

Economic Justice and Accessing Entitlements: Evaluation of National and State Level Policies for the Welfare of Transgender Persons in India

Research Study by Sappho for Equality, Kolkata, West Bengal

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2025



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research study deeply acknowledges the support provided by the staff and administration at Sappho for Equality, Kolkata. Only two months into the project, funding for this research was stopped because of anti-transgender policies announced by the U.S. government, which forced our funder to withdraw their support with immediate effect. As we were contemplating whether this project could be continued at all, the management at Sappho for Equality extended support in all ways possible, to make this project run. Our plan for fieldwork was gravely affected, but we could pursue it within a tight budget nonetheless.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the research participants across the nine states who agreed to give us their valuable time and shared their thoughts and experiences as and when we have requested. This research would not have been possible without the insights and experiences shared by all the activists, leaders, community persons, government officials, volunteer and staff members at the different organisations and the shelter home residents.

Our advisory committee comprising of Dr. Ranjita Biswas, Vihaan Vee and Koyel Ghosh helped us with important suggestions and provided guidance. We thank them for their support and encouragement.

A big thanks to all the interns – Amrika Ghosh, Shwetasree Datta, Shihana Rukiyath, Nabajyoti Hazarika, Prakriti Dutta, Jetoshree Bandyopadhyay and Puja Saikia - for helping us with detailed transcriptions of the recorded interviews, something that was immensely crucial given the short time limit of this study. Lastly, warm head scratches and pats to Sappho the cat, for all the emotional comfort and her calming presence amidst much chaos.

Thank you

Kolika Mitra

Principal Investigator

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INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) passed a judgement that gave legal recognition to transgender persons for the first time in India. Although it used the term 'third gender' to refer to transgender persons, which itself creates a hierarchy between gender identities and recognition of those identities, it nonetheless honoured a much-needed acknowledgement of the existence of transpersons as citizens and recognized rights and entitlements that come with it. The NALSA judgement introduced the formation of Transgender Persons Welfare Boards in several states that promised to bridge the gap between the transgender community and the government. In 2017, the Supreme Court of India passed a judgement protecting privacy of individuals as an inalienable, fundamental right that one is born with (Right to Privacy), which then led the way to decriminalisation of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in September 2018. This section was introduced by the colonial British government during its rule in India, that criminalized non-reproductive sexual engagement as 'unnatural', or 'against the laws of nature'. This section indirectly criminalized same-sex sexual engagements and thus, anyone who engaged in such acts were 'criminals' in the eyes of law. It is another matter that it also technically criminalized all forms of opposite sex sexual engagement that did not lead to procreation necessarily.

The early movement addressing the rights of LGBTQIA+ persons mostly revolved around demanding the decriminalisation of same-sex desires and intimacies on one hand and the cause of HIV/AIDS among persons assigned male at birth who engaged sexually with other men. In September 2018, when Section 377 of the IPC was finally read down by the Supreme Court, an apology was made to the LGBTQIA+ community by the Court, for the history of violence perpetrated on gender sexually marginalized persons by different stakeholders of the society. Physical, mental and sexual violence, invisibilization, bullying, misgendering, forced marriage, discrimination, shaming, heteronormative assumptions and various other forms of abuse have

been inflicted by the cis-heteronormative society on non-normative gender-sexual identities, lives and livings historically. Persons assigned gender female at birth and those assigned gender male at birth are made to undergo varying forms of harassment and violence based on the patriarchal binary understanding of gender. In 2019, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was passed by the Supreme Court of India that drafted rules and regulations to combat violence and harassment on transgender persons. The understanding of transgender persons in the Act includes transmen, transwomen, genderqueer persons, persons with intersex variations and persons having such socio-cultural identities as *kinnar, hijra, aravani and jogta*.

The Act aims to protect the rights of transgender persons, ensuring their access to healthcare, education and employment and it mentions prohibition of discrimination on transgender persons, recognition of the identity of transgender persons whether or not the person has undergone surgery, *'to secure full and effective participation of transgender persons and their inclusion in society'* (Chapter 4, page 4 of Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act). The Act mandates the appropriate government to introduce welfare measures as may be prescribed to protect the rights and interests of transgender persons, and facilitate their access to welfare schemes framed by that government. The appropriate government was also directed to formulate welfare schemes and programmes which are transgender sensitive, non-stigmatising and non-discriminatory. Every educational institution funded or recognised by the appropriate government is required to provide inclusive education and opportunities for sports, recreation and leisure activities to transgender persons without discrimination on an equal basis with others. Along with this the appropriate government also needs to formulate welfare schemes and programmes to facilitate and support livelihood for transgender persons including their vocational training and self-employment.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment formulated an umbrella scheme – **'SMILE – Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise'**, which includes two sub-schemes – **Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons** and **Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of persons engaged in the Act of Begging**. This umbrella scheme is intended to cover several comprehensive measures

including welfare measures for both transgender persons and persons who are engaged in the act of begging with extensive focus on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counselling, education, skill development, economic linkages with the support of State Governments/UTs/Local Urban Bodies, Voluntary Organisation, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), Non-government Organisations (NGOs) and others. The Ministry has allocated Rs. 365 crores for the scheme from 2021-22 to 2025-26. A National Council for Transgender Persons was formulated after the enactment of this Act, to (a) advise the Central Government on the formulation of policies, legislation and projects with respect to transgender persons; (b) to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and programmes designed for achieving equality and full participation of transgender persons; (c) to review and coordinate the activities of all the departments of government and other governmental and non-governmental organisations which are dealing with matters relating to transgender persons; (d) to redress the grievances of transgender persons.

One of our transwoman research participants, who is a member of the National Council told us how she was shocked to find no transman representative in the Council. When the first meeting happened in 2024, she had presented a report on the situation in the north eastern states and the meeting went well according to her. However, none of what was discussed have been brought into action yet. No funds have been allocated and no training has been given to the district government officials. A Transgender Identity card has been introduced that a transgender person can use to avail the welfare schemes. The Act has kept provision for two types of TG identity card, one carrying the gender identity as transgender and the other carrying the gender identity of female/male. The second type requires a person to undergo gender affirmative therapy.

In 2023, the Supreme Court of India listened to 17 petitions that were submitted in court by individuals from the LGBTQIA+ community, demanding the right to marriage for same-sex couples. After a week of hearings, the Court announced that marriage is not a fundamental right, hence, it is not the Court's decision to make. It also announced that transgender persons who

have secured the binary transgender card of male or female can marry under the existing legal system.

Objective of the research:

In this research our main attempt has been to evaluate existing welfare schemes and policies that have been drafted for transgender persons in India by analysing the central government SMILE initiative and also by looking at select state schemes and policies which were drafted by the respective state governments from before and during the NALSA judgement. Since 2014, it has been a legal journey of 11 years, across which various laws and enactments have been passed keeping the welfare of the LGBTQIA+ community in mind. It is time that we as part of the community know where we stand in terms of accessing these schemes.

This study is thus an evaluation of existing national and some state level policies, services, schemes and other forms of benefits that can be utilized by queer and trans lives across spectrums and intersections. Although we had initially thought of looking at the wider LGBTQIA+ community, but over the course of planning and conducting our study we found that separate policies or schemes for lesbian, gay, bisexual individuals are almost non-existent, and thereby this short-term one year study focuses specifically on transgender persons. Through the findings of this study, we seek to:

1. **Strengthen Crisis Intervention** – Enhance legal knowledge to better support queer and trans couples, as well as social workers navigating legal and bureaucratic challenges.
2. **Advance Policy Advocacy** – Collaborate with queer organizers across India to push for policies addressing violence, livelihood, housing, and other critical issues affecting queer communities.

Some **research questions** that this study has attempted to raise and address are:

- What are the laws, policies and schemes that are currently existing in India for the safety, development and well-being of the transgender community?
- How much has the transgender community been able to access the policies, schemes and scholarships that have been made available to the community by the government?
- What are the gaps in the existing policies and schemes?
- Is the transgender community finding the existing policies and schemes helpful and beneficial for their full and effective participation in society?
- Are the rights and interests of the transgender community being adequately protected by the existing Transgender Persons Protection of Rights Act?

METHODOLOGY

In November 2024, we began working on this project with the aim of outlining and evaluating the existing welfare policies and measures that have been drafted for transgender persons in India by the central government after the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, was passed. At a regional level, a few states have formulated their own policy documents and have introduced a range of welfare measures to realise the promise of social justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution. For this one-year study, our focus was manifold, where we attempted to see how the Indian state at the national and regional levels has been working towards the betterment of queer–trans persons along these four indices:

- **Education**
- **Employment and Livelihood**
- **Health**
- **Housing and Shelter**

These four areas were chosen as the thematic focus for our study because the SMILE initiative also looks primarily at these four aspects of a transgender person’s life and we wanted to evaluate the implementation of schemes drafted around these areas.

Our **geographical focus** was across nine states: Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh. We were able to conduct in-person fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and West Bengal. The data collection for Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur was conducted through online modes.

Data Collection, Methods and Tools

We imagined this study as a community-led collaborative investigation to know where we stand in terms of accessing these schemes and policies. As part of our study, we met queer communities in contact with 21 organisations. It is important to note that the form and structure of these organisations varied remarkably. Some of them were collectives, both registered and unregistered, while some were non-governmental organisations with large-scale projects. Some of these organisations had a regional focus while some had pan-Indian presence, with initiatives and projects running in multiple states. The demographic associated with these organisations was queer, not only in the sense of gender- and sexually marginalised identities of individuals but also in the subjective experience of affiliating with these organisations, which was varied. The individuals we spoke to were activists, shelter residents, survivors of violence, representatives working within government institutions, and people who were seeking a space to belong. Their own journeys of finding a queer community through these organisations were also unique and non-linear. It is important to note these details because their goals and aspirations vis-à-vis the State were informed by their sense of and struggle for belonging in queer communities and the world.

Our data collection methods involved two major methods:

Focus Group Discussions: Focus group discussions (FGDs) have emerged as a significant method of investigation for social science researchers working with social justice principles. They allow for greater attention to collaborative knowledge production. For our study, we conducted 13 focus group discussions. Our aim was to conduct at least one FGD from each state, but we could not conduct them in the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur due to our inability to travel to these states. The FGDs gave us a sense of the community's overall experience with welfare policies as well as state institutions. They also gave us a glimpse of queer life and, in many cases, the social life of legal developments concerning queer and trans persons. Four of our FGDs were with shelter residents. One was a residence hosted and run by an organisation in Hyderabad and three of the shelters were government-run shelters: one was a Garima Greh shelter

supported by the central government, one was supported by a state government, and the other was supported by a local municipal corporation. All of the shelters were run by community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations. These focus group discussions were usually held in the space where the host CBOs and NGOs conducted their day-to-day business. Two of our focus group discussions were at One-Stop Centres (OSCs). The number of participants in each focus group discussion varied across regions. Our smallest focus group consisted of 5 participants, while our largest group consisted of 12 participants. In total, nearly 102 people participated in our focus group discussions conducted across 6 states.

When we visited the organisations in the field, we soon realised that it would be hard to follow through with all the protocols of data collection methods in social sciences, especially with respect to sampling. It was almost impossible for us to limit the number of participants in focus group discussions, as many of our participants used the opportunity to meet for a focus group discussion as a means to connect with the community. In other words, our visits for data collection in the field also became a site where queer–trans people met with others in the community to seek joy, comfort, and sometimes even intimacy beyond the everyday violence of the heteronormative world. If we are to be candid, in the field, we moved beyond the goal of mere data collection and joined in with the community as they sought joy in other queers. For the FGDs, we used a structured interview schedule, which served as a prompt to start the conversation along specific thematic areas mentioned above.

In-depth Interviews: While the focus group discussions were a good measure of understanding the overall experiences of the community vis-à-vis welfare policies in a region, we were also interested in in-depth narratives of these interactions, the ongoing efforts of integrating queer–trans persons with governmental efforts, and their aspirations vis-à-vis the state. In-depth interviews (IDIs) formed a strong basis of our investigation through semi-structured interviews, often serving as a sampling technique where we identified not only people but also themes for further exploration. We spoke to 49 individuals as part of our semi-structured interviews across 9 states, out of which 44 interviews were in person while 5 were conducted online via video conferencing. For the interviews, we used a semi-structured interview schedule as a tool. We

devised two different versions of it: one for government officials and the other for activists. Eleven of our interviewees worked within the government in some capacity.

Throughout our FGDs and in-depth interviews, we took elaborate field notes. We also recorded them using an electronic recorder. The recordings were transcribed by the research interns working with us on this project. The interns were assigned recordings based on their linguistic proficiency.

Data Analysis

The participants' experiences were the starting point of our analysis, and there was a multiplicity of them depending on their regional, cultural, and political contexts. Personally, we as well as our research interns who dealt with the data were exposed to the complex ways of queer life across the country. The large extent of our data, which was rich in narrative, posed a significant challenge for analysis. Our interview recordings were transcribed. Some of our recordings in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Bengali were translated into English for the purpose of analysis. While we were attentive to the form of language used by our participants who spoke in Hindi, English, and Bengali, due to our limited knowledge of other languages, we could only analyse the content and narrative present in the translated transcriptions.

For our analysis, we used a mixed-method approach, primarily employing thematic analysis and working with narrative analysis wherever necessary. We processed our field notes to produce a skeleton of our findings and embarked on filling the gaps through a rigorous analysis of the interview and FGD transcripts. We manually coded the transcriptions. These codes were used to analyse the thematic areas that we identified at the beginning of the project. While doing the coding, we were also forced to revise the thematic focus of the study and especially see the interconnectedness of our themes. While our aim was still to understand the implementation of the Transgender Persons Act, SMILE Scheme, and other welfare policies, the presentation of our results follows the major issues or themes that concern state welfare and queer communities in the country. In our analysis section, we explore how bureaucratic barriers, outreach gaps,

administrative inertia, low awareness, and insufficient funds play a role in trans–queer people's access to welfare measures across the country.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The NALSA Judgment (2014): Legal Recognition and Conceptual Contradictions

On **15th April 2014**, the Supreme Court of India delivered the landmark **NALSA verdict** (*National Legal Services Authority vs. Union of India*).¹ This judgment legally recognized **transgender identity** and affirmed the **Right to Self-determination** of gender, a decision adjudicated on a writ petition filed by the 'National Legal Services Authority' and the 'Poojaya Mata Nasib Kaur Ji Women Welfare Society.' The two-judge bench, comprising Justices A.K. Sikri and K.S. Radhakrishnan, held that all Indians possess the right to choose their gender irrespective of the sex assigned at birth, or without necessitating medical interventions.

¹ *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India*. Supreme Court of India. 15 Apr. 2014. (2014) 5 SCC 438.

Affirmation of Fundamental Rights

The ruling constituted a significant move towards social justice by affirming the fundamental rights of transgender persons.

- **Right to Equality and Non-discrimination:** Through a gender-neutral interpretation of **Articles 14, 15, and 16**, Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan, J. stipulated that discrimination against transgender persons, stemming from non-recognition, violated the fundamental right to equality and equality before the law. The judgment placed the onus on the state to ensure equitable treatment in matters relating to **employment, education, and access to public spaces**.
- **Self-Expression and Integrity:** Justice K.S. Radhakrishnan asserted that the constitutional right of speech and expression enshrined in **Article 19(1)(a)** incorporated one's right to express their self-identified gender. The judgment categorically held that "values of **privacy, self-identity, autonomy, and personal integrity** are fundamental rights guaranteed to members of the transgender community."

Conceptual Shortcomings and Critiques:

While lauded as a progressive step, the NALSA judgment has been subjected to scholarly and activist critique for its inherent conceptual and legal contradictions.

1. Defining Transgender Identity

The judgment exhibits contradictory tendencies, which Dutta (2014) observes as an oscillation **between a broad definition of 'transgender' as an 'umbrella term' for various gender non-conforming identities and practices, and a more restricted definition based primarily on Hijra and trans women identities.**²

² Dutta, Aniruddha. "Contradictory Tendencies: The Supreme Court's NALSA Judgment on Transgender Recognition and Rights."

Gee Imaan Semmalar's³ critique highlighted that while the Supreme Court claimed to uphold the Right to Self-identification of gender, the judgment relies on **broad generalizations** of trans identity. For instance, it claims that all hijra persons can be identified as third gender due to a perceived lack of reproductive capabilities. These generalizations were fundamentally premised on the **pathologization of transgender persons**.

2. The Pathologization of Identity

While dismissing biological testing to determine gender, the NALSA judgment hastily concluded that a **psychological test** would be more appropriate. The Court justified this by stating that "transsexuals, who, whilst belonging physically to one sex, feel convinced that they belong to the other, seek to achieve a more integrated unambiguous identity by undergoing medical and surgical operations to adapt their physical characteristics to their psychological nature."

This notion of transgender identity is premised on a **Descartesian mind-body dualism**, which is apparent in Justice Radhakrishnan's statement describing transgender persons as individuals "whose mind and body disown their biological sex."⁴

3. Exclusion of Transmasculine Identities

Semmalar⁵ pointed to the NALSA judgement's evident **antipathy towards transmasculine identities**. The judges conceded that transmasculine identities are frequently omitted from discussions of gender identity due to their lack of public presence compared to Hijras and transfeminine identities. While the judgement acknowledges that many trans men "experience violence and discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity," it notably **failed to delve into the specific needs and rights of transmasculine communities**. Activists

³ Semmalar, Gee Imaan. "Gender outlawed: The Supreme Court judgment on third gender and its implications." *Round Table India* 19 (2014): 24-25.

⁴ STRYKER, SUSAN. *When Monsters Speak: A Susan Stryker Reader*. Edited by McKenzie Wark, Duke University Press, 2024. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.15854248>. Accessed 27 Nov. 2025.

⁵ Semmalar, Gee Imaan. "Gender outlawed: The Supreme Court judgment on third gender and its implications." *Round Table India* 19 (2014): 24-25.

underscored that the judgement's disproportionate focus on transfeminine identities (such as Hijras, kothis, aravani, jogappas, etc.) resulted in a failure to adequately address the recognition of transmasculine persons.⁶

Reservations and Entitlements

A significant homogenization forwarded by the NALSA judgment was its categorization of all transgender persons as **Socially and Economically backward communities (SEBC)**. The judges directed the state to make provisions and entitlements available under the SEBC category.

- **Caste Intersectionality:** This move instituted **vertical reservations** under a blanket SEBC category, thereby neglecting the crucial intersections of **caste** within the transgender category.⁷
- **Demand for Horizontal Reservation:** Contemporary trans activists have mobilized to demand a **horizontal reservation** for transgender persons. They argue that a blanket reservation under the OBC category, as envisioned by the Supreme Court, will fail to address the socio-economic precarity faced by transgender persons belonging to the SC, ST, and OBC categories. Furthermore, if all transgender persons are uniformly categorized under SEBC, those belonging to already marginalized SC, ST, and OBC communities may be prevented from availing themselves of existing caste-based reservations.⁸

⁶ Several other activists apart from Semmalar have pointed this out. For more elaborate critique refer to the <https://orinam.net/ftm-is-inclusion-nalsa-jackuline-mary-vs-superintendent-police-karur/>

⁷ For more details refer to, <https://en.themooknayak.com/lgbtq-news/inclusive-policies-or-empty-promises-9-years-after-nalsa-verdict-transgender-community-seek-horizontal-reservation>

⁸ Deekshitha Ganesan, 'Making Rights Real' (Centre for Law and Policy Research, 24 Dec 2018) <<https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Policy-Brief-2018-Implementing-Reservations-for-Transgender-and-Intersex-Persons.pdf>>

The report provides a thorough summary for the demand of Horizontal Reservations.

The Problem of Gendering

While the NALSA judgment acknowledged the pervasive discrimination faced by the community and deemed the legal right to self-determination as crucial for socio-economic amelioration, it critically failed to address the **fundamental problem of gendering** pervasive in Indian laws, institutions, and public life.

