

# Review of: "The Complexity of Leaving No One Behind: Unmasking and Emphasizing Multiple and Intersectional Marginalisation in India"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This article contributes to understanding geographic patterns of poverty in India through spatial analysis of the Multi-dimensional Poverty Index, correctly pointing out that considering aggregate or average measures only masks substantial variations between people and places. However, there are a number of areas in which the paper can be improved.

The framing of the paper centres around India's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. But there is very little discussion of the actual strategies and policies used by the Indian government, as well as other organisations, to achieve the SDGs, how successful/unsuccessful these have been, and in what ways. At times the paper hints at the shortcomings or existing strategies, e.g. where the paper says "As the successful strategies for the mainland are inadequate for the people at the margins...", but without any discussion of what these successful strategies for the mainland actually entail, and in what ways they are inadequate for those living in marginal districts.

India's Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is used throughout the paper. Could the authors please provide some information about this index and the measures that it contains?

The justification for using intrastate distribution of low-performing districts rather than national distribution seems somewhat lacking. It is explained that, when low-performing districts are defined at a national level, two third of these districts are located in just four Indian states, and that "such skewed distribution hides the intrastate distribution of poor-performing districts". This is probably true, but why should we be interested in the intrastate distribution of low- and high-performing districts? In other words, what is the theoretical, or policy-related, reason for classifying districts as high or low-performing relative to other districts within the same state, rather than with reference to the distribution of districts across India as a whole?

Relatedly, it would be informative to know where districts defined as having high MPI according to the intrastate distribution sit in the national MPI distribution. Figure 1 gives some indication of this, but it would be good to have this be explicitly discussed in the paragraph just above Table 1. I am a little concerned that the intrastate-based classification approach means that some districts are classified as being in the high-MPI quartile, despite, by national standards, having quite low levels of poverty, e.g. in Kerala, Tamil Nadu etc. Now, it might be that in fact it makes sense to classify these districts as high-MPI (if a good theoretical reason is provided for why this approach is taken - see above) but it would be good for the reader to have some context about where these districts sit when it comes to the national poverty distribution.

Table 1 - for clarity I feel this table needs to indicate that the classification of districts is based on the intrastate distribution of MPI, not the national distribution.

Graph 1 - this information would be better presented in the form of a map. That way it would be easier to provide visual confirmation that low-performing districts do indeed tend to be located away from state capitals or metro cities (i.e. by adding state capitals and metros to the map). Or, if this is not possible, then at least present a similar breakdown of non-high-MPI districts, so that the reader can compare the percentage of high-MPI and non-high-MPI districts that are geographically marginal in some way. Also, shouldn't the label for the orange pie-slice read "Bordering high MPI"? That is what is suggested by the text.

In the section "Low development clusters – intersecting marginalities", several claims are made about the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalisation that affect people in high-poverty districts. But very little actual data is presented to demonstrate these multiple forms of marginalisation, other than the multi-dimensional poverty index analysed in the earlier sections of the paper.

For instance, it is stated that a large proportion of the population living in high-poverty districts belongs to vulnerable sections of society, i.e., scheduled tribes (ST) or scheduled castes (SC) categories. Could the authors provide some data to support this and show how the proportion of 'vulnerable' inhabitants in these districts differs from that of other districts? This would help to illustrate and lend weight to this issue.

Similarly, it is stated that "the districts at the margin also experience economic disparities due to limited infrastructure, lack of development initiatives, and limited access to resources". Some data, or references to existing research describing the situation with regards to infrastructure, development initiatives, etc, in these districts would really help to substantiate this statement, and more generally the authors' claim to "shed light on the complex web of challenges of multiple and intersectional marginalisations experienced by multidimensionally poor communities".