groups, tribal councils, youth clubs, faith groups)

- Commit publicly to end child marriage and support parents who postpone marriages for their children.
- Communicate information regarding which agencies and employers are safe and which are not.
- Reintegrate rescued children without any discrimination into school or workplace.

Policy recommendations for ages 15–18

1. Right to Education up to the age of 18 years. Amend the RTE Act to include secondary education, with a legal obligation to provide one secondary school, and transport or hostel facilities to make attendance possible for everyone.
2. Source village migrants' register to track migrant adolescents. Record adolescents moving out of every panchayat and its linkage with anti-trafficking mechanisms in source state as well as the destination state.
3. Make money conditional on attending schools. Provide conditional cash transfers to families of adolescent girls belonging to SC, ST and poor communities for each year of schooling up to Class 12 and linkage with delayed marriage.

4. Index and enhance the post-matric scholarship scheme. Increase the threshold and allowances for SC and ST scholarship by indexing to cost-of-living and automatic transfer upon joining institutions.
5. Make vocational training accountable for outcomes. Report wages, retention, and job profile by gender and social group to the Government and ensure housing and safety at placement.
6. Register and regulate labor recruiters. Register recruiters for workers migrating across states, and prohibit recruitment of under-18s and advances to their families.
7. Provide sufficient staff for guidance in all secondary schools. Ensure each government secondary school in high-risk areas has at least one counselor and one female teacher.
8. Certificates should be issued in advance. Issue caste and domicile certificates in advance to students from SC/ST communities in Class 9 for future applications.

Chapter 4

Youth and Entry into Work (Ages 18–25)

At the age of 18- 25, youngsters from Scheduled Caste, Adivasi/Scheduled Tribe, and others among the oppressed groups in Bihar and Jharkhand start entering colleges, training, apprenticeships, and their first employment. It is often their first experience to enter such institutions in their family history. This is when the test of possibility comes: whether there are reserved seats, scholarships, or whether recruiters and managers use caste and tribe as an excuse to keep them out, and whether young girls can live and work outside their families safely.

This chapter is aimed at college students and trainees, apprentices, universities and training institutes, recruiters and human resource managers, employers – FMCG firms and their vendors, labor contractors, NGOs and local administrations.

1. Exclusion in practice

Overt discrimination such as segregated seating does not exist by the time one reaches adulthood. It takes shape in the questions asked during an interview, in who is posted on the shop floor and who is posted in the office, in who receives a room in the shared accommodation, and in the remarks that make the youth feel out of place in the college and firm. Because it is assumed that the young adult can handle everything alone, much of it goes unreported.

Scenario 4.1: "Quota student" in the college hostel

A 19-year-old Dalit student from a small town in Bihar wins a reserved seat in an engineering college. He is the first in his family to attend college. In the hostel, some classmates learn his category from the admissions list and begin calling him a "quota student". They question whether he deserves to be there and exclude him from study groups.

His scholarship, which covers fees and a living allowance, is delayed by several months because of a verification backlog. The college demands the fees in the meantime, and he borrows from relatives to avoid being barred from exams. He struggles with lectures in English after studying in Hindi medium, and no faculty member offers help.

p1: "I stopped asking questions in class. I did not want them to say, see, this is why he got in through the quota."

By the second year, he is failing two subjects and considering leaving. The college records academic performance but has no system to notice when a student is isolated, humiliated, and in financial distress. Its equal opportunity cell exists on paper but has never met.

Scenario 4.2: The interview that asks about surnames

The 22-year-old Adivasi girl, a graduate of Ranchi, has applied for customer service positions at various companies. During more than one interview, the recruiter asks about her surname, her village, and her "background," and whether she knows how to speak "proper" Hindi and English. Once, someone told her that her accent would not be suitable for customers.

She is not selected for any front-office positions. A recruiting agency offers her a position in a warehouse, where she will pack goods on the night shift. Other classmates of hers with comparable grades but different surnames are posted to office positions.

None of the recruiters mention caste or tribe as the reason, and she cannot prove it either.

Scenario 4.3: A complaint that goes nowhere

A young woman belonging to a Scheduled Caste community is continuously harassed at work by a supervisor. This supervisor uses sexual language and mentions the caste to which the young woman belongs. She seeks intervention from the Human Resources office, but is asked to handle the case informally.