The judgment directed government authorities to provide **separate public toilets and other facilities** for transgender persons. Conversely, transgender activists have advocated for the **ungendering of public institutions** by demanding the construction of more gender-neutral spaces and the institution of gender-neutral laws.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019

Following the **NALSA judgment (2014)**, which mandated the recognition of transgender persons as the 'third gender,' the Indian government introduced the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill (TPB) in 2016**⁹, culminating in the enactment of the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**¹⁰. This legislation, while aimed at protection, became a central point of contention, demonstrating a contradictory approach to the right of self-determination.

⁹ India. Lok Sabha. *The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016*. Bill No. 210 of 2016. Lok Sabha, 2 Aug. 2016.

¹⁰ India. Parliament. *The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019*. Act No. 40 of 2019. Parliament of India, 5 Dec. 2019.

Evolution of Definition and Contradictions:

The journey from the NALSA judgment to the 2019 Act reveals an ongoing tension between the principles of self-identification and biomedical models of gender.

- **2016 Bill:** The Bill initially followed NALSA's emphasis on gender identity (mismatch with assigned gender at birth) but also included a problematic biological understanding, defining transgender as: "(A) neither wholly female nor wholly male; or (B) a combination of female or male; or (C) neither female nor male."
- **2019 Act Definition:** The final Act provided a broader definition, including socio-cultural identities and explicitly covering non-operative trans identities: "a person whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth and includes **trans-man or trans-woman** (whether or not such person has undergone **Sex Reassignment Surgery or hormone therapy or laser therapy or such other therapy**), person with intersex variations, genderqueer and person having such socio-cultural identities as **kinnar, hijra, aravani and jogta.**"

Mandating Surgery for Binary Recognition:

A critical contradiction within the 2019 Act lies in its gender recognition process (Chapter 3). While the definition embraces self-determination:

1. A person seeking a transgender identity card and classifying their gender as '**transgender**' in legal documents applies directly to the **District Magistrate (DM)**.
2. However, transgender persons seeking a change in their identity to the **binary genders (male or female)** must first undergo **Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)**. Section 7 requires applicants to submit a certificate from the Medical Superintendent or Chief Medical Officer certifying the surgery.

This requirement for surgery to access binary gender classification makes the categories of ‘male’ and ‘female’ more insular and restrictive, thereby instituting a **biomedical model** that undermines the fundamental right to self-identification guaranteed by NALSA. This move highlights the State's anxiety regarding the transgression of established legal gender categories.

The Screening Committee Controversy:

The initial proposal for a **District Screening Committee** in the 2016 Bill was a major catalyst for nationwide protests, as the community feared it was a state mechanism for identification, surveillance, and pathologization.¹¹

Proposed Committee Members (2016 Bill)	Criticism and Standing Committee Response
Chief Medical Officer, District Social Welfare Officer, Transgender Community Representative, Govt. Nominated Officer, Psychologist/Psychiatrist,	The presence of medical personnel was seen as pathologizing gender identity and making legal recognition contingent on medical or psychological verification.
Standing Committee Report (2017):	The Committee questioned the medical officers' role and suggested replacing the District Welfare Officer with a “renowned person in the field of welfare of transgender persons,” prioritizing self-determination over biological determinism.

¹¹ <https://orinam.net/telangana-samiti-response-msje-trans-rights-bill/>

Ministry's Response:	The Ministry argued that the medical practitioner's involvement was "essential" to prevent misuse, referencing the Tamil Nadu model.
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The **2019 Act got rid of the District Screening Committees**, making the initial application for a 'transgender' identity card easier by directing it to the District Magistrate's office.

Social and Kinship Structures:

The Act has been criticized for neglecting the social and kinship structures integral to the community, specifically the **Hijra *guru-chela* system**.

- **Criminalizing Begging:** The Transgender Persons' Bill 2016, provisions criminalizing begging as bonded labor. As Saria (2021) argues, this is seen as an attack on Hijra kinship, where begging is a mode of establishing **generational continuity** and provides subsistence money for the elders (*gurus*) who train the younger disciples (*chellas*).¹² Criminalizing this practice makes the structure vulnerable to state policing.
- **Right of Residence and Chosen Family:** Section 12 of Chapter V of the Transgender Persons Act enshrines a transgender person's "**Right of Residence**" with their parents or immediate family. While it protects them from being separated from their natal family (except by court order), the provision states that if a family is "**unable to take care of a transgender,**" the court shall direct the person to be placed in a **rehabilitation centre**. This provision critically **fails to acknowledge the central role of chosen families and queer kinship systems** prevalent in the community. Instituting the natal family as the

¹² Saria, V. (2021). Hijras, Lovers, Brothers: Surviving sex and poverty in rural India. In *Project Muse (Johns Hopkins University)*. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780823294732>

primary custodian for transgender children, while potentially protecting them from familial separation, ignores and invalidates the safety and legitimacy of chosen families, especially given the lack of trans-sensitive rehabilitation centres.

National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP)

Chapter VII of the Act governs the constitution of the **National Council for Transgender Persons (NCTP)**, intended to be a grievance redressal and welfare body.¹³

- **Composition:** The Council is chaired by the **Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment** (Vice-Chairperson: Minister of State). It includes representatives from numerous ministries, NITI Aayog, NHRC, and NCW.
- **Transgender Representatives:** The Act stipulates the inclusion of **five representatives from the transgender community** on a rotational basis, one each from the North, South, East, West, and North-East regions, who are **nominated by the Central Government**.
- **Clarity on Powers:** Notably, the Act provides **no clarity on the exact nature, scope, and powers** of the National Council.

Anomalies in Legal Gender Recognition: The 2019 Act and Rules

The implementation of the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**, and its subsequent Rules reveals a continuing and significant tension between the **Right to Self-determination of Gender**—a core principle established in the NALSA judgment—and a **bio-essentialist** understanding of gender identity. This conflict manifests acutely in the legal process for gender recognition, creating substantial barriers for transgender individuals.

¹³ For an elaborate critique of the Trans Welfare Board across India refer to m.thewire.in/article/government/the-reality-of-indias-transgender-welfare-boards-what-an-rti-investigation-reveals

The primary contradiction exists between **Section 7 of the Act** and the corresponding **Rules** concerning applicants seeking to legally classify their gender as **male or female** (within the binary system).

1. The Statutory Requirement (Act)¹⁴

Section 7 of the 2019 Act mandates a strict, bio-essentialist approach for binary gender change. It requires a transgender person to undergo **'surgery'** confirming the desired binary gender (male or female) before they can seek legal change to that category. Applicants must submit a certificate from a medical authority (such as the Medical Superintendent or Chief Medical Officer) confirming they have undergone the Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS). This provision effectively imposes a **biomedical gatekeeping model** for accessing binary gender identities.

2. The Liberal Interpretation (Rules)

In contrast, the **Rules for the Transgender (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**, appear to soften this requirement. The Rules state that a transgender person who undergoes a **"medical intervention towards a gender-affirming procedure"** can apply for gender change to male or female.

Crucially, the Rules define **"medical intervention"** broadly as:

*"any gender-affirming procedure undertaken in an individual to facilitate the transition to their self-identified gender, including but not limited to **counseling, hormonal therapy and surgical interventions, if any.**"*

By explicitly including **counseling** and **hormonal therapy**, and framing surgical intervention as an *optional* component ("if any"), the Rules attempt to align the process more closely with the principle of self-determination. This move recognizes that a person's transition is a continuum

¹⁴ For more details on the Critique of Transgender Act see Vikramaditya Sahai, 'The Trans Act Is A Reflection Of Our Broken Democracy' (HuffPost , 07 Sep 2020) https://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/transgender-act-2019-reflection-of-broken-indian-democracy-in-5f5468abc5b6946f3eb2ed16?ncid=other_twitter_cooo9wqtham&utm_campaign=share_twitter

that may not include surgery, thereby offering a more inclusive interpretation than the explicit surgical mandate in the Act itself.

Implementation Failure and Physical Verification:

Despite the relatively progressive definition of “medical intervention” in the Rules, the on-ground implementation by state administrative bodies—specifically the **District Magistrate (DM) offices**—continues to present severe challenges.

1. Illegal Physical Verification

The Rules explicitly state that DM offices shall **not subject transgender applicants to physical verification** to ascertain their gender identity. This safeguard is intended to prevent arbitrary judgments and maintain the dignity of the applicant.

However, trans activists have documented numerous instances where **state officials illegally mandate physical verification**. If the transgender person is deemed by the officials to “**not pass**” as their self-identified gender (i.e., their gender presentation is not perceived as conforming to the officials' binary expectations), the DM offices have reportedly **rejected their application**.¹⁵

This practice reintroduces **state-sanctioned surveillance and aesthetic judgment** into a process that is meant to be based on an individual's declaration of identity. It effectively substitutes the discarded District Screening Committees with the arbitrary, subjective assessment of administrative officials.

¹⁵ <https://behanbox.com/2022/03/30/indias-new-transgender-portal-is-caught-in-red-tape-apathy-and-bias/>

2. Administrative Ambiguity

The legal anomaly created by the discrepancy between the Act (mandating SRS for binary change) and the Rules (allowing non-surgical interventions) leads to **administrative confusion and a lack of standardized procedure**. This ambiguity empowers local DM offices to interpret the law selectively, often defaulting to the more restrictive, bio-essentialist demands of the Act or, worse, their own prejudiced notions of what constitutes a "real" man or woman. Consequently, transgender individuals face an inconsistent, humiliating, and often futile process when seeking legal gender recognition, perpetuating the very discrimination the Act was intended to eliminate.

Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty & Anr. vs. Union of India (2023)

The Supreme Court of India's decision in **Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty & Anr. vs. Union of India (2023)**¹⁶, often referred to as the Marriage Equality case, delivered a complex and ultimately disappointing verdict on the demand for legal recognition of same-sex marriage. The five-judge bench unanimously refused to grant marital status but issued directives to protect queer relationships.

Demands from Stakeholders:

The petitioners, consisting of queer couples and individuals, argued that the non-recognition of same-sex marriage violated their **Fundamental Rights** under the Constitution, particularly Articles **14 (Equality)**, **15 (Non-Discrimination)**, **19 (Freedom of Expression)**, and **21 (Right to Life and Dignity)**.

- **Recognition of Marriage:** The core demand was for the Supreme Court to read the words "man and woman" in the **Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954**, as gender-neutral terms like "**spouses**" or "**persons**" to allow same-sex couples to marry.

¹⁶ *Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v. Union of India*. Supreme Court of India. 17 Oct. 2023. AIR 2023 SC 5283.

- **Legal Entitlements:** Petitioners sought access to the 'bouquet of entitlements' and rights that flow from marriage, including **inheritance, adoption, surrogacy, property ownership, and spousal benefits** (like pension and healthcare).
- **Constitutional Validity:** They challenged the SMA and other gender-specific personal laws as unconstitutional for discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation, arguing that this non-inclusion lacked an intelligible differentia.

The State's Response:

The Union Government vehemently **opposed** the petitions, making several key arguments:

- **Legislative Domain:** The State contended that the recognition of a new social institution like same-sex marriage is a matter of **legislative policy** and falls exclusively within the domain of the **Parliament**, not the judiciary.
- **Complexity and Chaos:** Granting marriage equality would necessitate the redesigning and amendment of over 160 statutory provisions and rules across various laws (inheritance, adoption, maintenance, etc.), arguing this would lead to administrative chaos.
- **No Fundamental Right to Marry:** The Union argued that there is no unqualified **fundamental right to marry** under the Indian Constitution, framing the issue as one of legislative policy rather than constitutional right.
- **Legitimate State Interest:** The State claimed a legitimate interest in restricting marriage to heterosexual couples based on societal, cultural, and religious history.

The Court's Judgment:

The five-judge Constitution Bench delivered a split decision on certain issues but reached several unanimous conclusions:

1. No Fundamental Right to Marry

All five judges **unanimously held that there is no unqualified fundamental right to marry** under the Indian Constitution—a distinction was drawn between the fundamental right to choose a partner and the statutory right to marry.

2. No Same-Sex Marriage

The Court **unanimously refused to read up or read into the Special Marriage Act (SMA)** to include same-sex couples. The majority (3:2) held that the judiciary cannot enter the legislative domain to create a new category of civil unions or mandate same-sex marriage. They upheld the constitutional validity of the SMA provisions defining marriage as a union between a "man and a woman."

3. Heterosexual Marriage for Trans Persons is Allowed

The Court **unanimously affirmed that transgender persons in heterosexual relationships have the right to marry** under existing marriage laws (including both personal and secular laws). This relies on the NALSA judgement which recognizes transgender persons as a separate gender identity. For example, a trans woman marrying a cis man can register their marriage, as the union is between a "woman" and a "man."¹⁷

4. Recognition of Queer Unions

While the Court did not grant marital recognition, it affirmed the right of queer couples to a **"Right to Relationship"** under Article 21, which includes the right to choose a partner, cohabit, and enjoy physical intimacy without state interference.

- **Majority Opinion (Bhat, Kohli, Narasimha JJ.):** Held that the right to a relationship does **not** impose a corresponding positive obligation on the State to legally recognize civil unions comparable to marriage, maintaining that this is a matter for the legislature.

¹⁷ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/transgender-persons-in-heterosexual-relationships-have-the-right-to-marry-under-existing-law-supreme-court-holds/article67431749.ece>

- **Minority Opinion (Chandrachud CJ, Kaul J.):** Advocated for the **recognition of "civil unions"** for queer couples, arguing that the right to intimate association flowing from Articles 19 and 21 mandates the State to grant legal recognition to these unions to ensure access to material and expressive entitlements.

5. Directives to the State

Despite denying the legal right to marry, the Court issued several directives to the Union Government:

- **Non-Discrimination:** All five judges directed the Union and State governments to take steps to **ensure that queer persons are not discriminated against** and are protected from violence and harassment.
- **High-Powered Committee:** The Court accepted the Solicitor General's assurance and directed the Union Government to establish a **high-powered committee, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary**, to examine the rights and entitlements of queer couples in unions that can be granted without legislative amendments. This committee is tasked with clarifying the social and legal benefits (like joint bank accounts, jail visitation rights, medical consultation rights, and access to a deceased partner's body) that can be extended to queer couples.

The ultimate outcome of the *Supriyo* judgment was that the judiciary referred the primary question of marriage equality back to the legislature, effectively upholding the statutory status quo while issuing limited executive directions for the protection of queer individuals.

The following chapters of the report will separately look at the four indices of a) Education, b) Employment and Livelihood, c) Health, and d) Housing and Shelter, under the **Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE)** and with regard to how and whether state level and national level policies for transgender persons are addressing challenges in these areas.

EDUCATION

Education is widely recognised as a powerful tool for transformation – both at an individual and societal level. It instils confidence, nurtures hope, and promotes personal growth, regardless of financial background. By narrowing social disparities and fostering holistic development, education plays a crucial role in uplifting marginalized communities and advancing social equity. More importantly, it serves as a means to break the cycle of poverty, unlocking access to other fundamental human rights. The right to quality education is firmly established in international frameworks. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) affirms that *‘Everyone has the right to education’*, emphasizing that elementary education should be free and accessible. Recognizing education as a cornerstone of national progress, India enacted the 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002, recognising the Right to Education as a Fundamental Right under Article 21A. This reads that *‘The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children aged six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine’*. The subsequent Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) operationalised this vision, ensuring that education is accessible to all children, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds.

While the RTE Act has significantly advanced education for marginalized groups, its binary framework overlooks gender non-conforming children, including transgender individuals. Section 1(d) of the Act defines *‘child belonging to disadvantaged groups’* as one who faces disadvantages owing to social, cultural, economic, linguistic, gender or other factors. Transgender children fit within this definition, but explicit recognition would strengthen their inclusion and access to educational benefits. The National Educational Policy (NEP) 2020 identifies transgender persons as a Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Group (SEDG). However, there remains a critical need for the government to formally notify transgender children as part of disadvantaged groups under the RTE Act, 2009, ensuring their entitlement to statutory benefits.

Early experiences of bullying and shaming in school disrupt education, hinder skill development, and limit access to employment opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and mental health challenges. The absence of mental health programmes in schools, coupled with poor access to professional counselling, leaves transgender and gender non-conforming students vulnerable to depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. In its advisory dated 15 September 2023, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) emphasized creating a harassment-free environment for transgender students.

Under the SMILE (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise) Scheme, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has introduced scholarships, focusing on providing financial assistance to transgender students studying in secondary school (IX & X) and senior secondary school (XI & XII). However, the exclusion of children below Grade VIII is problematic, as many transgender children, including those with intersex variations, may need support earlier in their educational journey.

The objectives of the scholarship under SMILE are:

- To **reduce the dropout rate** of transgender students by providing financial support.
- To help transgender students **continue their education** and **develop skills** for **livelihood opportunities**.
- To provide **a dignified space in society** by overcoming barriers.
- To enable **better access to educational institutions** and **vocational training**.
- To **encourage students** studying in **government and recognized private schools, polytechnics, and technical training institutes**.

Eligibility to apply for scholarship:

- The applicant must have a Transgender Certificate/ID issued through the National Portal for Transgender Persons under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- Must be an Indian citizen.
- Must be studying in a recognized educational institution in India.
- Should not be availing of any other central or state government-funded Pre-Matric/Post-Matric scholarship.
- Scholarship is awarded based on merit, i.e., total marks achieved in the previous academic year.
- Preference is given to Post-Matric applicants over Pre-Matric applicants.
- In case of tie in merit, preference will be given to older candidates (based on Date of Birth).

Documents required:

- Passport-size photograph
- Transgender Identity Certificate/ID (Issued through National Portal)
- Declaration from parents/guardian stating that the applicant is not availing of any other scholarship.
- Marksheet of the previous academic year (attested by the institution)
- Aadhaar Card (self-attested copy)
- Transfer Certificate (if applicable)
- Institute verification form (attested by the school/college/institution)
- Bank account details (Aadhaar-seeded bank account required)

For Renewal Applications:

1. Marksheet from the previous academic year (attested by the institution)
2. Bank account details (Aadhaar-seeded bank account required)

Enrolment

India has seen a notable increase in the enrolment of transgender students in both school and higher education, according to data shared by the Ministry of Education in the Rajya Sabha in August 2025. As per the figures, the number of transgender students enrolled in schools rose from just 155 in the 2021-22 academic year to 965 in 2023-24. Rajasthan saw a decline from 107 students in 2021-22 to 77 in 2023-24, while West Bengal recorded a steep drop from 211 to 62 between 2022-23 and 2023-24. As per the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), the number of transgender students enrolled in higher education increased from 302 in 2020-21 to 1,448 in 2022-23 (provisional). Uttar Pradesh topped this list as well, with 369 students in 2022-23, followed by Maharashtra (158), Madhya Pradesh (124), Telangana (104), and Tamil Nadu (98).

The **Assam State Transgender Policy** that was published in The Assam Gazette in April, 2020, notes, *“The academic environment in institutions is vitiated on account of negligence, discrimination and humiliation of transgender persons by classmates and teachers. There is therefore no motivation for TG persons to pursue learning in these circumstances. There is a lack of family support for members willing to pursue academics. No educational quota or reservation or separate classes is available for transpersons”*. In a decision taken on June 2025, the Assam Cabinet officially recognized the transgender community as socially and educationally backward, granting them OBC (Other Backward Classes) status. The implementation of reservation happened after intervention and sensitization from activists. It is through this OBC status that transgender individuals can access reservations in education, employment, welfare schemes, and scholarships. Dispur Government State College has announced two initiatives for transgender students - 5 seats have been reserved for transpersons in the Arts and Commerce streams each.

Second, two deserving candidates will be provided free admission once required documents are submitted. These steps indicate that the college is in the process of encouraging transgender students to take up higher education. Separate toilets for transgender persons were also set up and different community initiatives are also actively supported. Their 'Gender Champion' programme organizes awareness activities to sensitize the students about transgender individuals. Scholarship support from the state government has not started yet in the form of reservations.

