

## SOCIO-LEGAL BARRIERS TO EDUCATION AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS: POLICY GAPS AND REMEDIES

PURBITA DAS<sup>1\*</sup> AND SOURADIPTA BANDYOPADHYAY<sup>1</sup>

---

*Higher education and the ability to learn become two key drivers of social and economic growth. However, in rural India, the low presence of inequity in access and opportunity remains a threat to these opportunities. Despite the constitutional protection and legislative initiatives, including the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009, and several national programs and initiatives aimed at developing skills and education, the rural population, especially women and disadvantaged groups, are limited by the poverty level, gender inequality, social marginalization, and weak institutional assistance that is an insurmountable obstacle to the process of acquiring an education and skills. This article examines socio-legal barriers that restrict access to education and skills development in rural areas based upon inequality; weak enforcement of laws, gaps in policy implementation, and systemic failures of existing programs; and the disconnect between law and legal implementation. Finally, if true empowerment and transformation is to occur within these communities, there must be a multi-faceted approach to overcoming barriers, which prioritizes legal enforcement, community participation, gender-sensitive planning and institutional accountability which results in an active and inclusive education and skills development context.*

---