The company, which employs more than 100 people, has an internal committee that handles sexual harassment complaints, but it is composed of senior management employees who all know the supervisor well.

Following her complaint, her shifts were changed, and she was given more difficult tasks. Her colleagues warned her that handling the complaint would mean losing her job. She quit her job and went back home within two months.

Although the law requires an internal committee, it is not independent.

2. Rights and protections

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
1	Reservation in admissions and public jobs: Constitution Articles 15(4), 15(5) and 16(4)	Allow the state to reserve seats in educational institutions (including private unaided ones, except minority institutions) and posts in public employment for SC, ST and other backward classes.	Constitution of India (India Code)
2	Post-matric scholarships for SC and ST students	Fee reimbursement and an allowance for SC students from families earning up to Rs 2.5 lakh a year in recognized degree, diploma and professional courses; a parallel scheme serves ST students.	Post-Matric Scholarship for SC

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
3	Anti-discrimination rules on campus: UGC (Promotion of Equity in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2012	Require universities and colleges to prohibit caste-based discrimination and to run mechanisms such as an anti-discrimination officer and equal opportunity cell. The Supreme Court stayed the UGC's 2026 replacement regulations on 29 January 2026 and ordered that the 2012 regulations continue to apply in the meantime.	Drishti summary of the stay
4	Protection from atrocities: SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, amended 2015	Covers intentional insults and humiliation of SC and ST persons in public view, including in hostels, classrooms and workplaces, and caste-based sexual harassment.	PARI summary of the 2015 amendment
5	Protection from sexual harassment at work and on campus: Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013	Employers with 10 or more workers must set up an Internal Committee with an external member; a district Local Committee handles complaints from smaller workplaces and informal workers. The Act covers students and trainees in educational institutions, and it prohibits retaliation against complainants.	POSH Act 2013 (India Code)

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
6	Minimum wages, timely payment and equal pay regardless of gender: Code on Wages 2019	Applies to all employees in organized and unorganized sectors. States must set minimum wages at or above a national floor wage. Employers may not discriminate on the ground of gender in wages, recruitment or conditions of employment for the same or similar work.	PRS summary; Code s.3 text
7	Social security: Code on Social Security 2020	Extends provident fund, health insurance, and maternity coverage to eligible employees, including those hired through contractors, and provides schemes for gig, platform, and unorganized workers. In force since 21 November 2025.	ClearTax on the new labor codes
8	Safe working conditions and contract-worker rights: Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020	Regulates working hours, safety and welfare, contract labor and inter-state migrant workers, and permits night work for women subject to their consent and safety measures.	TaxGuru summary

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
9	Workplace grievance mechanisms: Industrial Relations Code 2020	Establishments above a set size must have a grievance redressal committee for individual worker grievances.	TaxGuru summary
10	Non-discrimination and reservation for young people with disabilities: RPwD Act 2016	Employers may not discriminate against persons with disabilities; government establishments must reserve at least 4% of posts for persons with benchmark disabilities.	PARI summary of the RPwD Act

3. Shortcomings

The biggest gap for young adults is that Indian law has no general prohibition on caste- or tribe-based discrimination in private-sector hiring, pay or promotion. The Code on Wages bans discrimination on the ground of gender, but not caste or tribe. The Atrocities Act covers insults and humiliation, but not a quiet decision not to hire. As more young people from marginalized communities enter private employment, the protections they relied on in education and public jobs largely fall away.

Gap 1: Campus protections in legal limbo

The UGC's 2012 equity regulations have been heavily criticized for lax implementation, with equal opportunity cells existing in name only. However, the proposed 2026 regulations, which included stiffer penalty clauses, stronger reporting mechanisms, and better committees, were temporarily stayed by the Supreme Court in January 2026 after challenges raised their vagueness and exclusion of general-category students. Their future lies in the outcome of this case. For now, students

like the one in Scenario 4.1 will work under a mechanism that very few institutions consider important.

Gap 2: Scholarships that arrive late and stay small

Post-matric scholarships are the only way for SC/ST students to get into institutions of higher learning. Delays in scholarship payments mean students must borrow money or risk exclusion from examinations. The SC income cap of Rs 2.5 lakh hasn't been updated since 2013-14.