The **Tamil Nadu State Transgender Persons Policy** has a special education scheme for those who have no parental support or those who do not stay with their parents due to natal family violence. Students in the 10th standard receive an amount of Rs. 1500/-, those in the 12th standard receive Rs. 2000/-, and those pursuing under-graduation degree/bachelors receive Rs. 2500/-. Madras University has 1% reservation for transpersons. The 2025 revised policy mandates that educational institutions update academic certificates to reflect the chosen name and gender of transgender students, in line with the 2019 Act. This provision aims to reduce barriers caused by mismatched documentation which often hinders access to higher education and employment. The policy aligns with the National Education Policy's Gender Inclusion Fund which supports education for cis girls and transgender persons addressing high drop out rates due to bullying and lack of inclusive curricula. According to a transmasculine activist from Chennai, who runs the Urimai Kural Trust (registered in 2024) and is also a volunteer with Orinam, the Tamil Nadu Rules does not acknowledge binary markers of a transperson. An individual can only avail the schemes if they have a transgender marked ID card, not a 'male' or 'female' marked card, even if the person has lived with a trans experience. According to him, it reflects the government's limited understanding of transgender lives.

In **Kerala** there are two seats reserved for transgender students in every UG and PG course. For professional courses and professional degree courses, one seat is reserved. A couple of colleges have hostel facilities for trans students. It was clear that whether an educational institution will have any education-related facilities is the discretion of college authorities. A few members of a queer organisation in Ernakulam said, *"Some colleges are giving space for transgender people,*

and some are denying it. For getting a scholarship, one needs an admission certificate and a college certificate. We also need a TG ID card, an Aadhar card and PAN card. We used to have a state ID card. Now they don't issue a state ID card because of the national ID card. We use a national ID card. The application is done online through the Social Welfare Department website".

The Kerala government provides funding for education to those who stay in the NEST transman shelter home near Thiruvananthapuram, for degrees and diplomas. The shelter residents are free to study whatever they want to study and the scholarship is open to it. The government gives the fees directly to the institution. One question that needs further exploration is how many students have actually completed the course after that. Is the government able to address the violence, discrimination and non-acceptance of transgender students that happen persistently at educational spaces? In order to sustain education for a gender non-conforming or a transperson in school, mere financial support is not enough. Our respondents have also mentioned the requirement of an overall supportive and safe infrastructure where students, peers, teaching and non-teaching staff are aware and sensitized about transgender students.

There are issues related to hostel accommodations on campuses. If a transgender person takes admission in a college with only binary hostels for women and men, non-discriminatory accommodation is the main challenge. For transwomen, it is difficult to get admission into women's hostels. In most cases transwomen are forced to stay in the men's hostels which are unsafe and abusive for them with complete dismissal of their self-determined gender identity. It is the same with regard to transmasculine students forced to stay in women's hostels. It becomes particularly difficult for those who have started their gender affirmative therapy and undergoing visible physical changes. Many end up dropping out due to the lack of safe hostel facilities. In many colleges, trans students hesitate to take admission because of the lack of proper bathroom and hostel facilities. With regard to school curriculum, gender and sexuality is being addressed with more sensitization around non-normative gender identities. Higher education syllabus is also being revised. The state government has initiated gender auditing in nursery textbooks and revising gender roles.

The **Karnataka** government had drafted their **Transgender Persons Policy** in 2017 and recognizes education as an area where much gender sensitization needs to be incorporated. The policy emphasizes upon including transgender persons with proper social, legal and institutional protection. It also talks about sensitizing parents, teachers and students as enabling measures toward the protection and dignity of trans students. The policy has suggested family awareness to be created through collaborations with schools and scholarships that will support education for transgender students. It mandated that within the first six months, a process of curriculum building must be initiated to inform, sensitize and educate all stakeholders in schools, colleges, medical and health sciences, B.Ed. colleges and NCERT, leading to the new and revised curriculum being included in schools and colleges by the third year of the timeline. Reservations in ITI, vocational training colleges, design, planning and management schools, nursing and medical colleges are to be started. The policy highlights the need toward introducing hostels for transgender students to help them pursue higher education at the district and the state level.

The **Uttar Pradesh** governor has directed the establishment of 100 welfare centers across the state that will focus on providing education, training and employment opportunities. In August 2025, Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel inaugurated a digital board at the Kinnar Pathshala (transgender school) in Basti district. The Raj Bhavan provided financial assistance of Rs 2.10 lakh for the installation of the digital board in the classroom. However, the SMILE initiative has not yet started registering applications from students, as was confirmed by several of our research participants. A transwoman volunteer at an organisation in Benaras said that she had applied for the scholarship in 2023 through the SMILE portal in the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE) Website, but her application did not get registered. Others too confirmed that no applications are being registered and there is no notification regarding this displayed on the SMILE portal.

The Chief Minister's **Abhyudaya Yojana** was announced by the **Uttar Pradesh government** in January 2021 and has been formally implemented since February 16, 2021. Through competitive exams, the program seeks to give underprivileged and economically disadvantaged students in the state access to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service (IPS), and other

elite civil services. Initially, online classes were prioritized, but offline classes were subsequently expanded. Currently, the scheme is active throughout the state and aims to enhance the skills and overall upliftment of the youth from all sections of the state by providing them with high-level face-to-face (offline) and online guidance and training for various competitive examinations. This scheme has been made available for transgender persons who are from the state (native residents with TG ID card) and interested in pursuing higher education.

The scheme aims to provide free coaching, guidance, and resources to meritorious students from economically weaker sections to prepare for UPSC, UPPSC, NDA/CDS, JEE (Mains), NEET, and other competitive examinations. Youth from rural and underprivileged areas are given special priority. Among our research participants, no one knew about the availability of this scheme. There is lack of awareness among the transgender community regarding any such state scheme because the government too does not take efforts at spreading awareness and information or at focusing on including transgender students.

In **Telangana**, under the **Samatha Support Scheme**, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), also known as Telangana Open University, will provide free undergraduate education to transgender students, those with physical challenges, and members of primitive tribes. Students will receive free education after paying a fee of Rs.500/- for admission. BRAOU will be the first university to provide such opportunities for transgender individuals in Telangana. Starting in the 2025-26 academic year, any transgender person with a 10+2 qualification can enrol in any degree program at the university. This scheme is open only for individuals belonging to a socio-economic background where for those residing in urban areas, the parental annual income must not exceed Rs. 2,00,000 and for those in rural areas, the parental annual income should not exceed Rs. 1,50,000. Also, the requirement of a ration card makes it challenging for transgender students, as that too needs the involvement and support of the natal family who holds the ration card.

Although **Manipur** does not have separate educational schemes, provisions or scholarships for transgender persons yet, in August 2025, the Manipur High Court directed all educational institutions of the state to issue new, revised educational certificates to transgender persons with their preferred names. The Court observed that a transgender person can now apply for a revised

certificate, incorporating the new 'gender self-adopted post-surgery'. The Bench has observed the need for a transgender person to undergo gender affirmative surgery in order to be able to apply for the revised educational certificate. This requirement is still not confirmed and activists are unclear about the aspect of compulsory surgical intervention.

The states of **West Bengal** and **Arunachal Pradesh** have no separate state transgender persons welfare policy, schemes or provisions, although the NALSA judgement and then the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act mandated that every state must ensure all its departments to start implementing all the measures mentioned in the Act.

The scholarship scheme under the national SMILE portal has not been active since the portal's inception. Individuals have tried to apply for scholarships for their undergraduate studies, but the portal does not work, does not register these applications. The scholarship scheme is visible on the portal screen but an interested candidate cannot avail it yet. When we spoke to government officials at the District Social Welfare Office in Benaras, they promptly replied that they are unaware about when the scholarship under the SMILE portal will become active. According to them, these are matters of the central government, and the state government or district officials can act only when there are orders from above. We asked them if they can notify the state government to take measures through a report mentioning the number of students who are trying to apply for the scholarship, however, the district officials responded that we are not well-versed with bureaucratic procedures, which work only through a top-down approach.

Sex Education in schools:

A decisive public interest litigation (PIL) filed in the Supreme Court has placed a long-neglected issue at the centre of India's educational debate: the absence of scientifically accurate, transgender-inclusive sexuality education in school textbooks. The petition, spearheaded by Kaavya Mukherjee Saha, a Class XII student, does not merely challenge outdated institutional frameworks — it calls for a comprehensive overhaul of curricula designed by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and State Councils of Educational Research and

Training (SCERTs). While the draft National Education Policy (NEP) had mentioned that sex education would be included in secondary schools on issues of consent, harassment, respect for women, safety, family planning, and STD prevention, the final NEP removed sex education.

In 2021, The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) removed a teachers' training manual on the integration of transgender or gender-nonconforming students in schools from its website. This came just days after the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) sought to rectify "discrepancies" in the document. NCERT's Gender Studies Department recently published a teacher-training manual titled '*Inclusion of Transgender Children in School Education: Concerns and Roadmap*' on its website, with the goal of educating and sensitising teachers about the practices and strategies to make schools more sensitive and inclusive for transgender and gender-nonconforming students. The teacher's training manual advocated for gender-neutral toilets and uniforms, the elimination of practises that separate children for various school activities based on their gender, and the invitation of members of the transgender community to speak on campus, among other things. However, on 2nd November 2021, NCPCR wrote to NCERT, stating that it had received complaints about the teaching manual's content and had taken suo moto cognizance of the matter in relation to deprivation and violation of child rights.

There are concerns regarding the lack of transgender-friendly procedures at the National Institute of Open Learning (NIOS). Many transpersons are unable to complete their formal school education because of unsafe environment within the school, or the compulsion to wear gendered uniforms. Many students, especially in grades 11 and 12 drop out of school because of these problems. Open school offers the opportunity to pursue education at a time of their convenience. The National Human Rights Commission has urged NIOS to establish a dedicated Transgender Cell and address these issues. Addressing such institutional challenges is crucial to ensuring inclusive educational opportunities for transgender individuals. The central government should also reconsider the one-year residency cap at the shelter homes, particularly for beneficiaries pursuing formal education or preparing for competitive examinations. Provisions for extended stays based on educational progress may be introduced to ensure continuity in learning and skill

development, in case alternative arrangements in the form of hostel stay cannot be made. The government should display the details of schemes available at the state and national level on the National Portal for transgender persons. To enhance the utility of the National Portal, the government should consider incorporating detailed information on state-level schemes. While the RTE Act has significantly advanced education for marginalised groups, its binary framework overlooks gender non-conforming children, including transgender individuals. Section 1(d) of the Act defines ‘child belonging to disadvantaged groups’ as one who faces disadvantages owing to social, cultural, economic, linguistic, gender or other factors. Transgender children fit within this definition, but explicit recognition will strengthen their inclusion and access to educational benefits.

EMPLOYMENT

The right to employment is a cornerstone of dignity and inclusion, deeply rooted in the Indian Constitution. Articles 14, 15 and 21 collectively ensure equality, non-discrimination and the right to livelihood, forming the basis for the employment rights of transgender persons. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, too strengthens these protections, by prohibiting workplace discrimination. Yet, despite these safeguards, transpersons face significant barriers in accessing employment. They encounter prejudice, unequal opportunities and unsafe work environments. Non-supportive environments in educational spaces through lack of

awareness, discrimination, bullying, shaming, misgendering, binary uniforms, washrooms and other such intolerant practices toward non-heteronormative, gender non-conforming individuals by peers, teachers, administration leads to a high number of drop outs from middle and senior school. Those struggling to negotiate around these barriers and complete their basic school education also suffer significantly. Drop outs hamper educational qualifications, skills and eligibilities that are later required to get the employment that one seeks, along with discrimination at the selection levels and thereafter at the workplace if the transgender person is employed.

The lack of sustained dignified employment and livelihood has a direct impact on the lives of transgender persons, making financial struggle an everyday reality. This also forces individuals to engage in informal labour with no job security, unequal wages, lack of infrastructure and disrespectful working environments. Dreams, aspirations and hopes of an independent, respectable life also come under question. Judicial interventions are necessary steps in these matters. In the *Shahnavi Ponnuswamy v. Ministry of Civil Aviation and Anr.* (2022), the Supreme Court directed the government to create a policy for transgender employment in consultation with the National Council for Transgender Persons. Accordingly, the government introduced the **'Equal Opportunities Policy for Transgender Persons'** in February 2024, with the objective to create an atmosphere that ensures fair treatment of transpersons, free from discrimination, harassment and bias, while establishing a grievance redressal mechanism. Various high courts too have pushed for measures such as reservations to ensure better workforce inclusion¹⁸. Securing dignified employment, having equal access to opportunities are necessities for everyone in the modern, capitalist world. The right of transgender persons to have access to livelihood and employment opportunities are mandated by the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, and it is upon the central and state governments to work in this direction.

¹⁸ Please see: https://clpr.org.in/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Accessible_Transgender-Rights-Resource-Book-3.pdf

The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India has included skill development and livelihood as a focus area after the Transgender Persons Act declared it as a mandate. There are two types of skill development training programmes under the SMILE Scheme:

- Short Term Training Programmes (200 hours to 600 hours and upto 6 months).
- Long Term Training Programmes (5 months and above and usually up-to 1 year) (up to 1000 hours).

Objectives of the programmes:

The main purpose is to provide employment opportunities to the person belonging to the transgender community by providing them market-oriented skills. Areas for imparting skill training have been chosen after consideration by the training partners and based on the national consultations done with members of the community. The skills so imparted are expected to be a means to provide ample scope for employment with dignity to the transgender beneficiary.

Eligibility:

The transgender persons will be selected as per criteria indicated below:

- Transgender persons having a valid Transgender Certificate and Identity card issued by the National Portal for Transgender persons would be automatically eligible to attend the skill development training of their choice on priority.
- The beneficiaries should belong to the transgender community as notified by the Government of India.
- The beneficiaries should not be receiving such benefits from any other Centre/ State scheme.
- There is no income criterion for selection in the skill development programme.

- Transgender persons between the ages of 18-45 years are eligible for undergoing skill development training programmes.
- The skill development training programmes are free of cost.

The training is free of cost for the trainees. 100% grants are to be provided by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. A stipend at Rs. 1000 per month per trainee has been allotted in case of non-residential training. Post placement assistance shall be provided to the transgender candidate based on achievement of 80% attendance in the skill training programme. The criterion of age limit between 18-45 needs relaxation, as a transperson above the age of 45 may very well need a particular skill to be learnt or developed at any age of their life. Due to workplace harassment, transpersons are always in the risk of losing their employment, and in such circumstances, if the option of learning a new skill is available then it can facilitate other work opportunities, independent consultancies and business ventures too.

Telangana

In August 2024, the Telangana government announced plans to employ transgender persons as traffic volunteers to curb the traffic problem in cities like Hyderabad. The official notification released on the government website described it as a 'government recruitment cum social welfare programme'. When it comes to taking livelihood related loans from the government, transgender persons in Telangana continue to struggle for financial independence as banks deny them livelihood loans, even those sanctioned through the women's development and child welfare departments that also cover transgender persons officially. Many applicants are waiting for approvals under the Economic Rehabilitation Scheme for transgender persons. Under this current scheme, transgender beneficiaries are eligible for two types of loans – bank linkage loans of Rs. 2 lakhs (with the government giving Rs.1.4 lakhs and banks giving Rs. 60,000, repayable in five years) and non-bank linkage loans of Rs.50,000 distributed directly after scrutiny by district committees headed by collectors. An activist said, "*banks often reject applications because of the lack of fixed address or income proof. Managers demand physical verification, but mostly we live*

in rented accommodations and also move frequently". To address this challenge, discussions are underway to discontinue bank-linkage loans and raise non-bank loan amounts from Rs.50,000 to Rs.75,000 to ensure faster and simpler disbursement. The community hopes that the government will move beyond only providing trainings, but also facilitate transgender individuals into becoming self-reliant entrepreneurs.

Under the **PM Daksh initiative**, skill building was provided to transwomen through the Ministry of Women and Child Development for jute bag making. A member of a queer organisation at Hyderabad told us, *"We have learnt this skill and the government said we will provide you the machines and the material that are required, and you can work on your own. The problem is that neither have we got the machines, nor the material and they initially said that after the skill building workshop, you will also be employed. There has been no employment and the government has also started the second batch, leaving the first batch of people to their own"*. An organisation based in Hyderabad named Infosem with branches in Karimnagar, Jagtial, Asifabad and Sirsila (working in 32 districts of Telangana) helps transgender persons with documentation related work for Aadhar, PAN, setting bank accounts, passport, and linking transgender persons with government welfare schemes. A staff member from the organisation told us about the Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme that has provided Rs. 5 lakhs for setting up photocopy shops as first initiatives in Karimnagar.

The District Welfare Officer at Sirsila had given a proposal for setting up a petrol pump and a supermarket where transgender persons will be employed. Indian Oil has also helped in sanctioning this Rs. 5 crore project for a petrol pump which was inaugurated in January 2025. However, according to the staff members, there was a lot of intra-community violence from the hijra community regarding who will run the petrol station and finally the transgender community fell out. It is currently being run by 12 disabled persons. A proposal for a community kitchen was also in the making through USAID funds but that too fell out after transgender-discriminatory laws were brought in by the President of the U.S. and USAID was forced to stop all funding in 2025.

The Transgender Persons Welfare Board gave Rs. 50,000 as business loan to 2-5 transpersons from different districts in Telangana under the SMILE scheme. On ground the process is very complex as it requires approval from transwomen. The approval board constitutes only of transwomen, with no transmen in the committee. According to a transmasculine activist from Telangana, *“If they think that the business idea is not good then their subsidy grant will never get approved. Multiple transmen have never received the grant, including me. They just said that they do not have adequate budget to cover me. There is specific budget for each district, but still they say there is inadequate funds”*. The transwomen who we spoke to in Hyderabad, told us that this was not suited for transgender persons. Many of them start an entrepreneurship, but after one year or six months, most of them quit. They say it is not profitable. There is 13% interest on the loan that comes through State Women’s Development Corporation. One transwoman said, *“We are unable to pay the loan back because we do not have that much money. We do not have any support from family, support from friends, or support from neighbours either. We can only borrow money from our community people or moneylenders. There are no other options”*.

Kerala

In January 2025, the Kerala High Court directed the state government to provide reservations to transgender persons within six months in educational institutions and for public employment. With the help of the State Women's Development Corporation, the Kerala state government provides skill development trainings in candle-making, stitching, mobile technology etc, to those who stay in the shelter homes. After completing the training, the government gives upto Rs. 3 lakhs as a loan to set up any other operation. It is a one-time loan to set up business. The money is not given together. Initially, the government gives some money for the set-up, after which, the remaining money is given to buy other essentials.

In June 2023, the Kerala government launched a new scheme to provide employment opportunities to the transgender community in diverse sectors. The **Pride project** is being implemented with the objective of ensuring participation of the marginalized group in the

knowledge employment sector. The state-run **Knowledge Economy Mission** along with the Social Justice Department are jointly running the programme. Through this project, the state government is trying to tackle high unemployment rates among transgender persons. The Kerala Knowledge Economy Mission is a government initiative for providing skilling and employment opportunities for the youth in the state. One of our research participants from Trivandrum who was the founder of a former queer group in Kerala now works at the Knowledge Economy Mission. After joining, he started special initiatives for supporting the LGBTQ+ community. The government initiative supports the youth belonging to several marginalized communities, having done work with the SC/ST community, fisher folk, tribal women, career break women, disabled persons, and now transgender persons.

Our respondent from Trivandrum said, *“Now, we are only focusing upon trans individuals, but we are planning to extend the project to the LGBTQ+ community. Maybe, this financial year we will announce the project for the LGBTQ+ community. It is similar to what Pride Circle is doing in Bangalore, or what Periphery is doing in Chennai and Bangalore. The method in which we are working is similar, but we do it with the support of government and other government departments”*. They started a special training in airport management and airport operations for transgender people. During the time of our interview, 10 candidates had applied for training. The classes will start in Cochin. The Knowledge Economy Mission provides training and sensitization through diversity and inclusion approaches to organizations and corporates, so that they can work towards making recruitment possible for trans persons.

Employment drives had been initiated earlier in Kerala too, the Kochi Metro Rail Limited offering jobs to transgender persons being one of the first examples in the country to do so. However, we have seen how those who had been employed had to drop out within the first six months itself because no one in Kochi was willing to provide rented accommodation to transgender persons. Mere provisions for employment do not lead to sustained engagement as long as the workspace or the social surroundings are not conducive. Governments thus need to focus on interconnected aspects too, without which such drives will fall short of achieving desired changes in society for marginalized communities.

The residents at the transman shelter home NEST reported that skill development training is provided to them, for example Spoken English, Mobile technology and Tailoring. The residents can choose what skill they want training for. After the trainings, the shelter residents (both transwomen and transmen) are supposed to get a one-time loan of Rs. 3 lakhs in instalments to set up their own business. There is a 13% interest on the loan, with no subsidy, that is to be returned to the Kerala State Women's Development Corporation. Our respondents mentioned that most individuals have closed business after six months as there is lack of sustained support from the government and no support from family members. Regarding skill development, members of a queer organisation at Kozhikode told us that the trainings are *"just for show, as there are no follow ups. These trainings are just to show that money is being spent"*. Members at one of the oldest queer organisations in India, based in Thrissur also said that the Kerala government is introducing different schemes for the LGBTQ+ community but *"their attitude is such that they are doing charity. There are lots of gaps in the execution level"*. A queer organisation based in Ernakulam said that the National Institute of Social Defence does skill development training programmes for transgender persons in collaboration with the organisation.

The Department of Local Self Governance in Kerala has a project called Kudumbasree that was formed in 1997 to eradicate poverty and felicitate women's empowerment. It started self-help groups for the MSM (men having sex with men) population. According to activists from Ernakulam, the initiative has not moved forward among the LGBTQ+ population as no funds have been allocated yet, although the project Kudumbasree is a very popular and cherished project in Kerala, held with a lot of pride by local residents. A case fought and won in the Kerala High Court by advocate Padma Laxmi has initiated reservation for transgender persons in Public Service Commission jobs, intended to start from the end of 2025.

Tamil Nadu

The government in its revised Transgender Persons Policy 2025 has mentioned every individual, irrespective of gender, deserving access to employment opportunities. It has talked about self-employment schemes and extending subsidies and grants to transgender and intersex persons, sensitization of transgender and intersex persons in public and private sector workspaces, implementation of anti-discrimination policies in the process of hiring and employee benefit schemes, private sector employees to be encouraged to offer CSR support, special recruitment drives, skill-development training, ensuring 'appropriate representation' of transgender and intersex persons in government employment opportunities.

The Tamil Nadu government facilitates transpersons in setting up self-help groups (SHG) by giving loans at very low interest rates. For ciswomen, as the director of Trans Rights Association - the NGO in Chennai that runs the Garima Greh in the state told us - it is usually seven persons needed to start a SHG. For transwomen, the government has relaxed the rule whereby if five people come together, that is enough to start an SHG. Initially the group collectively received Rs.5 lakhs, but now it has been increased to Rs. 10 lakhs. One group gets Rs. 10 lakhs in total. It starts with Rs. 1 lakh, with each member receiving Rs. 20,000/- each to start their own business. In the year after that the group will get the next instalment. From Trans Rights Association (TRA), there are 30-35 self-help groups that have invested in fishing, vegetable shops, fruit shops, tailoring, beautician ventures, agriculture, farmhouse, textile shop, xerox centre, mobile shop. They collaborate with banks, get a loan and split it within themselves. During a discussion about including transmen in the SHG, a transman respondent told us, *"Some districts opposed it saying that the SHG is for ciswomen and transwomen, so this is not for you. If a transman was friends with a transwoman who was in the committee, then he had a chance to be included in a group with other transwomen. After some advocacy, gradually transmen are able to start SHGs now"*.

The shelter for transwomen named Thozi, run by the NGO Sahodaran in Chennai, also coordinates many self-help groups. Some of the residents who run self-help groups engage with making candles, organic soaps, baskets and jewellery. The interest on the loan is 0.80%.

According to a transmasculine activist from Chennai, there is a Rs.50,000/- small time business loan for transpersons too. The DSW committee decides whether a transgender person is eligible for any such grant. Fred, who started Urimai Kural Trust informed that he had applied for the small-time business loan, but it had been rejected. Bank officials also tend to not give loans to transmen because officials or even laypersons only understand transwomen as transgender.

West Bengal

Several transpersons had applied for the job of civic constable, given interviews too, but they did not get hired. *“Transpeople are not given any jobs here in Berhampore”*, said a transwoman during an FGD at the One Stop Centre. *“We are asked to go to traffic signals. Those of us who have completed our graduation are forced to migrate to other places if we want to live and work as TG. If I want to stay here then I have to live as a man”*. In June 2024, the Calcutta High Court issued an order to the government of West Bengal to ensure 1% reservation for transgender persons in all public sector employment across the state. The order was passed after a writ petition was filed by a transgender petitioner who had passed the Teacher’s Eligibility Test (TET) in 2014 and 2022, but was not called for counselling or interviews. The state’s Department of Women and Child Development and Social Welfare had issued a notification in November 2022 that transgender persons were entitled to equal opportunities in employment without any discrimination. However, even after three years of the Calcutta High Court order being passed, no such reservation has been implemented yet by the state government.

The assistant at the DSW office in Coochbehar told us that the most important requirement for transgender persons is job, livelihood and scholarship for students. The District Nodal Officer at Coochbehar who is also a member of the Transgender District Cell said that they have asked the state government to facilitate self-help groups for transgender persons, but no such initiative has been taken yet. The DSW office at Coochbehar showed us a letter from the National Institute of Social Defence (NISD) that had recently arrived, regarding a refresher course for government staff on skill development programmes for transpersons. The state government has a significant role

to play in facilitating the implementation of measures being undertaken by the central government. The two Garima Grehs that were running in Kolkata had skill-development programmes but adequate information could not be collected about the current status of those who had received such trainings. The state government should feel the urgency of the need, and act on it. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, has mandated all state governments to start welfare measures for transgender persons in all departments. The West Bengal government has yet not started skill-development programmes or employment drives for transgender persons as it should have.

Karnataka

a loan of Rs. 3 lakhs used to be given to transwomen by Brihat Bangalore Mahanagar Palike to set up small business, but no follow up is done after that. The State Transgender Persons Policy (2017) mentions self-employment grants for taking up small business, reservation of at least 5 seats for transpersons in polytechnics, designing customised vocational training programmes for the transpersons as per their needs and interests, and establishing effective linkages with vocational training centres run by private and government agencies. The policy mentions the extension of the existing **Udyogini scheme** to cover transgender persons. Helpline for career guidance and online placement support should be established. Capacity and entrepreneurship development for the transgender community is essential. Efforts should also be made to register transgender persons in the Employment Exchange of the State. Liberal credit facilities and other support for economic activities should be provided according to the State Transgender Policy.

For the Karnataka government too, transgender still implies transwomen. In October 2025, the Central Relief Committee (CRC), Government of Karnataka, held a meeting with representatives from the transgender community to discuss alternatives to begging and measures for social inclusion. CRC has decided to liaise with government departments to implement skill-training programmes, employment in CRC centres and facilitate access to services for the community.

Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY) is a Karnataka state government scheme that includes transgender persons in its scope of livelihood skill-development training. Our research participants do not know anyone who have taken skill-training under this scheme. There are several state government schemes that mention those who are specifically eligible, and the DDUGKY mentions transgender persons as those eligible to apply. However, there are several other skill-development and livelihood-related programmes of the central and state government which do not mention any eligibility criterion, so with proper awareness among the community and sensitization of government staff, these schemes can also be explored. These include the National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), Centre for Entrepreneurship Development, E-Skill India and E-Pathshala. In Bangalore, four organisations – Aneka Trust, Karnataka Sexual Minority Forum, Samara and Raahi have formed an alliance to work with the government. The alliance is the official team for sensitization of police. According to one of the staff members from Raahi, the government does meetings with organisations before launching schemes and takes their suggestions. The Women and Child Development Department is currently undertaking a baseline survey in Karnataka, to have an estimation of the number of transgender persons in the state. A few queer organisations in Karnataka have been involved in the survey.

Our research participant at Alternative Law Forum told us that 1% reservation has been drafted for transgender persons in public employment in Karnataka, but implementation is zero. No relaxations have been made too. Under the **Yuva Nidhi Scheme**, unemployed graduates will receive Rs.3000 per month which transgender persons can also access. Through the 1% reservation for government jobs, transpersons can apply to 1st and 2nd division assistant positions, clerks and peon positions.

Uttar Pradesh

According to a news report by ANI in June 2025, the Uttar Pradesh government is set to take an initiative to make the transgender community 'self-reliant' and to 'connect' them with

mainstream society. The notification states that transgender persons in the state will be connected to the **CM Yuva Uddami Vikaas Abhiyan** under which they will be given training and loan assistance based on skills. It is being looked upon as a major policy change to support transgender persons in the state. The Yuva Abhiyan (also referred to as the CM Yuva scheme) is the state's flagship youth entrepreneurship initiative that will now include transgender persons. The expanded programme will offer vocational training, access to interest-free loans, housing assistance, healthcare benefits and pensions. 100 welfare centres are being set up across the state to provide skill-building opportunities in areas such as tailoring, digital literacy, culinary work and beauty services. Each of Uttar Pradesh's 75 districts is expected to reserve two public sector job positions. This move can also bring a shift to including transgender persons in the job market, employment and public life. The officials have declared that community surveys and awareness campaigns will be carried out to ensure the programmes reach those in need.

The CM Yuva scheme was first launched in 2018 to support young entrepreneurs in Uttar Pradesh. It provides interest-free loans upto Rs. 5 lakhs for small business ventures. Implementation and actual inclusion of transgender persons in such schemes are critical at a time when legal protections have improved but access to economic and social opportunities are very much limited. The residents at Garima Greh, Gorakhpur are given training in capacity-building through an NGO., for which the funds come from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. There is no other skill-building/livelihood/employment initiative currently being undertaken by the U.P. state government or the central government.

Assam

The Assam State Policy for Transgender Persons states that transgender community members are known to have been denied jobs on account of their choice of clothing and gender non-conformity. There is no reservation for transgender persons in employment in the government sector, nor are skill development programmes exclusively available for them. The policy talks about how poverty affects community members in a big way. A huge portion of the transgender

community have a monthly income of Rs.500 to Rs.1500 (according to the policy). Good income comes in *Badhai* during the marriage season. The Assam state policy recognizes the social exclusion and lack of opportunity to obtain qualifications required to take up jobs, be it in the private or the government sector. The policy seeks to deal with this issue by focusing on building the capacity of transgender persons for self-employment. The policy has recommended some initiatives: a) Vocational training to be provided free of cost based on their field of interest through existing government schemes, b) self-employment grants upto a maximum of Rs.25,000/- will be made available for small business entrepreneurs from the transgender community who have undergone vocational training and are willing to set up business, c) material support like sewing machines upto a value of Rs.10,000/- per person will be provided to individual beneficiaries who propose to use such support for income generation, d) financial assistance in the form of monthly pension will be provided to elderly and destitute transpersons, e) ration cards will be issued to transpersons even if they are living alone or living in shelters, f) formation of TG self-help groups will be promoted and obtaining benefits by these SHGs under various income-generation schemes of the government will be facilitated.

Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh do not have any separate state schemes for employment generation or trainings for skill development of transgender persons. Our research participant from Manipur told us that many transpersons lost their jobs during the conflict. There were transpeople who were doing their own business, using the internet for their business and in their jobs. The internet ban during the crisis also took away many people's livelihood, and other employment-related opportunities. Also, as another transmasculine research participant from Manipur told us, the MNREGA scheme does not include transpersons. He added, "*many transmen have died after their parents have passed away because of lack of jobs, no money, no home, no partner and no friends*". Manipur does not have a Garima Greh, so there are no skill-development training facilities too as part of the central government SMILE scheme. Arunachal Pradesh too does not have a Garima Greh, so no facilities for livelihood generation. There are no self-help groups too, no financial assistance from banks, or loans from the state government.

Structured and accessible support mechanisms from the government would empower transpersons to navigate opportunities more effectively. Rather than leaving the entire operational burden on NGOs and CBOs, the government should establish centralised desks at the state and national levels, supported by the respective ministries. A comprehensive list of available government skill-building schemes tailored for the transgender community will streamline this process and provide clear, consistent guidance and act as a resource hub. The **NITI Aayog Darpan portal** provides information on NGOs, CSOs and trusts, which can be filtered by the state and district. However, the portal lacks a dedicated category for 'Skill development and Livelihood'. The portal maybe revised to include such a category so that CBOs may identify prospective partners for collaboration in the domain of livelihood and skill development easily.

Workplace harassment remains a significant impediment to sustained employment for transgender persons. Addressing these issues requires a multi-stake collaboration, including government policy revisions. While sexual harassment against ciswomen in the workplace has been recognised with laws such as the POSH Act enacted to address it, harassment faced by trans individuals remains a rarely discussed but equally prominent problem. Although NGOs and CBOs are conducting awareness and sensitization campaigns in several companies, they could be further strengthened by extending the provisions of the POSH Act to include transpersons. The State of Manipur, in its Action Taken Report submitted to the National Human Rights Commission, has included grievance redress mechanisms for transpersons under the Internal Complaints Committees established under the POSH Act across all departments and district administrations. This can serve as a model for expanding the scope of POSH to protect transgender employees in the work environment.

HEALTH

Health remains one of the most pressing concerns for transgender individuals in India. The healthcare landscape for transgender persons remains fraught with complexities tied to mental health, physical well-being, and socio-economic vulnerabilities. Gender affirmative healthcare encompasses physical health and mental health and is more complicated than it appears, and is interconnected with other socio-economic issues. From childhood, transgender persons often face gender dysphoria, social rejection and bullying, which take a severe toll on their mental health. These challenges are further aggravated by social stigma and the absence of adequate counselling and psychiatric care, leaving transgender individuals to cope without necessary support systems. These early experiences disrupt education, hinder skill development, and limit access to employment opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion and mental health challenges. The absence of mental health programmes in schools, coupled with poor access to professional counselling, leaves transgender persons vulnerable to depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. When it comes to physical health, medical health professionals are more curious about the person's appearance and gender non-conformity than addressing the physical ailment. Questions surrounding binary expectations of gender are bombarded on the person seeking treatment, no matter the intensity of the ailment. Many queer, trans, gender non-conforming individuals stop seeking medical treatment or going to the doctor in order to avoid uncomfortable questions, misgendering, snide remarks and judgements. This leaves queer, trans people's physical and mental health very much neglected.

The holistic understanding of transgender healthcare needs must integrate mental and physical health while addressing systemic inequalities through any initiative aiming at rehabilitation of transgender persons.

The **objective of the Composite Medical Health Scheme under SMILE** is to provide health insurance coverage to all transgender persons living in India to improve their health condition through proper treatment including sex re-assignment surgeries as well as medical support. The scheme would cover all transgender persons not receiving such benefits from other centre/state sponsored schemes.

Transgender persons will be selected as per the criteria indicated below:

- ❑ The beneficiary should be a transgender person as notified by Government of India holding a transgender certificate and identity card issued by the national portal for transgender persons.
- ❑ The beneficiary should not be availing similar benefits from any other schemes of the central or state government.

Ayushman Bharat TG Plus

The Ayushman Bharat TG Plus scheme is a step by the central government in addressing the healthcare needs of transgender persons. It aims to ensure financial protection and inclusive healthcare access for transgender persons. Key features of the scheme include:

Insurance Coverage: Each transgender person is entitled to Rs. 5 lakh annual health insurance under this scheme.

Comprehensive Care: The scheme covers all aspects of transition related healthcare for transgender persons. It also (not exhaustive of) provides coverage for hormone therapy, gender affirmative therapy, and is inclusive of post operation formalities which can be redeemed at all private and government healthcare facilities empanelled with the scheme.

Access to Hospitals: Benefits can be availed at empanelled private and government healthcare facilities.

While this initiative holds promise, its implementation faces delays as the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare works on finalising the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as per the information submitted to the NHRC by the concerned ministry. In West Bengal, issuance of Ayushman Bharat card has begun, but one of the required documents for the application is Aadhar card with changed gender. Having a TG ID card is not enough, the person's Aadhar card also needs to have their gender changed to transgender. A sufficient number of hospitals must be empanelled and made thoroughly aware to deliver sensitive and quality gender-affirmative care through the Ayushman Bharat scheme. Awareness campaigns among transgender persons are also needed to inform them of their entitlements under the scheme. In Tamil Nadu 170 hospitals are covered under Ayushmaan Bharat. In Kerala, for application of the Ayushman Bharat card, the criteria includes that applicants should be on the below poverty line list. Transgender persons are also included in a scheme called Transgender Plus, which earlier was only available for trans people who are below the poverty line, but now the government is trying to make it available for everyone. Kerala state government does not have any separate health insurance for trans people.

In August 2022, the central government had announced that **Ayushmaan Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)** would also cover transgender individuals and offer them additional access to gender-affirming procedures such as sex reassignment surgery/gender-affirmative therapy and hormone therapy. AB-PMJAY has two main arms - free primary care through Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (previously known as Health and Wellness Centres), and an annual health insurance cover of up to Rs 5 lakh per family for hospitalisations. This insurance is valid at over 31,800 empanelled hospitals across the country, of which 45% are private. The scheme claims to cover around 620 million people from 147 million families, mostly those identified as vulnerable under the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECS), 2011, or by states and Union territories, and senior citizens above 70 years. Of these, the programme has verified Ayushman cards of 405.7 million people, or about 65% of the target.

A 2018 study by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) found that 57% of 900 transgender respondents in Uttar Pradesh and Delhi wanted sex reassignment surgery (SRS) but

could not afford it. The cost of SRS in private hospitals reportedly ranges from Rs 2 to Rs 8 lakh depending on the procedure. This does not include pre and post-operative care. In August 2024, Health Minister J.P. Nadda told Parliament that 3029 transgender individuals had been included under AB-PMJAY through the Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons scheme. Meanwhile, the AB-PMJAY dashboard shows over 446,000 Ayushman Bharat cards issued to individuals marked as 'Other' gender, and it is unclear whether all of them are from the transgender community.

As of February 5, 2024, 794 hospital admissions for transgender beneficiaries had been approved under the scheme, with claims worth Rs 1.21 crore, translating to an average of Rs 15,000 per admission. In November 2024, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Prataprao Jadhav stated to the parliament that *“any individual including transgender persons eligible as per the criteria defined under SECC 2011 (socio-economic caste census) or those prescribed by State/UTs for non-SECC beneficiaries is entitled to free healthcare services”* under AB-PMJAY. This appears to contradict earlier claims that all transgender persons with a valid TG ID, and not receiving similar benefits under other schemes, were eligible for coverage.

Ration card requirement: In the states we visited, community members told us that beneficiary identification under SECC for Ayushman Bharat is done at the family level, not at the individual level. However, most trans people do not live with their families, which intensifies the challenges for them to acquire and show documents required to avail such schemes.

Tamil Nadu

From 2009, the state government of Tamil Nadu has started free SRS for transwomen in 4 government hospitals. The scheme that is most accessed there is the **CMCHIS**, that is the **Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme**. Since 2022, this scheme has included gender-affirming surgery and hormone therapy under a five-year policy with United India Insurance Company. According to the residents of Thozi, a transwoman shelter home in Chennai, initially it only covered the bottom surgery for trans women, but now it covers top and bottom

surgery for all transpersons wanting surgery, although, not phalloplasty. The residents told us that this is the first scheme that many transpeople access once they get the TG card. And mostly, people are getting the transgender card just for this insurance. The National Health Mission (TN) started Gender Guidance Clinics in 2018 to provide multidisciplinary care, currently 8 districts have such clinics operating. Tamil Nadu has removed the Rs.72,000 annual income cap and waived the need for a ration card in the transgender person's name to enrol in CMCHIS, addressing non-income barriers such as stigma and rejection from the family. As of October 2025, over 5200 transgender persons are enrolled in the scheme.