Gap 3: Apprenticeships without accountability

Apprenticeships pay stipends that are funded but do not require employers to disclose how many apprentices they keep, their positions, or results by social group. When apprentices are hired to fill production-line roles at reduced cost, the system becomes cheap labor.

Gap 4: Identity disclosure without safeguards

Both employers and landlords inquire about caste less formally. HR databases sometimes include caste data without any explanation. No policy says what circumstances allow collection of caste information, what measures should be taken to protect the caste status of an individual, and how that information can be used, for example, in voluntary diversity monitoring. The young have no choice but to lie or reveal their caste status.

4. Tools and guidance routes

Recommendations by stakeholder

Colleges, universities and training institutes

- Have an active cell for equality of opportunity with publicly available contact information, meetings, and an annual report on complaints and measures adopted.
- Do not publicize or advertise any category of students in a manner that is identifiable to their peers; make information regarding categories accessible only to those who need it.

- Provide bridge courses in English and technical subjects along with peer counseling in the first year for all students, especially first-generation students.
- Pay in advance or allow late-submission penalty relief if scholarships are delayed, so no student is denied the right to appear for examinations due to government delays.
- Take action on caste-based harassment and make it part of anti-ragging and POSH training, and act against derogatory language like "quota student".

Nonprofits

- Run placement-readiness programs for first-generation graduates, such as interview training and mentorship from people with similar backgrounds.
- Provide legal aid to youths facing discrimination in college and work.
- Track safe housing and women's hostels in major destination cities.
- Monitor delays in scholarships and raise them collectively with state welfare departments.

Local authorities (state welfare departments, labor departments, district administration)

- Disburse post-matric scholarships according to a pre-decided schedule and disclose delay information at the district level.
- Create hostel facilities for SC and ST students and working women in Patna, Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Dhanbad, and other centers.
- Form and notify the District Local Committee as per POSH legislation, with the members sensitized about caste and tribal harassment.
- Register and inspect labor contractors that hire young workers from Bihar and Jharkhand.

FMCG companies

- Adopt a written policy that forbids discrimination on the basis of caste, tribe, ethnic identity, religion, gender, linguistic background,

disability, and migration in hiring, payment, job allocation, promotion, residence, and termination.

- Exclude questions about surname, "native place," or family profession from the interview process, and educate recruiters about this.
- Conduct a pay audit by position and gender, and by social groups where voluntarily disclosed, for employees doing the same jobs.
- Provide paid apprenticeships with a disclosed retention rate, and monitor it by gender and social group.
- Include independent members on internal committees under the POSH Act and safeguard complainants against retaliation.

Suppliers

- Give every worker written terms, wage slips, and statutory benefits in a language they understand.
- Pay equal wages to direct and contract workers doing the same work.
- Provide a confidential grievance channel that bypasses supervisors and contractors, with the buyer's contact as a fallback.

Contractors (placement agencies, labor contractors)

- The key employer, pay, hours, deductions, and accommodation conditions must be disclosed in writing before the worker leaves home.
- Employers should never retain identity papers, and they should not deduct recruitment costs from the worker's pay.
- Provide safe, secure accommodation, with separate facilities for women.

Community organizations

- Create alums and professional networks that can offer job openings and referrals to first-generation college students.
- Provide peer support to youth who experience discrimination and document any instances.

- Have a listing of reliable landlords and employers in destination cities.

Policy recommendations for ages 18–25

1. Enact an anti-discrimination act for employment. Prohibit discrimination on grounds of caste, tribe, religion, ethnicity, language, and migration status in recruitment, remuneration, promotion, and termination of employment in the private sector, with a remedy for breach and an equality body capable of investigating the same.
2. Settle and fortify campus safeguards. Clarify the UGC equity regulations with a process that is clear, inclusive of all students, and provides marginalized students with a clear complaint procedure within a set timeframe.
3. Revamp post-matric scholarships. Index income ceilings and allowances to inflation, fix scholarship release dates, and allow institutions to defer tuition fees until payment has been made.
4. Impose joint liability of principal employers. Make the principal employer jointly responsible for the remuneration, benefits, and conditions of contract workers supplied by contractors, and audit contractors' workers.
5. Make apprenticeships worthwhile. Tie the subsidy to publicized retention rates and reporting of outcomes by gender and social category.
6. Ban discrimination against renters. Ensure that anti-discrimination laws protect private rented accommodation and increase hostel accommodation for students and young workers.
7. Ensure proper collection of caste data. Provide instructions to employers under data protection legislation on when they can collect caste or tribal identity information.