There are 12 public and private hospitals in Tamil Nadu which are empanelled with this scheme. Mostly visible hospitals are the ones in Chennai and one in Madurai. One of the staff members at Saathii, Chennai told us, *“Overall the attitude of doctors is very know-it-all and patriarchal. They have done things and they continue to do things to transmen. They do 2-finger tests to see if they are trans enough because in their line of thinking if you are being exposed to sex with a penis then you are not really a transman. The 2-finger test is still done for transmen. In a government hospital in Chennai, the endocrinologist stopped doing it after being sensitized by SAATHII”*. Comprehensive health needs for transgender persons extends beyond gender-affirming procedures to primary, preventive mental health, chronic disease and sexual health care across the life course. Even if schemes come to place, physical and mental health professionals need to be adequately and frequently sensitized about transgender identities and lives. Accessibility to a scheme will remain a hurdle as long as individuals do not feel safe and valued inside the health spaces and if their dignity is threatened by medical professionals.

Telangana

The Aarogyashri department has received instructions from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for free surgeries. Everything is linked to the ration card, but trans people have difficulties getting a ration card. An activist and member of the Transgender Persons Welfare Board in Hyderabad told us, *“Transgender persons in the eyes of the government are*

transwomen, who are all hijras and they are given the extra ration cards that are allocated for single women". The activists are urging the government to make Aadhar card the base for availing these schemes and syncing it with the trans ID card, not the ration card. No transgender person has acquired the Ayushman Bharat card till now.

The state government of Telangana has introduced 33 Maitri clinics for the transgender community in every 33 districts of the state. It is open for one day in a week (Wednesday) when doctors come and people from trans communities can go and do their checkups. Osmania hospital has a transgender persons' wellness clinic that is open in the mornings on Wednesdays. One staff member at a queer organisation told us that although every district in Telangana has a TG clinic, none of the doctors are from the transgender community, making the experience very discriminatory. When we visited the transgender clinic at Osmania hospital on a Wednesday, we found 2-3 transpersons who were already undergoing hormone therapy at the hospital, at the clinic. They had come for consultations. The clinic consisted of a team of medical professionals and a staff member who was a transperson herself, acting as medium between the transgender community and the doctors.

Kerala

The state government of Kerala has had a policy for transgender and intersex persons since 2014. An activist and staff member from one of the oldest queer organisations informed us that a transman gets Rs. 500,000, and a transwoman gets Rs. 300,000, and there is refund for surgery. The government asks for the PAN card, Aadhaar card, banking details, TG card, surgery bills and the doctor's certificates. There are forms that one has to fill which are available in the Sunitee portal which is the state government's portal for availing schemes. An aftercare amount is also given, for protein and other nutritional support. Post surgery, the scheme gives Rs. 3,000 per month for one year. The first instalment comes after six months, and the second instalment again after six months, in two bulk amounts.

GID certificates are given by private psychiatrists. After 6-8 months of hormone treatment, people are going for surgery. According to most of our research participants in Kerala, doctors are not following the WPATH (World Professional regulations for Transgender Health) regulations. They are doing surgery after six or eight months, when according to the regulations, one can start surgery processes after one year of starting hormones. They said that only one professional plastic surgeon, who is very popular in South India is following the regulations.

An intersex activist from Ernakulam told us that many transgender persons' deaths (through suicides) happen in Kerala because of doctors not following proper guidelines and misinformation and rush within the community. The doctors do not participate in WPATH related conferences. He said, *"They don't even know what is transgender health. They are not aware of it, so they are practicing unethical things on transgender persons, on transgender bodies"*. All transgender persons are also not fully aware of what the surgery entails. The intersex activists mentioned, *"They say, because their friends did it, they should also do it. They say, 'The day I die, my body will not be like this'. That is why they do it. But they do not know about the aftereffects and health issues"*.

Only Kottayam Government Hospital has a department for transgender persons, however, it is not open daily—only on the second Saturday of each month. A transman from Thrissur told us, *"I went there once but had a bad experience. They made us do a full body checkup. The way they interacted with the community members who had visited was horrid, not even humane. We are treated like a third-class citizen or something like that. There was only one single doctor and she had her other non-trans patients also. She met us after seeing her other patients. People come from all over Kerala because it is the only government hospital with a transgender department. After that we started going to a private hospital for hormone treatment"*.

Private hospitals are doing the surgery for the money. There is no other option for those living in Kerala. There are options of private hospitals in Bangalore, Coimbatore and other states, but they are choosing the Kottayam Government hospital because it is closer to home. However, everyone trusts and feels secure in private hospitals because the facilities in government hospitals are very few and staff treatment is very insensitive.

National Health Mission: The National Health Mission has appointed 5 transgender linked workers for community dealings with the government hospitals and systems. They have trainings and classes on hormone therapy. From each district, 5 persons are appointed for this work. It is currently established in Kozhikode, Thrissur, Trivandrum, Ernakulam, Malappuram and Kottayam. Their duty is to facilitate the linking of the transgender community with government medical systems. Whenever any transgender person goes to the hospital, the linked workers assist them in navigating the hospital space. They help during the doctor's consultation, in explaining medicines and medical tests. This is a part-time job and the linked workers are paid Rs.5000/- per month.

The Transgender Clinic in Ernakulam is open every day but it is only on Fridays that the doctor visits. Activists are demanding for a queer clinic, not just a transgender persons' clinic. Transgender people have had some sort of legal recognition, but lesbians or gay persons do not have any government support, which makes health concerns all the more non-recognized and non-addressed within the medical fraternity. One activist from Ernakulam said that the government recognition of trans persons has led to a kind of affirmed perception that all queer trans people are trans. Other marginalized gender and sexual identities are getting more and more invisibilized.

Intersex foetuses continue to get aborted. An intersex activist from Ernakulam who is a former member of the Kerala Justice Board, said, *"when in the time of pregnancy, the doctor finds that this child has difference in sex development, the doctors call it a disability. For disabled foetuses, they can do this 'correction', so abortion continues. Even if newborns are being born as intersex, they are being made to undergo these correction surgeries, which is unwanted, which is irreversible. Once it is done, we cannot do anything. I have intersex friends who were forced to have surgeries in their childhood, but who are suffering now because of that surgery"*.

He narrated two instances:

"One of my friends was born as an intersex person. Their parents had two female children already and said they wanted a boy child. So the doctors stitched it together and made them a boy. Then

later, at the age of 16, 17, hair was growing inside the genital part, along with them having frequent urine infection and kidney stone issues. Several correction surgeries were done after that. Later they said they are done with all these surgeries. 'I wish I could have been a female rather than being a male. It is very traumatic for me. My gender identity is very much confused'. Another of my friends was forced to remove his uterus. He was born as an intersex person. He was raised as a boy child. At the age of puberty, he started menstruating. And when he was menstruating, it was a huge issue for his family. They took him to the hospital and they just removed the uterus without his consent".

The Kerala government has given 5 crore rupees for transgender welfare in the last financial year, of which almost 2.5 crore rupees was spent for surgery refund. One activist from Thrissur said that this is an unrealistic amount that the government claims to have spent for transgender persons' hormone therapies. Another respondent from Ernakulam also agreed to this and talked about a possible nexus between a particular private hospital and the state government. Transpersons are refunded the money after their surgeries, so several trans persons continue to be forced to do work that involves harassment and violence. Trans women are doing sex work to make money to have the surgery and many trans men are becoming drug peddlers. If the surgeries are done from hospitals outside Kerala, they are not refunded.

West Bengal

The Swasthya Saathi card launched by the state government that can be used by residents of West Bengal for free medical treatment at state government hospitals has not included gender affirmative therapy so it cannot be used by trans people for their hormone therapies. Those who have applied and managed to receive the Ayushman card are going to Delhi or other states for their surgery. One transwoman activist from South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal said that the price of all medicines, including hormone medicines have increased so much, but nobody talks about it. She said, *"Medicines are emergencies so people just buy it. Only those who have a good income can take hormones. Transpeople do not want to go to government hospitals because*

the experience is so bad there. Those who can afford private doctors, visit them, others stop visiting doctors”.

In West Bengal too like in Kerala, private doctors are doing surgeries without a proper GD certificate. Here too, the activist said, *“Transpeople just know they will become a man or a woman, but when the desired result does not come, they start complaining. Proper awareness is not extended to them by the psychiatrists and other doctors who are part of the Hormone Replacement Therapy process”.* West Bengal state government has no support for transgender persons currently. There is no financial support for gender affirmative therapy and there is no effort from the state government to sensitize health spaces and medical professionals. In fact, as a staff member from the One Stop Centre at Berhampore informed that the ART centres register transwomen as ‘male’ because NACO guidelines do not have the ‘transgender’ option. They only follow the gender identity mentioned in the Aadhar card.

There is no separate washroom for transpersons in any government hospital, neither is there any separate clinic or ward for transpersons, making the experience of undergoing treatment or staying in the hospital extremely harassing and unsafe for transwomen, transmen and gender non-conforming persons. Doctors too are not completely aware of gender affirmative surgeries and cannot provide proper counselling to individuals. It is still in a very experimental stage, especially for critical surgeries like phalloplasty. The lack of reliable affirmative surgeries in West Bengal makes it necessary for transpersons who want the binary card to go to other states for the surgeries, where unfamiliarity with the local language and surroundings make it doubly difficult and distressing.

Self-determination of gender identity is not accepted at ART centres or even at Swasthya Bhavan (the Department of Health and Family Welfare of the Govt of West Bengal). The government staff asks for documents at every step. Not everyone has documents, and self-determination does not yield any cooperation from government staff. Sometimes health camps are organised, but transpersons do not want to go these camps because trust towards government staff is lacking significantly. Swasthya Bhavan also does not make any effort to reach out to transpersons through social media or public advertisements. They only communicate with some NGOs to bring

transpersons, making the entire programme appear very tokenistic. The language that the government officials use is also trans insensitive. The representative at DSW Coochbehar who handles TG ID cards, gender dysphoria certificates and doctors' prescriptions, kept saying that a 'female becomes a full man after all the surgeries', relegating the trans experience to only the body and making bodily transformation as the ultimate necessity for a transperson.

Manipur

No initiative from the state health department has come yet. The option of 'transgender' has been included in the admission form in government hospitals. A separate transgender counter is open every day in one government hospital, but according to an activist from Manipur, no one goes there because no one knows about it. Earlier the Manipur State Government Health Ministry ran a Transgender clinic at Imphal with the support of USAID, Centre for Disease Control, but it closed after funding stopped in 2025. We did not receive adequate information regarding transgender persons availing the Ayushman Bharat card in Manipur, for which ration cards or marriage certificates are required documents.

Assam

According to the Assam State Transgender Policy, interventions have been identified that will be rolled out. They include, regular or customized health screening, free medical treatment and free medicine that will be made available for transgender persons in government health facilities. Surgeries and treatments in the areas of hormone therapy and gender affirmative therapy will be made available to transpersons in select hospitals and financial assistance, subject to an upper ceiling. Psychological counselling will be provided to transpersons in order to build their confidence and to help them with depression. Special efforts will be made for HIV/AIDS prevention and care for transpeople through the health department. All transpersons will be extended benefits under Central and State government health insurance schemes.

Guwahati Medical Hospital provides free counselling, HRT and medication to transpeople. Free surgeries will also start soon. According to a transwoman activist, *“NGOs are promoting surgeries as the only ultimate goal for transpeople. The free facilities are also in a way perpetuating the binary”*. Rituparna Neog, who is Associate Vice Chairpersons of the Assam Transgender Welfare Board and a representative for Northeast India on the National Council of Transgender Persons, has said that the government did not make any corresponding budgetary allocation when they announced the extension of Ayushman Bharat for transpeople. Schemes can exist on paper, but implementation cannot happen without funds.

Karnataka

The Karnataka State Transgender Policy that was drafted in 2017 mentions that transgender persons should be included in the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana and all other health insurance schemes of the state. Self-help groups of transgender persons can avail the benefits under Yeshaswini scheme also. Health insurance cards should be issued to transpeople. Government will provide financial assistance for gender affirmative therapy in selected government hospitals. Directives will be issued by the Health and Family Welfare Department to all hospitals to provide healthcare facilities to transpersons without any discrimination, so that they can access all hospitals without any hesitation. Proper counselling to transgender persons will be given about options available in relation to gender transition and proper post-operative follow-up counselling and support. All public hospitals will have policies and will include registration and admission of transgender persons, training and sensitization of healthcare providers about transgender persons and their health issues. Separate HIV and Sero-surveillance centres will be operated. The NGO Raahi had managed to organise a meeting with the State Health and Family Welfare Department after they had identified government hospitals and a list of medical benefits and requirements, but nothing has progressed after that. Raahi has also submitted a memorandum to the department based on NHRC guidelines to talk about transgender health.

Victoria Hospital started to provide transition surgery in Karnataka during the mid to late 2000s. Many elder transpeople have done their gender affirmative surgeries from this hospital. It had a separate ward for transgender persons. The TG policy has been drafted but not yet sanctioned. Activists say that it will be implemented after the survey of transgender persons in the state.

SHELTER AND HOUSING

Garima Greh:

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the Garima Greh initiative as a pilot programme to provide safe housing and comprehensive support for homeless adult transgender persons - those who have escaped from violent natal family homes or have been evicted. Section 8(4) of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act mandates that the appropriate government shall take appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights of transgender persons to participate in cultural and recreational activities. Furthermore, Section 12(3) mentions that where any parent or a member of the immediate family is unable to take care of a transgender family member, the competent court shall by an order direct such a person to be placed in a rehabilitation centre. The government should take into account the fact that for years, the queer community and the chosen family have been primary caregivers for many transpersons evicted from their natal family homes. While planning welfare measure, the role of the queer-trans community and the chosen family must be considered and included. Section 10(9) of the

Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules, 2020 mandates the appropriate government to create institutional and infrastructure facilities, including but not limited to temporary shelters, short-stay homes and accommodation, choice of female and male or separate wards in hospitals and washrooms in the establishment within two years from the date of coming into force of these rules to protect the rights of transgender persons.

In line with these provisions, the MoSJE initiated a pilot project to rehabilitate homeless transgender persons in collaboration with CBOs and NGOs working in this area. The initiative seeks to offer temporary rehabilitation – safe shelter, essential amenities, healthcare, counselling, skill development and livelihood opportunities – for up to one year. As the SMILE scheme (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise) was launched as an umbrella scheme in 2022, it had a sub-scheme named ‘Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation for Welfare of Transgender Persons’. The Garima Greh initiative was merged under this umbrella scheme. It exited from pilot mode and was made to run on a regular basis. When the Garima Greh project was announced in November 2020, a budget of Rs 36 lakh was allocated for each shelter home for the initial year, including a one-time setup cost of Rs 5 lakh and a recurring budget for running the space as Rs 31 lakh. The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) had selected 12 CBOs to operate these homes across 9 states during the pilot phase. Initially, 40% of the grant was disbursed, followed by another 40% after six months of operation, with the remaining 20% released at the end of the year. Following the programme's success, it was integrated into the SMILE scheme in 2021. As of April 1, 2025, Rs. 6.8 crore has been released and utilized by the Garima Grehs.

The government aims to set up at least one Garima Greh in each state. As per the current funding assistance, finances need to be released to the NGOs or CBOs running the Garima Greh in two instalments of 50% each. Before releasing the money, a list of documents that include quarterly/annual report, details of residents, utilisation certificates, photos, feedback of residents and inspection report may require to be verified. For skill development training agencies, funds are disbursed in a 30:40:30 ratio as defined under the PM-DAKSH scheme – 30% at the start of the training, 40% upon successful certification and 30% after placement

verification. The MSJE initiated 12 Garima Greh homes on a pilot basis in states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha in 2021. In August 2025, 18 Garima Grehs are supported by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment (DoSJE) in 15 States and Union Territories (UTs) across the country. The approval for the new Garima Greh has come for Jharkhand, Manipur and Madhya Pradesh. Proposals for setting up new Garima Grehs are being received from NGOs and civil society organisations. Garima Grehs are executed by the Project Management Committee (PMC) headed by the District Magistrate or equivalent. According to guidelines, PMCs are supposed to meet quarterly. In the case of West Bengal, it was found that the PMC was yet to be constituted for both the shelter spaces that were operating in Kolkata. Other states too have had infrequent and delayed meetings. However, even though the project director is responsible for organising PMC meetings, approval from the above is often delayed, making implementation difficult.

Although the project started with a lot of hope, the initiative has faced funding delays, operational challenges and systemic gaps, threatening the sustainability of these shelter spaces. There have been significant delays in fund disbursements from the government, resulting in huge pressure on the NGOs, staff working with no salaries and in two cases, shutting down of the shelter space. The current reimbursement-based funding model puts considerable burden on organisations forcing them to self-finance operations while awaiting reimbursement. This challenge is particularly difficult to undertake for smaller CBOs that lack corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds, foreign contributions or goodwill donations. The annual allocation of Rs.9 lakh per shelter to cover food expenses for the 25 residents also translates to only Rs.100 per person per day, raising concerns about its inadequacy. Shelter staff also expressed that this amount is insufficient to meet the residents' basic dietary needs, given rising food prices and regional cost variations. There is also no separate budgetary allocation for essential recurring expenses such as medical care, clothing or community events.

The prescribed rent of Rs.40,000 per month for housing the Garima Greh in a quiet, safe place also contradicts ground realities of social stigma and financial constraints. The low acceptance of transgender persons makes it difficult for NGOs to find properties in welcoming residential areas.

The prescribed rent amount is also inadequate especially in metropolitan areas where rental costs are significantly higher. There is extreme mismatch between remuneration of the staff and required qualifications too. While CBOs try to employ transgender individuals, the stringent qualification criteria often make it difficult to fill key roles, leading to vacancies or deviations from the guidelines. Delays in fund disbursement result in salary payment issues, leading to high staff attrition, loss of experienced personnel, increased recruitment costs and operational disruptions. Loss of essential documents due to this mismanagement has also complicated compliance with government regulations. Certain staff roles are tasked with multiple responsibilities, including skill-building, legal aid coordination and institutional partnerships. These become unrealistic and also a potential human rights violation.

Uttar Pradesh

An activist from Uttar Pradesh said that The National Council of Transgender Persons did not consult anyone while designing the concept of Garima Greh. The work was given to those organisations and individuals who are close to the members of the Council. While speaking to the staff at the Garima Greh at Gorakhpur that started in January 2025, we came to know that the shelter home is being financially managed by the NGO that runs it. Government funding has not reached their accounts yet. Daily functioning includes salaries of the office staff, everyday grocery supplies for the residents, electricity bill, rent and every other expense required to run such an establishment. The staff is worried that their own funds will get depleted over time and it is uncertain how they will run the shelter space after that.

The current residents have come from different parts of the state. One among them used to stay in a boys' hostel, but she identifies as a transwoman and was heavily bullied by the hostel residents. Another transwoman resident used to stay in an NGO-run shelter home, but the director of the NGO did not know which ward to keep her in for the long run. They contacted the Child Welfare Committee, who connected her to Garima Greh at Gorakhpur. One transwoman resident was initially planning to do a make-up course but has now shown interest in pursuing a

law degree. Arrangements and applications are in the process. Another resident wants to complete her school education and the staff at Garima Greh are trying to enrol her in the open school. Currently there are five residents at the shelter space, of who two have gone home for a few days to celebrate Eid. The staff and the residents have assembled a space of worship inside the shelter which holds place for multiple religious expressions.

Tamil Nadu

Garima Greh started on June 18th, 2021. The NGO Trans Rights Association (TRA) is running Garima Greh, but has not been getting money from the government yet. One staff member said, *“We are taking bank loans. We received government funds till 2022, but did not receive any since 2023-2024. 92 residents have lived here. At present there are 15 residents. All of them take different skill-development courses. Some of them also finish their education. More than 35 members have been hired for different jobs while many are self-employed. 20-25 individuals are reunited with their families. We used to have weekly family counselling”*. Residents need to show the TG ID card during admission at Garima Greh. The staff claims to have facilitated the formulation of more than 10 self-help groups of transgender persons comprising 5-7 members each. A transwoman resident after her SRS was able to complete her PhD during her stay there. TRA has continued to provide skill development programmes, including computer classes, tailoring, beautician training and driving lessons. It has established connections with colleges and NGOs for skill training and placements. A recent job fair with Amazon and Flipkart led to 4 transgender persons securing employment. The Association requires immediate financial support from the ministry as sustaining operations through personal investments or donations will soon become impossible.

The other shelter home for transwomen is Thozi, run by the NGO Sahodaran. There is no shelter home for transmen. The residents of Thozi mentioned during the FGD, *“We had a meeting with the city health officer but he was not interested in initiating a shelter home for a small transman community. Later he told us they will try. There is nothing for non-binary transpeople, but only for*

those who are always in female attire. There are no counsellors. There is no government support for addressing the trauma of leaving the natal family home. It makes us more vulnerable as a community. Sometimes someone may commit suicide, and who will be responsible for that?"

Telangana

The state does not have any Garima Greh. The only one shelter home is a private entity, not a government owned one. It is run by an NGO in Hyderabad named QT Centre. It currently hosts 7 residents from different parts of the country. Most of them had come to Hyderabad for livelihood and employment. They had been initially staying at rented accommodations, but one day without any notice they were asked to pack up and leave from their rented apartments. The landlord did not cite any specific reason, but the residents suspect that it is because of their transgender and gender non-conforming identities. All of them identify as transwomen. Other residents living at the shelter home at the time of our visit have come from other parts of the country. Some identified as lesbian, while a couple of residents were gay persons. The shelter home shares the same space with the NGO office. It has dormitories, a washroom, a room with a TV and some books to read. The NGO has a shelter manager, a cook, and a cleaning person.

The lack of Garima Greh, according to an activist is also the reason why within the state of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, people are not aware of these government schemes which are introduced. The participants at an FGD at one of the queer organisations in Hyderabad told us that companies should provide accommodation for queer and transpersons in a new city because finding a safe shelter in a new city is quite impossible. Local people also think that all transwomen are either sex workers or beggars and refuse to give accommodation.

Under the Telangana government's **Indiramma Housing Scheme**, transgender persons are explicitly listed as a priority group for housing assistance. Asserting that the state government is committed to encouraging transpersons in all sectors, Women and Child Welfare Minister Danasari Anasuya has said it is contemplating appointing eligible persons from the community in all government departments. During a review meeting on the issues of transpersons in May 2025,

the minister also announced that the transpersons would be allotted Indiramma houses under the disability quota. Why transpersons need to be allotted houses under the disability quota remains a question of concern.

Kerala

The government owned transman shelter home NEST was started in February 2024. They have 8 people living there, along with a manager, and a caretaker. The residents have 6 months of permitted accommodation, but if they need to stay longer then they can write to the govt, asking for an extension. A resident informed us, *“Someone comes from the government once or twice a month to the shelter home for inspection. They check our surroundings to see if it is clean or not. They ask if we have any complaints, whether we are fine, or if we have any issues. They also talk to each of us individually. There is one psychologist, who is a transman. A social worker and a physical therapist come, they are cis men, not from our community. For cooking and cleaning, there are two ladies. They know we are transmen, and they never discriminate or misgender”*. Government provides skill training for mobile technicians, tailoring and spoken English too.

Regarding any communication that the residents want to send across to the government, the manager of the shelter home informs the NGO, and the director of the NGO then informs the government officials. The communication happens through these channels. If there is any special government funding for any resident, it is given to the NGO, and the NGO provides it to the resident. The name of the NGO that runs NEST is Navodaya Movement. Transgender people under 18 years and above 60 years should be housed in special shelter homes, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) recommended in a report on the Garima Greh.

The state of Kerala has launched a new, dedicated housing scheme for transgender individuals to address the issues of social exclusion and lack of safe, affordable housing. The initiative, which was set to be formally introduced in August 2025 by the Social Justice Department, offers several options for transgender people to secure housing. Some details of the scheme are given below.

The initiative provides financial aid through the following three options:

- ❑ **Interest-free loan:** Transgender individuals who do not own land or a house are eligible for a ₹15 lakh interest-free loan. The government will cover the interest, while the beneficiaries will repay only the principal amount in monthly installments.
- ❑ **Assistance for construction:** For transgender persons who already possess land, the scheme offers ₹6 lakh for the construction of a house. This amount is disbursed in three installments at different stages of construction.
- ❑ **Support for land and construction:** The program also aids transgender persons who have been allotted land through sponsorship from various agencies, providing them with financial assistance for construction.

Manipur

There are two transgender children's shelter homes running for last 2-3 years, one for TG boys, one for TG girls. It is situated in Imphal West and is run by the District Social Welfare Department. The activists who we spoke to did not know anyone who has lived in those shelter homes. There is no Garima Greh in the state yet, but the government is receiving proposals from NGOs to start one.

Karnataka

The state does not have a Garima Greh yet, and neither does it have a state government run shelter space. The NGO Raahi has a shelter space of its own which was inaugurated in June 2024. It currently hosts one resident, who is originally from Maharashtra. We visited the space and found it to be cheerful, spacious and inviting. It has a cook, a person who comes and cleans, a counsellor and a shelter manager who looks after the day-to-day arrangements. The shelter space which is a two-storied building, has a living room with a TV, separate rooms with single

beds, washrooms, a kitchen, a dining area, a library room, an open terrace, and is located in a friendly, green neighbourhood in Bangalore, close to Raahi's office. The NGO has been running the place for less than a year and are in the process of drawing rules and regulations, looking up practices from other shelter homes in other states.

West Bengal

Two Garima Grehs started their operations in Kolkata, managed by two NGOs – one is Gokhale Road Bandhan and the second being Kolkata Rista. Both NGOs have worked in Kolkata for many years and are led by trans activists who have contributed to the sexuality rights movement in West Bengal in crucial ways for decades. The shelter home at Gokhale Road Bandhan is situated inside the premises of the organisation which is owned by the trans activist. During the time when the Garima Greh was in operation, there were news of mistreatment of the residents, lack of follow ups on skill-development programmes, but these could not be verified as in both cases, management did not give time for interviews. According to an NHRC report, 2025, overburdened staff and non-functional Project Monitoring Committees (PMCs) had weakened the management. It was observed that in WB, the PMC was yet to be constituted for both shelters in the state. The NHRC has recommended that the PMC may be constituted at the earliest and the Government of West Bengal should definitely look into it.

Sappho for Equality started its own shelter space during the covid pandemic, as a response to the number of emergency calls that were coming on the organisation's helpline number. Most of those who were calling had faced natal family violence, in the form of physical violence, confinement, forced marriage, extreme surveillance on movements, clothing, phone conversations. Many of them had lost their jobs or had been evicted by the landlord in their rented apartments and were forced to go back to their violent natal families. A crisis intervention team was formed on behalf of the organisation, comprising of volunteers from the collective. Individuals from the community called for help from railway stations, police stations, friends' homes. Some of them had been living on pavements too, not knowing where to go, all during the

raging pandemic. Sappho for Equality started a temporary shelter home in 2021, in one their collective member's empty apartment as a desperate measure, because of the dearth of safe shelter homes for LGBTQIA+ community persons. Gradually over the next few years, the organisation now has a running shelter space, with a capacity to keep up to 8 residents. There is a cook, a shelter manager, a counsellor, and staff members of the organisation, who look after the day-to-day management of the shelter and the well-being of the residents. Although the neighbourhood is safe, other residents in the building frequently create trouble raising some issue or the other. The residents get an opportunity to be in a safe place, while looking for employment, continue their education, and mingle with other community persons. One can stay in the temporary residence for up to a year, unless there is need to extend the stay.

Assam

One Garima Greh is operational in Kamrup (M) district of Assam. According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Rs. 5 lakhs have been released to the NGO for setting up the Garima Greh in 2024, and till March 2025, 25 transpersons have resided in it.

A new state-funded shelter was announced in 2025. Transgender shelters will gradually be built at certain locations where homeless transgender persons are able to live with dignity. These will be run by NGOs. According to a transwoman activist from Assam, who herself was unaware of a Garima Greh in her state, public promotional campaigns on behalf of the government regarding the existence of a shelter space for transpersons is nil. Those in the state do not know that they have a shelter space run by the government to go to if they face violence in the natal family home or by the landlord. She asks, "*Why does the government in their promotional campaigns not include us?*" She mentioned a shelter space for transpersons named Tritya Niwas which was started by an NGO, but we could not find any more information on it.

Structural problems in the scheme: To reside in a Garima Greh, individuals are required to obtain an Aadhaar card and a transgender certificate if they do not already possess these documents. Listed below are some structural problems, also pointed out by NHRC:

- **Administration and Management:** Overburdened staff, non-functional Project Monitoring Committees (PMCs), lack of police sensitivity, impractical reporting requirements.
- **Funding and Infrastructure:** Irregular fund disbursement, inadequate food and living allowance, limited govt supported premises, eviction threats, poor living conditions (including lack of privacy).
- **Staffing:** Low salaries, delayed payments.
- **Documentation and identity proof:** Transgender persons often lack essential IDs especially while leaving the natal family home, face cross-state procedural barriers, fear inheritance loss upon changing legal identity.
- **Healthcare and Well-being:** Mental health needs, HIV/AIDS prevention, gender affirmative care remain poorly addressed. Medical expenses are excluded.
- **Skill development and employment:** One year stay is insufficient for meaningful rehabilitation. Residents face unfair employment standards, workplace exclusion without adequate institutional support.
- **Exclusion of children and elderly:** Current policy does not cater to gender non-conforming children or elderly transgender persons, leaving both age groups vulnerable.
- **Language barriers:** NGOs from non-hindi speaking areas find the entire application process more difficult as all the communication with central government staff is required to be done in hindi. An activist from Arunachal Pradesh told us that they did not even understand what Garima Greh meant.

Due to inadequate funding and institutional support, shelter residents develop independent strategies to address health-related challenges. Some shelters collaborate with other organisations to provide counselling services to ensure mental health support. Shelters located on the outskirts of cities face challenges during medical emergencies particularly at night when public transport is scarce. When it comes to education, Garima Greh guidelines require the programme manager to assess the skills and capabilities of residents and introduce appropriate education, vocational training, recreational activities and bridge education programmes. The bridge course coordinator is responsible for assessing residents' interests and providing life skills training. Additionally, the coordinator is required to make regular visits to schools and vocational training institutes, keeping concerned officials informed about the specific needs of residents. Government has limited its role to financial assistance with excessive responsibilities placed on the shelter staff. The community requires sustained government support, including guidance and capacity building to ensure equal opportunities.

The budget for skill development of the residents does not include course fees or travel costs to reach a distant training institute, which significantly limits the accessibility and effectiveness of skill development initiatives. Also, the maximum duration of stay, currently set at one year, may not be sufficient to instil confidence and equip individuals with the necessary skills, especially for those who have faced prolonged discrimination throughout their lives. The shelter spaces lack a conducive learning environment because of inadequate space and infrastructure for studying. There is lack of sufficient privacy as well with no partitions or curtains.

Employment guidelines and policies need to be revised to address the unique needs and circumstances of transgender persons ensuring inclusivity and fairness. The government should conduct awareness programmes for skill-development trainings, vocational training courses, and encourage transpersons to register on the National Career Service portal. Hostels for working transgender persons should be established, similar to ciswomen's working hostels, to provide safe and supportive living environments. The POSH Act should be amended to address complaints concerning harassment against transpersons. The establishment of transgender-led business may be encouraged by providing entrepreneurial support through accommodative policies and

concessional loans. The visibility and awareness of transpersons in employment opportunities, cultural centres, business hubs should be focused upon.

Transgender Persons' ID card

Before the promulgation of Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, the process of changing gender marker in identity documents varied across states. Since the Union government released the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Rules in 2020, a uniform centrally regulated process of gender reclassification in identity documents was brought into existence. The Act and the subsequent Rules institutionalized the process through which individuals may secure a Certificate of Identity as transgender, or revise their legal gender after medical interventions. Any individual who does not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth is entitled to apply. Applicants are not required to undergo any form of medical or surgical intervention in order to obtain this certificate. Instead, the law uses a combination of psychiatric

knowledge, medical expertise and bureaucratic oversight to determine gender identity, allowing determinants to make a formal declaration of their chosen identity.

Applications may be filed either online through the National Portal for Transgender Persons or offline at the district level. The **District Magistrate** is the competent authority to receive and process such applications. The applicant must provide basic supporting documents such as proof of residence, photo identification, and an affidavit declaring their self-identified gender. Once submitted, the District Magistrate is required by law to issue the Certificate of Identity within thirty days of receiving a complete application. This certificate serves as legal recognition of the applicant's transgender identity. The process for securing recognition as a transgender person does not require any proof of medical intervention. However, for people who desire to change their gender from one gender marker to the binary gender marker i.e. male or female, the process requires proof of sufficient medical intervention.

For individuals who undergo gender-affirming medical interventions, the law provides for a **Revised Certificate of Identity**. In such cases, applicants must additionally submit a medical certificate issued by the superintendent or chief medical officer of the hospital where they received gender affirmative care. Upon verification, the District Magistrate may issue a revised certificate, allowing the person to change their legal gender marker accordingly. This pathway is crucial for those who wish to be legally recognized as male or female following medical transition, although the initial transgender certificate itself is not contingent upon medical procedures.

Through our study, we found that both the process to secure transgender certificates under Section 6 of the Transgender Persons Act and the process to reclassify gender into male or female under Section 7 of the Act remain ambiguous with no clear guidelines on various requirements. For instance, despite the whole process being online, our respondents reported that the bureaucrats and designated social worker from the district magistrate office often insisted on meeting them in person. In some cases, this was done by calling the applicant to the office with an explicit demand to appear before the person in charge of the application. In some cases, the bureaucrats also appeared at the applicant's residential address to verify.

Across the six states that we visited, non-governmental organisations that were involved in encouraging transgender persons to apply for the transgender card, told us that these verification visits had become a part of the process despite the NGOs and CBOs strongly resisting these measures. These verification visits to the applicant's house often turn into violent and humiliating encounters for transgender persons especially if they live in the natal family home. The bureaucrats justify these visits by stating that with migration being a predominant reality for transgender persons, the verification visits ensure that the domicile status was ascertained before issuing the transgender certificate.

Indeed, migration did pose a significant challenge to the whole process of securing gender recognition through the Act. Transgender persons migrate to different cities primarily to reduce the proximity with their non-supportive and often violent natal family and relatives, better economic opportunities, intra-community violence etc. The Transgender Persons Act 2019 enacts a strict domicile requirement where the applicant is mandated to live in a state for approximately a year to be able to apply for the identity card. The bureaucrats instead of relaxing this criterion chose to institute stricter measures to verify domicile status.

According to the website of the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, that houses the SMILE portal, since their launch in November 2020, 30,000 TG IDs have been issued as of November 2025, representing less than 5% of the transgender population as per the 2011 census. Nearly 4,774 applications are currently pending. Data for pendency of applications by duration is only available for about 2,483 applications, two-thirds of which have been pending for more than three months, despite the Transgender Persons Rules stating that such applications be processed within 30 days.

The community has cited bureaucratic delays, lack of awareness among officials, invasive verification visits, website glitches, digital illiteracy and lack of necessary documents among transpeople as challenges in applying for and obtaining the TG ID.

Digital access- No more than an estimated 10-15% transgender persons effectively use any digital device, according to a study by the Centre for Internet and Society, a not-for-profit organisation

that undertakes interdisciplinary research on internet and digital technologies. Affordability and technical knowledge are the two biggest barriers to transpersons' digital literacy, the report observed. It further noted that as a result of this barrier, the community is entirely dependent on NGOs, community-based organisations and a handful of community members to fill out their online TG ID applications. Many transpersons do not even have the financial resources to apply for the TG ID.

Gender change in Birth certificate- Currently, as per the law, there is no provision for any voluntary change in the birth certificate, not just for transgender persons, but for anybody. The only thing one can do is either cancel or correct a name, if there is a spelling error. The High Court observed that Sub-section (2) of Section 7 in the Transgender Persons Act provides for a certificate to be issued, which in turn would enable such a person to seek a change in name and gender in all identity documents. Sub-section (3) of Section 7 provides for a change in the first name in the birth certificate. The government would have to carry out necessary amendments to the Act of 1969 and rules framed there under to give effect to the Transgender Persons Act and establish necessary procedures required to be followed, to give effect to the purpose, intent and mandate of the special laws, namely the Transgender Persons Act.

Gender change in Aadhar card: In July 2022, the UIDAI included TG identity card as one of the valid supportive documents for verification and change of gender in the Aadhar card.

Gender change in Pan card: In April 2018, the application process for PAN Card included the option of selecting 'Transgender' along with the option of Male and Female. However, the problem faced by the transgender community was with respect to the proof to be submitted along with the PAN Application. A Special Leave Petition (SLP) was filed before the Supreme Court seeking reliefs for all the members of the transgender community regarding the application form for a PAN Card. The Union Government in response submitted to the Apex Court that the certificate to be issued under Section 6/7 of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 issued by the District Magistrate will be acceptable along with PAN Card Application.

Gender change in Passport: In India, transgender citizens can update their gender details on their passports using documentation from the Transgender Persons Act. As of January 2025, the MEA has formalized a process for Indian citizens who have undergone gender affirmation surgery outside India. This came after a Delhi High Court case highlighted the difficulties faced by transgender citizens trying to return home with updated identities.

Steps for citizens returning from abroad:

1. **Upon re-entry:** One can use a sworn affidavit of gender change and a certificate from the hospital where the surgery was conducted to re-enter India.
2. **Emergency Certificate:** If someone is unable to provide the required documents immediately, an Emergency Certificate can be issued with an endorsement confirming that one has undergone a gender affirmation procedure.
3. **After arriving in India:** Once in India, one can obtain the necessary documents from the relevant authorities and apply for a reissued passport with updated details.

All the issues of transgender persons have been clubbed with the women and child welfare department, which are vastly different from one another. There is an increased paranoia by the state regarding what kind of documentation and proof of documentation is needed. In the federal system of the country, state government officials are cooperating with a certain method but the central government officials are insisting on some other method. An activist and researcher from Bangalore told us, *“We have heard from the WCD department which is taking care of the TG cards now, that when they have doubts, they cannot call the helpline because the helpline only speaks in Hindi. It is more the chaos of the requirements that is being presented. Each authority is presenting a requirement for a different document, and it is still not streamlined at all, and that is essentially the struggle, so with each time you go or you send somebody after doing the documentation for them, for doing the name change and gender change, there is a new discovery saying, this time they are asking for this for that”*. In Bangalore more or less all organisations working with community members have found ways to support them, which essentially means

that they have mapped out throughout the city which are the officials that are going to be agreeable to making the changes without creating much hassle.

The Transgender Persons Act looks at 'transgender' as an umbrella term. It includes cultural identities, but the judiciary has no understanding of cultural identities. They only understand the binary of male and female and one clubbed category of transgender. For this clubbed category of transgender, the government is trying to introduce reservations. For human rights lawyers, there has also been some degree of hesitation of how much they want to use the Act which has a lot of loopholes. According to a human rights lawyer associated with a collective in Bangalore, *"10 years later when the challenge gets heard, we do not want it to be presented as a good litigation in jurisprudence that has come out of using the Act. So, I think there is still some hesitation and confusion around that question. So, it depends on an issue-by-issue basis, because we are specifically looking at the question of the prohibition of discrimination clause when it comes to the act for this particular litigation"*. They also mentioned how the Transgender Persons Act does not have penal offences. The transman is actually not being able to go to court as a transman, but he is being forced to use his dead name and also to be identified as a woman, not as a trans man.