Adulthood, Employment and Leadership

The impact of exclusion in adulthood becomes permanent in terms of wage, type of work, access to land and forests, leadership positions and collective bargaining power of the workers.

In Bihar and Jharkhand, workers from SCs, STs, and other disadvantaged groups work informally, on contracts, and seasonally in agriculture, construction, brick kilns, mining, forest produce, and factories that manufacture products for national FMCG brands. Women belonging to such communities have to bear the additional burden of unpaid care work, harassment and exclusion from skilled work.

The chapter is meant for workers and their trade unions, women workers, employers (including FMCG firms and their suppliers), labor contractors, community organizations, panchayats, and local authorities.

1. Exclusion in practice

For grown-ups, however, exclusion is very much built into the nature of the job: who works directly for the employer, who is a contractor; who runs machines, who cleans them; who gets a written contract, who gets an oral one; who sits on the panchayat, who sweeps its room. These are not always seen as being caste and tribal discrimination, but that's precisely what they are.

Scenario 5.1: The cleaning jobs

In the food processing plant in Bihar that provides for a leading packaged foods company, three labor contractors bring in employees. Workers from Dalit communities do all sanitation and waste-related jobs, including some from families traditionally required to do sanitation work.

Machine operators and quality controllers belong to dominant and intermediate caste communities.

There is no written policy on job assignment by caste. However, the supervisor recruits through his own network, and when Dalit workers request transfers to production-related jobs, he says there are no vacancies. The canteen keeps drinking-water utensils separate, and sanitation workers eat after everyone else.

A social compliance audit of the company involves checking for minimum wage and safety equipment provision, but the checklist does not enquire about job assignment based on social identity or how workers are treated in common areas.

Scenario 5.2: The contractor who controls everything

Adivasi men and women from Jharkhand work at a construction site in another state, through a series of contractors. These laborers have been hired by an agent who handed them to a sub-contractor working for a contractor building for the developer. No one knows the name of the company he works for.

They get their wages in cash, which are below the notified minimum and sometimes paid weeks after the work. They deduct their food expenses and a collective shelter in the form of iron sheets from their salary. They have not been enrolled in any construction workers' welfare board or social security schemes. If any worker gets injured, then the contractor provides him only basic medical aid and sends him away.

p1: "If we complain, then the sardar will say that many others are waiting for this job. We are thus silent, and wait to get our payment."

Scenario 5.3: Pregnant and let go

A woman from a Scheduled Caste background works in a garment unit that caters to branded retailers in Jharkhand. She has worked there for three years, but she works temporarily for the factory through a contractor. Once she shows signs of pregnancy, her boss informs her that there will be "no work for her until after the baby".

She does not receive any maternity benefits despite having worked long enough to be eligible, because the contractor treats her temporary

employment as new employment. The factory lacks a crèche facility. On delivering her child, she cannot manage childcare and hence leaves the job.

Among the women workers targeted by the maternity provisions of the Code on Social Security are those who work informally and on contracts

Scenario 5.4: The leader in name only

A Dalit woman is elected as mukhiya of a panchayat in Bihar through a reserved seat meant for women of the Scheduled Castes. In reality, a dominant-caste male makes the decisions in the panchayat, "assists" her, and she is seldom consulted on the budget or schemes. During panchayat meetings, she sits separately, and officials address her "assistant."

If she tries to allocate a housing scheme to Dalits and Adivasis listed in the panchayat, she faces a motion of no confidence. Additionally, she is ridiculed openly on account of her caste and lack of educational qualifications.

The system of reservation has allowed marginalized women to hold positions of authority, which, however, can be meaningless without protection and support from those in power before them.

Scenario 5.5: The union that was not allowed

The laborers working in a warehouse for a major consumer goods manufacturer, with many being Dalit and Adivasi migrant laborers, start meeting each other to complain about unpaid overtime and unsafe working conditions. In an attempt to organize into a union, the contractor starts refusing shifts to the workers who are most vocal in their complaints. The warehouse manager tells everyone else, "no outside elements" will be allowed on their premises.

The laborers do not know how to organize themselves as a trade union, and the company's supplier code, which talks about freedom of association, is not available to them in a language they can understand.

2. Rights and protections

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
1	Guaranteed rural wage work: Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act 2025 (VB-G RAM G)	Replaced MGNREGA with effect from 1 July 2026. Raises the statutory guarantee from 100 to 125 days of wage employment per financial year for every rural household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.	PIB notification; IMPRI analysis
2	Minimum wages, timely payment and equal pay regardless of gender: Code on Wages 2019	Covers all employees, including in the unorganized sector. Minimum wages cannot be below the national floor wage—no gender discrimination in wages, recruitment, or conditions for the same or similar work.	PRS summary
3	Safe working conditions, contract labor and migrant workers: OSH Code 2020	Regulates hours, overtime, safety, welfare facilities and health check-ups, contract labor, and inter-state migrant workers.	TaxGuru summary
4	Social security: Code on Social Security 2020	Provident fund, health insurance and employment-injury coverage for eligible workers, including contract workers; schemes for unorganized, gig and platform workers.	ClearTax summary

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
5	Freedom from bonded labor: Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act 1976	Abolishes any system forcing a person to work to repay an advance or debt. District Magistrates must identify, release, and rehabilitate bonded laborers.	Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act 1976 (India Code)
6	Protection from caste- and tribe-based atrocities: SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989, amended 2015	Covers public humiliation, forced labor, wrongful occupation of land and obstruction of access to common resources for SC and ST persons, with special courts and victims' rights.	PARI summary of the 2015 amendment
7	Protection from sexual harassment at work: POSH Act 2013	Employers with 10 or more workers must have an Internal Committee; District Local Committees hear complaints from informal workers, including farm laborers and domestic workers. Retaliation is prohibited.	POSH Act 2013 (India Code)
8	Maternity benefit and crèches: Code on Social Security 2020, Sections 59–72	Up to 26 weeks of maternity benefit for eligible women employees; establishments with 50 or more employees must provide a crèche.	K&K compliance guide
9	Right to organize and grievance redress: Industrial Relations Code 2020	Provides for registration of trade unions and requires grievance redressal committees in establishments above a set size.	TaxGuru summary

#	Right or protection	What it provides	Source
10	Forest rights: Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006	Recognizes individual rights to forest land under cultivation and community rights to use, manage and protect forest resources, including minor forest produce. Gram Sabhas initiate and verify claims.	Forest Rights Act 2006 (India Code)
11	Tribal self-governance in Scheduled Areas: PESA Act 1996 and Jharkhand PESA Rules 2025	Notified in January 2026, the rules recognize the Gram Sabha as the key authority in Scheduled Areas, with powers over minor forest produce, small water bodies and minor minerals, and a role in consent for land acquisition and mining.	Drishti on Jharkhand PESA; PTI via The Week
12	Protection of tribal land: Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908 and Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act 1949	Restrict transfer of land owned by Scheduled Tribe members in covered areas of Jharkhand to non-tribal buyers.	CNT and SPT Acts (Jharkhand statutes)
13	Reserved leadership in local government: Constitution Article 243D and state panchayat laws	Seats and chairperson posts in panchayats are reserved for SC, ST and women; Bihar and Jharkhand reserve 50% of panchayat seats for women.	Constitution of India; state Panchayati Raj Acts (India Code)

3. Shortcomings

The common thread across adult working life is that protections are written for a direct employer-employee relationship. In contrast, marginalized workers in Bihar and Jharkhand mostly work through contractors, informal arrangements, or their own forest and farm livelihoods. Without an identifiable employer, workers cannot claim these protections.

Gap 1: No law against caste-based segregation of jobs

In general, the private sector faces no legal restrictions on assigning employment, promotions, or facilities based on caste or tribe. Sanitation and sewage handling remain areas dominated by Dalit workers, as discussed in Scenario 5.1. The atrocities act and prohibition of manual scavenging act deal with worst scenarios of discrimination but not routine segregation in terms of occupation.