Many applications have been rejected because of lack of address proof. Those who have migrated from other states cannot apply for the TG card from their new place of residence. The TG ID card can only be issued from the state which is registered in one's Aadhar card.

Is the TG card helping the community?

There is mental satisfaction among people who are getting the TG card, to see a legal document that acknowledges and establishes their trans identity legally. This is for those who are out of the closet. For those who have still not come out with their gender identity, having a TG card could add to the risk of their gender getting disclosed. They might want the TG card but the risk of it remains high.

There are two categories of people applying for the TG ID card. One is the category which consists of those who are not interested in any welfare scheme but only want to change all their government ID markers to the binary, where they get a national ID card as M or F and use it to change all their government documents and then not use their transgender card anymore for any schemes. Some in this category working in specific IT companies do not also have to depend on the SMILE or any other government scheme, because their company itself will pay for their employee's gender affirming process. The other category consists of people who want to apply for SMILE schemes, for which they need the TG ID card.

Uttar Pradesh

The activists are going to different gharanas to convince people to apply for the card so that they can benefit from it during old age, get pension and avail other schemes like ciswomen and men do, like housing, health and others. In Benaras, not many people are aware of the TG card and hence the count is very low of people applying and getting the card. Hijra persons are also being spoken to for getting TG cards, however, they do not care so much about the card. The hijra profession and lives around it continue the way they have for generations. Activists are trying to convince those in the hijra gharana that having the card will allow them to have access to government schemes, but since the schemes themselves have not been fully implemented yet, transpeople in the gharana are not convinced of the utility or benefit of the trans ID card. Young people can still be explained to, but gurus and other senior members of the gharanas are not showing much interest in getting a TG card. An activist from Benaras working with the hijra community for a long time said that they are organizing camps in different gharanas, spreading awareness about education scholarship, pension, Ayushman Bharat. Among those who have applied and got the TG card said that they have had to go their native villages to verify documents or receive the TG card, which often leads to harassment from the natal family and neighbours. The entire process of application, verification of documents and receiving the ID card also takes up to 8-9 months in some cases.

Manipur

Very few people are applying for TG card. Only those who know about the NGOs SAATHII or Ya All come and apply. Many find the online process very difficult because not everyone has internet and smartphones. Even those who have applied for it do not know what to do with it because most of the schemes are non-functional still. Before the conflict, Ya All did an RTI and found that most blocks showed zero TG card applications.

Earlier the TG card took less time to arrive after application, whereas now it takes much longer. The process has become more complicated, according to a transman activist. Very few people are going for TG card. People are unaware. The Manipur Legal Services Authority helps with legal support. In 2024 some activists went to the District Social Welfare office to ask for job reservations, shelter home, old age home, revision in school uniforms and free education. A lot of campaigning was done, but nothing has yielded from it yet.

Tamil Nadu

In Chennai many have not applied for the TG ID card because to avail the state schemes the government still wants the state ID, whereas for national schemes they want the national ID. To add to the confusion, the health insurance which was formally covered by the state funds, that is the chief minister's insurance scheme, is now going to be funded by a mixture of state and central funds. It is still not known what ID the government will want in this case. The National ID has the gender options of M, F and T. The State ID is in the Tamil equivalent of transgender, whereby the gender options are Thirunangai (transwoman) and Thirunambi (transman).

One needs to have a state ID card to access state schemes and a national ID card to access national schemes. The state ID card has been around since 2008 and it is specifically to avail social protection schemes. It did not come up as an identity card. It came as a card to access the social protection schemes and welfare schemes for trans people in the State level. They were announced by the state as part of its State Welfare Measures. Afterwards people started using it

as an ID card and as a proof to change the name and gender in other ID Cards as well. It became an acceptable document to change the name and gender in the Aadhaar and in the Gazette also. However, the glitches remain in the lack of awareness of the TG card among the general masses. For instance, while attempting to avail the free bus service, bus conductors are on many occasions not aware of the TG ID card, or the free scheme, leading to further harassment, especially for transmen.

Kerala

In Kerala, the state government moved to a single ID system once the TG Act came. After the Act, the state government is not issuing state ID cards. One can change the Aadhaar card with the national ID card. Earlier the State ID card had to be applied through the website and a screening process was conducted by seven psychiatrists and psychologists and two or three community members, through the District Social Justice Board. Many applicants faced issues. If someone on the Board had any grudge towards an applicant, they did not sign their transgender ID card. The District Justice Board would also sometimes suggest an inspection by the State District Social Justice Office. The staff would go to the individual's home, under the pretext of verifying the applicant's residence proof.

West Bengal

Discussions around gender dysphoria has increased after the passing of the Act. Demanding of rights and articulations around it have also developed. Staff members working at NGOs have remarked that the community is quite casual about documentation and want to depend completely on NGOs. Linking TG card with Aadhar card is tricky. In West Bengal there are two steps to the linking – first there will be name change on the Aadhar through affidavit, and second there will be gender change. Those doing affidavits for transpersons are also charging 200-250/- per affidavit, whereas around the court premises, the actual cost of getting an affidavit is

between 10-20/-. Getting a binary card is more difficult than the TG card mainly because medical intervention is not clearly detailed in the TG Act. Also, as a transman activist from West Bengal said, *“The masculinity of government officials is threatened. They ask transmen whether they have a penis, the officials do not want to give a binary male card to a transman who have still not had phalloplasty, as it questions their own manhood. After all, according to the idea of a man, what kind of a man does not have a penis?”* Bottom surgery continues to be a risk in India and there is lack of honest reviews about phalloplasty.

The process has become more digitized. Earlier a notification would come on the registered phone number, but now every applicant has to give an email ID where the OTP comes. Many applicants do not have their own email IDs or even smartphones, so activists and NGO workers are having to give their own email IDs for this step. There is limitation to how many times the same email ID can be used for different applications.

Banks are looking at the TG card as identity document. For those who have their non-identifying gender in their Aadhar card, having the TG card is a proof of their transgender identity. After the Act and Rules have come, people feel much more confident to come out publicly. This is one change that has happened with the TG card. According to a participant at an FGD, DSW Jalpaiguri had briefly stopped issuing the TG card saying first one needs to do a voter card, then only one will get the TG card. *“We had gone and complained at the DSW office. Later they said that higher officials have instructed the release of TG cards”.*

Transpeople are still very much unaware of what is the use of the TG card. NGO members tell them that one can claim their TG identity officially. When asked whether applying for the TG card is easy or not, one staff member at Jalpaiguri OSC said, *“It is easy for me because I know the steps through the SMILE portal and I have been working with several people about this for many months, including government officials. But it is not easy at all for community persons. Many of them cannot even do signatures, or use mobile phones. If I tell them about an OTP going to their email ID, they ask me what is an email ID, what is an OTP? When we sent a letter to the officials stating this problem, they said this is done to maintain privacy. Coming to the office just for this is also expensive for them”.*

The OSC has kept one day in a month to call people together and explain TG card related formalities to them. Community persons were also under an impression that the TG card will provide them monthly rations like it had happened during the pandemic. Address pin codes are also creating a big problem because pin code jurisdictions sometimes cross district borders. Some whose residence district is maybe South 24 parganas have Kolkata as the pin code. The DM officers are confused about where the TG card should be registered.

Transpersons are just being harassed a lot according to an activist from Berhampore, and they fear that one day people will not want to take so much harassment and just stop applying for the TG card, or those working in NGOs which are providing this service will have to go through the harassment. One of the FGD participants at Berhampore asked, *“Why is the TG card application not being made the same as other cards? The government did not even start TG card in WB on its own. A PIL had to be filed and then the government sat up a bit and started taking applications from January 2023. The entire application is a sophisticated elite process. It is very difficult for people from the grassroot”*.

The starting notary itself takes money and most people involved in the application and verification process are taking money. The document uploading process is online. Many people have to do it from a cyber café. Every application takes at least 30 minutes, and many cyber cafes do not want to give so much time, or takes a lot of money for creating Email ID, password, scan photos etc. For verification one needs to go to the DM office, and the formalities take an entire day. Daily wage workers find it very difficult. Some DM office sends mails, some call on phones, some do not do anything. The whole process is very complicated. Every NGO will have to fix somebody who will sit and do just this, but not everyone has that money.

TG card application needs to be made into a one-window system, and the process needs to be simplified. The TG card will be useful only when some schemes or facilities will be activated. Till this is done the TG card will not come to any use, but remain only as an extra ID card. In terms of employment the TG card will be useful to get jobs in companies which are actively looking for transgender persons, for example, Tata Steel. Some transpeople are also opting not to change their gender on their Aadhar card because it could be a harassment with property related issues.

One of the advantages of having a TG card is during police harassment of hijra persons on the train, when the TG card becomes a useful card. Police harassment can reduce if one has the TG card.

Assam

According to one of the activists, there is a lot of gatekeeping among NGOs about who will get the TG card. NGOs are deciding who is trans enough or not. There is a lot of institutional gatekeeping. NGOs are more focused on how many applications have happened, not following up on whether the card has come. There is a persisting element of real and fake trans among the outsider and indigenous population. Indigenous people are never perceived as fake trans, but those who have come from Bangladesh and Nepal are perceived as fake.

According to one of the activists, the majority of the transgender population does not know about the Act. Although, the fact that transgender students are starting to ask for rights in educational spaces, is a huge change according to one transwoman activist. Individuals are also building aspirations around the TG Act, believing that a lot will gradually change with the Act. Individuals have started to frame demands on the basis of the Act. Some people, even if not with surety, are referring to the Act and feel that they can use it for their self-defence and protection. It gives scope to negotiate with institutional stakeholders. A roadmap is being built by the community.

Karnataka

Members of Alternative Law Forum support the queer organisations for TG card and any legal support that maybe required. Currently it takes 30 days from the date of application for an applicant to receive the TG card, earlier it used to take up to one year. The reasons for rejection would mainly be lack of address proof, especially for those migrating from outside. The government is also doing a baseline survey in Karnataka to find out the number of transpersons

in the state, with the help of NGOs. A transgender policy has been drafted, but it has not yet been sanctioned. Activists say that the policy will be implemented after the survey.

The number of Transgender Certificates issued via the national portal remains disproportionately low compared to the population enumerated under the 'Other' category in the 2011 census. It is also argued that even the census figures under-represent the actual transgender population to a very large extent. Many transgender individuals who flee their natal family homes and places due to violence and discrimination often lack essential identity documents. This makes it difficult to comply with the requirements for obtaining a certificate. Transgender individuals often relocate to other states to build a new identity. However, the rules require the district magistrate to verify their residential address. Challenges such as the use of dead names (formal names no longer used by transgender individuals) in certificates and a lack of understanding of preferred names highlight the need for sensitization among officials. Verification protocols should respect the privacy and dignity of transgender individuals, for example, avoiding police visits for address verification, allowing alternative methods of verification such as self-declarations and affidavits. Community endorsements can also be considered as an alternative method to facilitate the application process.

DEMANDS FROM THE COMMUNITY

There are two groups in Tamil Nadu currently with conflicting demands, regarding whether the state should have one LGBTQ policy that covers all identities under the queer spectrum, or whether it should have two separate policies – one for transgender persons (on the basis of gender) and one for lesbian, gay and bisexual persons (on the basis of sexual orientation). Responses from the community also brought out the understanding of transpersons and queer persons' lives, needs and requirement, as held by those from the community itself. A comment from one of our interviewees, *"What I am suggesting is that transgender people want schemes, sensitisation and health benefits like health insurance. And on the other side there are lesbian, gay and bisexual people. They want only two supports. One is sensitisation for them and another one is shelter. Short time shelter. The second policy should include insurance, education, employment reservation, social schemes only for the transgender people including intersex. We are clearly telling this to the government"*. That lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals will not need the support of insurance, education, employment reservation is an assumption because they can experience as much discrimination and negligence from the family and other social institutions. Some demands from the states are listed below:

- Reduction of the cost of hormone medicines.
- Proper prescriptions and supportive nurses or doctors.
- Shelter home and housing support – Government should identify a suitable place which it controls and directly transfer rent amount to the owner without involving grantee institution/NGOs.
- Monthly ration.
- Gender-friendly toilet.
- Government exam (UPSC) forms to have the 'transgender' option.

- Enhancing societal awareness and acceptance of transgender persons through targeted campaigns to reduce bias and stigma especially in the areas where shelter spaces are located.
 - Awareness in schools.
 - Census data is very necessary. Without this data no scheme can be accurately designed or executed. The state needs to be involved in this.
 - Inclusion of transgender-related issues during panchayat level meetings for child protection issues.
 - Awareness among government staff about transgender people and the transgender community to be carried out like it was done during the HIV campaign.
 - Funding release should be on time.
 - Political representation of transgender persons in the government.
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CONCLUSION

Political willingness is where the aspect of implementation of what has been included in the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019, has stopped. District Social Welfare officers are absorbed in various other government projects, none of which address the social issues that transgender persons have to face. Departments lack any agenda for transpersons. Having a roadmap and political willingness are most crucial. The formal recognition of transgender rights is recent, yet low education levels have slowed down awareness and uptake of government schemes. Bureaucratic hurdles and a lack of incentives hinder registration.

Several community persons, especially transwomen have talked about the hijra community's apathy toward such government schemes and initiatives. Those engaged in the hijra profession, already have significant capital and skills that they have collected over the years. The gurus in particular are not interested in government schemes. The economic gains from the hijra profession and the honour that they receive from the community are far more in comparison to the alternatives that the government is offering. The road to achieving employment equity for transgender persons requires a multifaceted approach that combines robust policies, dedicated government support and societal change.

Programmes like Garima Greh have the potential to transform lives, but their success depends on addressing systemic challenges in funding, infrastructure and capacity building. Providing designated spaces and ensuring timely fund disbursement can ease the burden on implementing agencies, allowing them to focus on creating truly inclusive and empowering environment. Child care institutions should be established to accommodate gender non-conforming children. Manipur has two child care institutions to support such children. This model can be studied and expanded to meet the needs of gender non-conforming children across India. A review of the

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 should be undertaken to incorporate transgender-inclusive provisions.

As per the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, it is of the opinion that the self-perceived gender identity of the transgender persons up to the age of Grade 8 remains ambiguous to some extent and therefore the transgender identity of the children may not be established. Hence the ministry under the SMILE guidelines proposed to provide financial assistance to the transpersons studying in Grade 9 and above to enable them to complete their education (although such scholarships have not started in the ground level yet). However, in framing the guidelines, the government needs to look into awareness and sensitization of the parents who continue to be the legal guardian of the children till they turn 18, and do not accept their children to be transgender. Also, the condition of intersex persons needs to be considered. Intersex traits can appear at various stages of early childhood development, including at birth. Such children are often abandoned or given to traditional hijra groups. Excluding them from state support below Grade 8 is inadequate and misaligned with their lived reality.

Ageing further isolates transgender individuals, with shrinking social circles and limited emotional support. Stigma restricts their access to community-based elder care services and old age homes. Financial insecurity is a pressing concern. Existing elder care facilities and policies largely overlook the needs of transgender persons. Most old-age homes and assisted living facilities are gender-segregated, often forcing transgender individuals into concealment or exclusion. There is a lack of dedicated shelter homes and welfare schemes specifically designed for elderly transpersons. Garima Greh guidelines mandate that beneficiaries must be below 60 years of age, while some shelter homes do accommodate aged transpersons, as we too saw at Thozi, the shelter space at Chennai. Elderly transpersons may require permanent care solutions.

As several community persons across states have understood over the years, one has to speak in the language of the government in order to create pressure and facilitate implementation. The use of the term 'transgender' as an umbrella term also sweeps over all identities as a single category, by which the specific needs of each of these identities do not get addressed. The community will have to show solidarity with the government. Also, if different people define

transgender differently, the government will all the more find it as an excuse not to address demands. There needs to be constant appeal to the government as a unified community.

A STATE-WISE TABLE ON SCHEMES FOR TRANSGENDER PERSONS

State	Housing	Educational Scholarship	Health	Livelihood	Shelter Home	Old Age	Govt Bodies & Trans Representation
Uttar Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Housing assistance as per PM Awas Yojana. Implementation: Activists helped access PM Awas Yojana, but it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Proposed budget for education. Implementation: There has been no further reports on the utilization of the budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Healthcare benefits under Ayushman Bharat. Implementation: Activists use the promise of linking the TG ID to the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Transgender persons have been included in the CM Yuva Scheme. As per the scheme, they will receive skill-based training and financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy (SMILE): Garima Greh in Uttar Pradesh and Lucknow Implementation: "We do not have any Garima 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Pensions were announced at the time of setting up of old age home. Implementation: The promise of a future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: 'Kinnar Kalyan Board (Transgender Welfare Board) constituted. Implementation: District board is "non-functional" (1 meeting in 2 years). Concerns have been raised about the name of the board criticizing the State for prevailing

	<p>required "Trans" on Aadhaar, not just TG ID.</p>		<p>Ayushma n (health insurance) card as an incentive for ID card registration.</p>	<p>assistance . Additional ly, each district was directed to employ at least two trans individual s. The Governor of UP announce d opening of 100 skill building centre for trans youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemen tation: However, there has been no 	<p>Ghar in the state of Telangana ." This is a key reason for low awarenes s of central SMILE schemes. • • Uttar Pradesh governme nt announce s old age home facilities for transgend er citizens above 60 years in Mau. However,</p>	<p>pension is used by activists as a key incentive to get gharana members to register for TG ID cards. However, there has been no separate pension scheme for trans people so far.</p>	<p>Hinduised trans feminine terminology such as Kinnar over other forms of gender variance.</p>
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				<p>details about the implementation either on ground or in reports.</p> <p>Garima Greh as a centre of skilling has failed to provide employment opportunities.</p> <p>Gharana system is resistant to govt. skill programs, preferring their traditional badhayi</p>	<p>the status of the old age home remains unknown</p>		
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				profession.			
Telangana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Priority group under Indiramma Housing Scheme. (Especially for trans persons hired as traffic assistants.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Free graduation at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University. No other scholarships have been announced specifically for trans students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Mythri Trans Clinics in each district were announced. Implementation: Clinics are largely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Hired trans persons as traffic assistants in Hyderabad- Secunderabad. Hyderabad metro also hired 20 trans persons as 	<p>The government has invited applications from the NGOs to setup shelter homes. However, there are no functioning government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: High Court directed state to consider Aasara pensions. Implementation: No other specific data or 	<p>The Welfare Board has been reconstituted however as per community reports it remains "inactive" and "demolished" after the change in government.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation: (No specific implementation data on this scheme was found) 		<p>functional . However, they are few and scattered. The clinics are functional twice a week in government hospitals for a limited period of time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier (SRS): Many Govt. hospitals in the twin cities area of Hyderabad 	<p>security personnel .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation: While the move to employ transport people in transportation related jobs has been significant , there's a need to expand it to other sectors. • Policy: 'Maha Lakshmi' Scheme 	<p>nt shelters in Telangana at the moment.</p>	<p>reports on pension was found</p>
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			<p>d- Secunderabad are not trained for SRS. Community expressed scepticism of them.</p>	<p>(free bus travel).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemen tation: Success. Govt clarified that all TG ID holders (trans men, women, NB) are eligible. 			
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<p>Karnataka</p>	<p>As per Karnataka's Transgender Policy: Existing housing schemes should provide subsidies or grants to transgender persons for house construction.</p> <p>Day centres for older transgender persons should be established and</p>	<p>Providing education grants similar to those offered to OBC students.</p> <p>Ensuring government schools and colleges are accessible to transgender students.</p> <p>Offering hostel facilities.</p> <p>Allowing transgender students to use male or female toilets.</p> <p>Providing fee waivers, free textbooks, free hostel</p>	<p>The policy mandates appropriate and inclusive infrastructure in hospitals.</p> <p>It explicitly states that "corrective surgery at birth" should be discouraged.</p> <p>Transgender persons should be included under the Rashtriya Swasthya</p>	<p>Vocational training should be provided to transgender persons (Transgender persons).</p> <p>Reservation of at least 5 seats should be ensured for Transgender persons in ITIs and Polytechnics.</p> <p>NGOs should conduct</p>	<p>Santhwan a Centres, run with NGO assistance and currently providing temporary shelter to women facing atrocities, can be utilised as one-stop crisis centres for transgender persons.</p> <p>Five exclusive shelter homes for transgender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: Mythri Pension (₹1,200/month) 	<p>Policy provisions:</p> <p>Welfare of transgender persons is handled by the Department of Women & Child Development (WDC).</p> <p>The policy establishes a "Cell for Transgender Persons" within the Department of Women and Child Development (WCD).</p> <p>Identity (ID) cards for transgender persons are to be issued by the Tahsildar.</p>
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<p>made accessible .</p> <p>The government should consider allotting registered land to transgender persons for housing purposes.</p> <p>Housing assistance for transgender persons should be income-based.</p>	<p>accommodation, and subsidized facilities.</p> <p>Ensuring compliance with the RTE Act to improve educational conditions for the transgender community.</p>	<p>Bima Yojana and all other State health insurance schemes.</p> <p>Self-Help Groups (SHGs) or societies of transgender persons are eligible to avail benefits under the Yeshaswini scheme.</p> <p>Health insurance cards</p>	<p>training on the formation and governance of TG Self-Help Groups (SHGs).</p> <p>The Udyanidhi scheme should be extended to cover transgender persons.</p> <p>The scope of similar livelihood schemes such as NRLM and NULM</p>	<p>er persons should be established in different parts of the State, based on the local transgender population.</p> <p>Implementation status:</p> <p>The provision exists on paper, but interviewees were hesitant to comment,</p>	<p>Barriers in implementation (ID cards):</p> <p>Corruption during initial implementation, including demands for fees.</p> <p>Harassment by WDC officials particularly through illegal “house verification” procedures.</p>	
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	<p>Support may be provided through a combination of grants, subsidies, and loans, depending on beneficiaries' income levels.</p>		<p>should be issued to transgender persons.</p> <p>The government will provide financial assistance for Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in selected government hospitals.</p>	<p>should be gradually extended to transgender persons.</p> <p>Efforts should be made to register transgender persons with the State Employment Exchange.</p> <p>Liberal credit facilities and other necessary support for</p>	<p>suggesting implementation gaps or unresolved issues.</p>		
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				economic activities should be provided to Transgender persons.			
Kerala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Promises "Right to live with dignity" and protection from landlords; implies support for safe residence. Under state housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Mandates "Positive discrimination" in education and barrier-free access. 2 reserved spots per course. Implementation: Govt. pays the "full amount" for 	<p>Include Transgender persons in national/state health insurance schemes (e.g., Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana, CHIS).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Guarantees "Equal access to economic opportunities" and public appointments. Self-employment grants must be made available to TG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: No "Garima Greh" in the state at present. Establish dedicated shelter homes for Transgender persons in different regions, 	<p>Repositio n day-care centres for elders so they also accommodate TG elders. Provide a monthly pension scheme for destitute</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Establishes a "TG Justice Board" to monitor implementation and seek annual reports. Implementation: Board includes trans men, women, and intersex persons. Barrier (ID Card) National portal is slow ("3-6