Gap 2: Rural work guarantee in transition

While VB-G RAM G ensures that the guarantee is extended to 125 days, it also incorporates a weekly payment system. On the other hand, VB-G RAM G also reorganizes funding and delivery methods. Supporters argue for stronger guarantees and faster payments; however, opponents argue that state capacity and centrally allocated funding may create problems, and that demand may not be met in practice. Workers face challenges in both states.

4. Tools and guidance routes

Recommendations by stakeholder

Schools and training institutions

- Organize wage literacy and rights education sessions on pay, maternity rights, POSH, and forest rights in native languages.
- Conduct skill training for progression into skilled and supervisory jobs, and deliberately recruit Dalit and Adivasi women.

- Include caste and tribe inclusion in management and supervisory training.

Nonprofits

- Set up worker helplines in source areas and destination locations to help workers identify their main employer, recover unpaid dues, and register for social security.
- Assist Gram Sabhas in filing Forest Rights Act applications and implementing PESA rights.
- Educate Dalit, Adivasi, and women representatives of the panchayat, and document proxy rule and intimidation.
- Facilitate access to the District Local Committee by women workers.

Local authorities (district administration, labor department, forest and revenue departments, panchayats)

- Constitute, train, and popularize District Local Committees under the POSH Act, with members who can address caste and tribal harassment.
- Establish time frames for making decisions on Forest Rights Act claims and publish the pending claims status per village.
- Carry out identification campaigns of bonded labor working in brick kilns, stone quarries, and agricultural areas, leading to their immediate liberation and rehabilitation.
- Monitor VB-G RAM G activities by social group, including issuing job cards, assigning work, and paying wages.
- Register labor contractors/recruiters and cross-check them against complaints.

FMCG companies

- Connect supply chains to labor contractors and collection levels in Bihar and Jharkhand, and publish supplier lists for commodities considered high risk.
- Include non-discrimination, child labor, forced labor, and anti-retaliation clauses in all supplier contracts, applying to workers who are recruited by the contractor.

- Conduct regular, confidential interviews with workers outside supplier audits, examining salary and promotion by gender and social group, if workers provide it voluntarily.
- Support crèches, maternal services and transportation for female workers within the supplier factories and collection centers.
- Hold awareness seminars and take corrective action with deadlines and verification.
- Respect workers' rights to organize and address retaliation.

Suppliers

- Ensure that all workers, direct and contract, receive written conditions, payslips, and other statutory benefits in a language they understand.
- Do not restrict any job based on caste. Open all jobs to all workers.
- Ensure common facilities for water, food, and sanitation.
- Establish a grievance redressal mechanism that does not involve supervisors and contractors.

Contractors

- Pay minimum wages straight into their accounts along with pay slips.
- Enroll workers in social security and the welfare board for construction projects.
- Do not take documents from them, charge any recruitment fee, or use advances for keeping workers tied.
- Do not terminate the services of pregnant workers or make changes in contracts just to deprive them of maternity benefits.

Community organizations (unions, self-help groups, tribal councils, Dalit and women's organizations)

- Coordinate workers across contractors so they can bargain collectively.
- Use the Gram Sabha and PESA authority to protect common land, forests, and water resources, and insist on consent for any mining or land-use decisions.

- Support Dalit and Adivasi elected officials against proxy rule and threats.

Policy recommendations for adulthood

1. Make principal employers collectively responsible. Make principal employers and major purchasers collectively responsible for compensation, benefits, and safety of labor supplied via contractors.
2. Demand human rights due diligence in corporate supply chains. Demand major companies to conduct human rights due diligence with respect to caste, tribe, gender, children's labor and forced labor in the company supply chain down to the level of contractor and collection, and disclose it in public.
3. Ban caste/tribe-based discrimination in employment. Pass legislation on private employment regarding recruitment, job allocation, remuneration, promotions, and facilities.
4. Guarantee maternity benefits and crèches in the informal sector and contract labor.

Finance maternity benefits and crèches for unorganized-sector women workers under social security code schemes, and stop contract arrangements meant to avoid such benefits.

5. Resolve forest rights claims within the statutory period. Fix statutory period for filing FRA claims, prohibit access restrictions when claims are pending, and recognize PESA consent in mining and land acquisitions.
6. Protect reserved representatives. Watch proxy rules and intimidation of Dalits, Adivasis and women Panchayat leaders, and train, staff independently and complaint mechanism for them.
7. Protect freedom of association. Take action against employers retaliating against employees organizing themselves by treating such actions as labor violations, including with respect to contractual and migrant labor.
8. Monitor rural employment transition. Make VB-G RAM G work and wage data available, disaggregated by caste, tribal, and gender

categories, for Bihar and Jharkhand so that any discrimination in the transition process can be addressed.

Recommendations Across the Life Course

In all five stages of life, the issue is not a lack of rights for Adivasi, Scheduled Castes, and other vulnerable groups in Bihar and Jharkhand; rather, it is the gap between rights on paper and rights in reality. Accordingly, recommendations have been made at the chapter level for each stage of life.

Broad recommendations for all stakeholders

These guidelines would apply to all organizations working with children, adolescents, and adults from marginalized groups, regardless of age.

Use a single inclusive criterion throughout the lifecycle. Each school, Anganwadi, college, hostel, training center, employer, supplier, and community program must develop a written non-discrimination criterion based on caste, tribe, ethnicity, language, gender, disability, and migration status. This should include criteria for access, seating and facilities, food and water, job assignment, payment, promotion, housing, sanitation and termination, and should be posted in the local language.

Go from waiting to outreach. Each service should know its target population and those being left out, and should make its presence felt among hamlets and communities that are not availing services, rather than waiting for individuals to approach it. Maintain a list by hamlet/settlement so whole communities do not remain out of focus.

Develop confidential reporting lines that bypass local power structures. Each organization must provide a reporting line that does not go through someone on whom the reporter is dependent, such as a district-level or head office representative, a non-profit partner, a customer relations hotline, or an independent committee member. Retaliation should always be considered a distinct and serious offense.

Collect data wisely and then use it. Each organization must track outcomes in terms of attendance, scholarships, placement, salary, and promotions by gender and, with explicit consent, by social category.

Data about caste and tribe must never be collected without a stated purpose, consent and safekeeping, and must never be displayed in identifying ways.

Communicate in peoples' languages. Training materials, notifications, contracts, grievances, and training procedures must be conducted in the language actually spoken by communities, such as Santhali, Ho, Mundari, Kurukh, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi, as appropriate.

Use corrective measures instead of one-time workshops. Awareness campaigns do help but are not enough. Organizations need to take steps when a problem arises, in the form of a written corrective action plan with an owner, a deadline, and an independent verification process.

Track the person during transitions. The most vulnerable times are the transitions: birth to enrollment, Anganwadi to school, class eight to class nine, school to employment, village to city.

Schools, Anganwadis, training institutions, employers, and local authorities need to transfer documentation and track individuals during each transition point.

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About the Author

Atiksh Sinha

Author, Bihar-Jharkhand Inclusion and Rights Guide

Atiksh Sinha is an 18-year-old author currently serving National Service in Singapore. He graduated from Singapore American School in May 2026. Outside academics, he enjoys staying active, meeting friends and eating good food.

GCR SCHOLARLY GUIDE SERIES

BIHAR-JHARKHAND INCLUSION AND RIGHTS GUIDE

Every child in India has rights on paper, but for many children from Scheduled Caste, Adivasi and other marginalised communities in Bihar and Jharkhand, those rights are hard to reach. This guide follows a life from birth to adulthood across five stages: early childhood, the school years, adolescence, entry into work, and adulthood and leadership. Each chapter opens with real-life scenarios of exclusion, explains the laws and schemes that protect people at that stage, identifies the gaps between rights on paper and rights in practice, and offers practical recommendations for schools, nonprofits, local authorities, companies, contractors and community groups. Clear, practical and grounded in law, this guide is a resource for anyone working to make inclusion real.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Atiksh Sinha is an 18-year-old author currently serving National Service in Singapore. He graduated from Singapore American School in May 2026. Outside academics, he enjoys staying active, meeting friends and eating good food.



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