<p>schemes (including Indira Awaas Yojana), set aside subsidies specifically for Transgender persons to construct houses.</p> <p>Housing assistance for Transgender persons may include grants, subsidies, or loans depending on</p>	<p>any level (10th, BA, MA, PSC exams), paid directly to the institution. Residents are actively using this.</p>	<p>Issue health insurance cards for Transgender persons.</p> <p>Create a fund for Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) in government hospitals.</p> <p>All government hospitals should adopt policies for:</p>	<p>initiate activities related to raise incomes as well as TG Interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement "Pride" Project offers employment skills (e.g., airport management). 	<p>based on the local TG population.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation: State-run shelters (one for trans men and three for trans women) are operational. They are well-staffed (trans manager, psychologist), safe, and have a govt. oversight. However, 	<p>Transgender persons and Transgender persons above age 55.</p>	<p>months"). Local boards create illegal barriers.</p>	<p>Local boards create illegal barriers.</p>
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	<p>beneficiary income.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation: Housing Scheme provides ₹15L loan or ₹6L grant for construction. 		<p>1) Registration and admission of TG persons</p> <p>2) Training and sensitization of healthcare staff about TG health issues</p> <p>3) Health Department should instruct hospitals to ensure nondiscriminatory access for Transgend</p>		<p>they suffer from funding constraints.</p>		
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			<p>er persons.</p> <p>4) Provide proper counselin g on gender transition and post- operative care.</p> <p>5) Establish separate HIV sero- surveillan ce centres to address sexual health issues faced by Transgend er persons.</p>				
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation: State reimburses private SRS surgeries; 				
Tamil Nadu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: State policy Promises "Right to Residence and Stay" Preference in housing schemes; "Aran Illam" state-run 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: The State will form a District Level Committee to identify gender-non conforming persons (i.e Transgender and Intersex persons) who discontinue their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: Free surgeries; state clinics (Chennai, Madurai). The State will ensure the implementation of State's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: Up to ₹50,000 self-employment subsidy. Provision of self-employment schemes and extend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy (SMILE): One Garima Greh in Chennai. • Implementation: The central Garima 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: ₹1,500/month pension for destitute trans persons over 40. • Implementation: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy: First state to form a Welfare Board (2008). • Implementation: Board includes trans men, women, & intersex persons. Thirunangai activists have a good rapport with the government. A

<p>shelters. provision of free house site pattas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemen tation: Housing quality varies by district. Houses are allotted in the outskirts making it difficult for people 	<p>schooling and help them to complete their studies.</p> <p>Transgender Persons will be treated as 'socially and educationally disadvantaged'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State will provide Scholarship to Transgender and Intersex students pursuing higher education. • The State will provide age relaxation for gender- 	<p>Mental Health Policy (2019) with regard to Transgend er and Intersex persons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State will explore the provisions of Pre-Exposure Prophylax is (PrEP) to prevent HIV infection among the Transgend er and Intersex persons. 	<p>subsidy/gr ants to eligible Transgend er and Intersex persons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemen tation: Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are a functional and successful way for trans women to get govt. loans for livelihood. 	<p>Greh is no longer functional due to "funding issue" and "administ ration issue".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier: State shelters are often only used by trans women, leaving trans men without a dedicated shelter. 	<p>(No new implemen tation data provided in interviews)</p>	<p>dual ID system (State vs. National) creates confusion. Activists filed a High Court case to stop officials from illegally demanding "surgery proof" for binary IDs.</p>
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		<p>nonconforming persons who drop out of school and higher education institutions.</p> <p>The state shall provide ₹1,000/month scholarship ("Puthumai Pen") to transfer students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation: Activists had to file a High Court case to reopen state clinics after COVID. CM's insurance scheme is confusing due to dual state/central IDs. 				
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<p>Arunachal Pradesh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: (No state-specific data found). Relies on central schemes like SMILE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: (No state-specific data found). Relies on central SMILE scholarships. Implementation: However no one has been able to access it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Relies on central SMILE scheme (Ayushman Bharat TG Plus). Implementation: (No specific implementation data found). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: (No state-specific scheme available). Relies on central SMILE skill development. Implementation: Extreme lack of awareness and government engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy (SMILE): Garima Greh. Govt. has identified Arunachal as a "Gap State" needing a shelter. Implementation: No Garima Greh exists. One local CBO is the "only safe space". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: (No state-specific schemes available for older adults). Implementation: Elder generation is fearful of engaging the government at all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: No functioning Transgender Welfare Board exists. Activists are attempting to meet with the Minister to establish one. A "Transgender Protection Cell" exists. CRITICAL CHALLENGES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Govt: Dept. of Social Justice is "unaware" and lacks resources. Community: "Fear and ignorance," especially among elders.
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							<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultural "Religious and cultural barriers" (e.g., threats from church leaders and "threats from underground militants").• Language: Over 26 tribes and 100 sub-tribes; language barriers prevent access to info in Hindi/English.
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<p>Assam</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: State announced a dedicated shelter home to be built in Guwahati (Mar 2025). Transgender persons can apply for benefits under the existing housing schemes like IAY, PMAY etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Assam Policy for transgender persons (2020) promises scholarships & reserved seats. Accelerated non-formal basic education program will be opened up for providing education to transgender persons in informal settings. Accelerated education programs in the formal sector (both by 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Ayushman Bharat TG Plus (Central). State Policy (2020) mentions community-specific health schemes. Regular or customized health screening, free medical treatment and free medicine will be made available for transgender persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Orunodoi 3.0 Scheme (Sep 2024): Transgender persons included as a priority group for ₹1,250/month direct cash transfer. Self-employment grants upto a maximum of Rs 25000 will be made available for small business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy (SMILE): One Garima Greh is operational in Kamrup (M) district (Guwahati). A new state-funded shelter was announced in 2025. Transgender shelters will gradually be built at certain locations where homeless 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Orunodoi 3.0 prioritizes destitute/transgender persons, functioning as a social security net (₹1,250/mo). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Transgender Welfare Board has been constituted. Policy: Assam Policy for transgender persons (2020) adopted.
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		<p>government and private organizations) will also be started.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarships will be provided to transgender students at the middle, secondary, higher secondary, graduate and post graduate levels and also to those who pursue studies in medicine, engineering and other technical courses. 	<p>in government health facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All lawful surgeries and treatments in the areas of hormone therapy, sex reassignment etc. will be made available to transgender persons in select hospitals and financial assistance , subject 	<p>entrepreneurs from the transgender community who have undergone vocational training and are willing to set up businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material support like sewing machines upto a value of Rs 10000 per transgender will be 	<p>transgender persons are able to live with dignity. These will be run by NGOs/ Gurus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A short-stay home will be constructed in Guwahati to serve as a temporary shelter for Transgender persons in crisis and as a safe place for Transgender persons 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seats for transgender students will be reserved in government schools, colleges and professional education institutes to the extent possible. • Transgender students will benefit from fee waiver, free textbooks, free hostel accommodation and other facilities at subsidized rates. Transgender persons 	<p>to an upper ceiling, will be made available to those transgender persons who are considered to be in need of such assistance</p>	<p>provided to individual beneficiaries, based on assessment of the capacity and motivation of the beneficiary, who propose to use such support for income generation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of TG SHGs will be promoted 	<p>to stay when they visit Guwahati only for the purpose of medical care and sex reassignment surgery.</p>		
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		<p>granted SEBC Status (June 2025), enabling reservations. However, these are vertical reservations while the transgender movement has demanded horizontal reservations.</p>		<p>and obtaining benefits by these SHGs under various income-generation schemes of the government will be facilitated .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEBC Status: Enables affirmative action in employment. We are still to understand the extent of implementation. 			
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<p>Manipur</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (No specific data found) 	<p>Manipur does not have any scholarships or reservations for transgender students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: "No initiative from the Health dept has come yet." Implementation: A separate TG counter exists in the government hospital, but "no one goes there because no one knows about it." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation: (Barrier) "Trans people don't get jobs through MNREGA." 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Welfare Board exists but is described as "practically defunct" since 2017. Representation: The board was reconstituted last year with 17 members, but includes only one trans woman and one trans man.
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> History: A previous TG clinic (ran with USAID) closed after funding stopped. 				
West Bengal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Banglar Awaas Yojana (housing). No No specific reservations for transgender persons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: (No state-specific scholarships). Relies on central schemes. Implementation: School enrolment dropped significantly (211 to 62 in one year). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Swasthya Sathi (State health insurance, up to ₹5L). CRITICAL GAP: Swasthya Sathi does not cover SRS. Trans people cannot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Plan announced (2015) to recruit trans persons as Civic Police Volunteers. Implementation: Failure. "Many 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy (SMILE): Garima Greh. Implementation: Two Garima Greh homes are operational in Kolkata (funded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: (No state-specific pension found). 814 beneficiaries under National Pension Scheme (Central). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy: Transgender Development Board constituted (2015). Implementation: Dysfunctional. The board did not hold a single meeting in 2023.

			<p>use it for gender-affirming care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemen tation: Trans people avoid govt hospitals due to "bad experienc es" and discrimina tion. 	<p>applied but did not get hired." Skill programs are a "game of numbers."</p> <p>Transmas culine persons leave jobs due to lack of gender-neutral washroo ms.</p>	<p>by Centre).</p>		
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PARTICIPANTS' LIST FOR IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Name	Location	Organisation	Affiliation
Ananya Mithi	Benaras	Prismatic Foundation	Social worker
Vijeta Singh	Benaras	Prismatic	Researcher, Activist
Nihal	Benaras	Prismatic	Community Member
Anamika Patel	Benaras	Prismatic	Social worker
Aarya	Benaras	Prismatic	Social worker
Nitin Kumar Varma	Benaras	Prismatic	Social worker
Neeti	Benaras	Prismatic	Founder, Activist
Pratibha Vyas/ Shaanu	Benaras	Prismatic	Community Member/ runs a cafe

Gunja	Mau, Uttar Pradesh	Satrangi Foundation	Founder, Lawyer, Community activist
Suraj Pandey and Nevish	Gorakhpur	Ekta Seva Sansthan	Project Manager, Bridge Course Coordinator
Fury	Hyderabad	QT Centre	Social worker
Aisha Siddique	Hyderabad	QT Centre	Social worker
S Venkatesh & S Mahesh	Hyderabad	Infocem	Social worker
Rachana Mudraboyina	Hyderabad	India HIV/AIDS Alliance	Advocacy Officer, Community leader
Manvi	Bangalore	Alternative Law Forum	Lawyer
Natraj Naik	Bangalore	Raahi Shelter home	Shelter home resident
Astha Kalarikkal	Bangalore	Raahi	Founder, Social worker
Nathan Madhavi	Bangalore	Raahi	Staff member
Anurag	Bangalore	Periferry	DEI worker
Shiva Rudraksh	Bangalore	Periferry	Staff member
Dr. L Ramakrishnan	Chennai	Saathii	Public health expert and Senior Vice President of Saathii
Swethashree	Chennai	Saathii	Social worker, staff

			member
Fred Rogers	Chennai	Urimai Kural Trust	Founder
Sivakumar	Chennai	Nirangal Charitable Trust	Community leader
R Jeeva	Chennai	Trans Rights Association	NGO leader
Ramya	Chennai	Trans Rights Association	Staff member
Jaya	Chennai	Sahodaran	NGO leader/ community worker
P Sudha	Chennai	Sahodaran	Leader/community worker
Prijith	Trivandrum	Kerala Knowledge Economy Mission	Government worker/ community member
Sabari	Ernakulam	Edam	Community member
Anand C. Rajappan	Ernakulam	Amigos Trans Collective	Activist
Athul	Trivandrum	Individual	Activist
Jaya Das	Kolkata	Sappho for Equality	Programme Assistant
Shreosi Ray	Kolkata	Sappho for Equality	Senior Programme Officer
Koyel Ghosh	Kolkata	Sappho for Equality	Managing Trustee

Sudeb Suvana Sadhu	Baruipur, South 24 Parganas	Individual	Activist
Sintu Bagui	Dumdum, Kolkata	Kolkata Anandam for Equality and Justice	Co-founder, Secretary
Sonal Dey	Berhampore, West Bengal	Individual	Volunteer at One Stop Centre
Subhankar Das	Berhampore, West Bengal	One Stop Centre (Plan India NGO)	Staff member
Ahmed	Berhampore, West Bengal	One Stop Centre (Plan India NGO)	Manager
Saheb Kar	Jalpaiguri, West Bengal	One Stop Centre (Plan India)	Manager
Tonmoy Roy	Cooch Behar, West Bengal	District Social Welfare Office	Social worker/ government worker, DSW office
Kaunish Dey Sarkar	Jalpaiguri and Howrah, West Bengal	Bengal Transmen, State Transgender Persons Welfare Board, Govt. of West Bengal	Founder (Bengal Transmen), Activist, Ex-Member (Transgender Persons Welfare Board)
Rudrani Rajkumari	Assam	Xomonnoy	Founder, Individual activist
Rituparna Neog	Assam	Akam Foundation, State Transgender Persons Welfare Board, Govt of Assam, National Council of Transgender Persons	Founder and Director (Akam), Associate Vice Chairpersons (Transgender Persons Welfare Board), Member (National Council)

Eton	Manipur	Individual	Activist
Saddam Hanjabam	Manipur	Ya_All	Founder, Activist
Sawang Wangcha	Arunachal Pradesh	Queer Station	Founder, Activist

SOME PHOTOS FROM OUR FIELDWORK



Image 1: FGD with members of Mobbera Foundation, Hyderabad, Telangana



Image 2: FGD with members of Sahodaran, Chennai, Tamil Nadu



Image 3: In-depth interview with members of Infocem, Hyderabad, Telangana



Image 4: Post FGD meet with members of Prismatic Foundation, Benaras, U.P.



Image 5: FGD with shelter residents of Thozhi (Sahodaran), Chennai, Tamil Nadu



Image 6: Entrance to Thozhi, where mainly transwomen reside, but transmen too can come if needed. Our FGD had both transwomen and transmen (non-residents).



Image 7: With staff members and residents at the newly-opened Garima Greh, Gorakhpur, U.P.



Image 8: Prayer space for practitioners of all religions at Garima Greh, Gorakhpur, U.P., set up by the staff and residents.



Image 9: FGD with transmasculine members of QT Foundation, Bangalore, Karnataka.



Image 10: Shelter resident at QT Foundation, Bangalore, Karnataka



Image 11: Transgender persons' One Stop Centre (Plan India) at Jalpaiguri, West Bengal



Image 12: Photos of extra-curricular activities by volunteer members at OSC, Jalpaiguri.



Image 13: Living and Dining room at NEST transmen's shelter home at Trivandrum, Kerala.

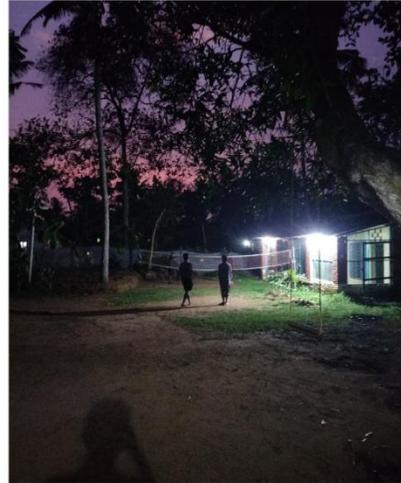


Image 14: Playing badminton at the shelter grounds.



Image 15: With the shelter space residents at NEST after our FGD.



Image 16: After an in-depth interview with a staff member from Prismatic Foundation, Benaras, U.P.



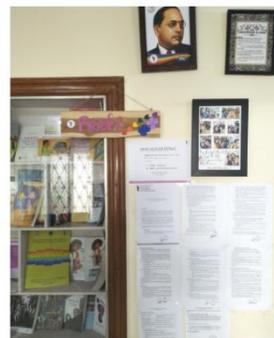
Image 17: With the founder and members of Satrangi Foundation at Mau district, U.P.



Image 18: IDI with the founder and staff member at Transgender Rights Association that runs the Garima Greh in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.



Image 19: FGD with the founder and staff members at Sahayatrika, Thrissur, Kerala.



ONE STOP CENTRE (TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY)
MURSHIDABAD, WEST BENGAL
STAFF DETAIL

S. No.	Name of staff	Designation	Date of joining	Phone	Address
1.	Ms. Anand Kumar Baran	Admin Manager	08.11.2020	9830088888	9830088888
2.	Ms. Anand Kumar	Admin Staff	08.11.2020	9830088888	9830088888
3.	Ms. Anand Kumar	Admin Staff	25.08.2020	9830088888	9830088888
4.	Ms. Anand Kumar	Admin Staff	08.11.2020	9830088888	9830088888
5.	Ms. Anand Kumar	Admin Staff	08.11.2020	9830088888	9830088888
6.	Ms. Anand Kumar	Admin Staff	08.11.2020	9830088888	9830088888

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