



**POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA
IN
CHILD RIGHTS AND GOVERNANCE**



BLOCK I

DCG103: Vulnerabilities of Children in the North East

OFFERED BY

**CENTRE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING
TEZPUR UNIVERSITY
(A CENTRAL UNIVERSITY)
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DCG-103: Vulnerabilities of Children in the North East

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Rajeev K. Doley	Director, Centre for Inclusive Development, Tezpur University
Prof. Debabrata Das	Director, Centre for Open and Distance Learning, Tezpur University
Prof. Rabindra Kumar Mohanty	Professor & Head, Department of Sociology, Mizoram University

CONTRIBUTOR(S)

Prof. Asok Kumar Sarkar	Professor, Dept. of Social Work, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal
Mr. Indranil Sarkar	Research Scholar, Dept. of Social Work, Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan, West Bengal
Mr. Abhisek Dey	Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan, West Bengal.

EDITOR(S)

Dr. Subhrangshu Dhar	Assistant Professor, Centre for Inclusive Development, Tezpur University
Dr. Ritumoni Das	Assistant Professor, Centre for Inclusive Development, Tezpur University

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Any other information about CID may be obtained from the Office of the CID, Tezpur University, Tezpur-784028, Assam.

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

The course of *DCG 103: Vulnerabilities of Children in the North East* is divided into two blocks. Each block contains two units. The present block contains Unit 1 and 2. **Unit 1** deals with the basic concept of vulnerability and related terminologies like social exclusion and child vulnerability. The unit further explores the characteristics of vulnerability, types of vulnerability, measuring vulnerability, characteristics of social exclusion, structural determinants of disparity/discrimination/access, drivers of social exclusion and marginalization.

Unit 2 is expected to lay the theoretical foundation for the remaining two units of this paper. It covers Fineman's theory of vulnerability; social risk management approach; gender perspective; victim blaming; sub-culture theory; and Subaltern theory.

UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO CHILD VULNERABILITY AND RELATED CONCEPTS

Structure

- 1.3 Introduction
- 1.4 Learning Objectives
- 1.3 Vulnerability: Concept and Characteristics
- 1.4 Types of Vulnerability
- 1.5 Measuring Vulnerability
- 1.6 Children and Vulnerability
 - 1.6.1 Causes and Factors of Child Vulnerability and Marginalization
 - 1.6.2 Impacts on Child
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- 1.7 Social Exclusion: Concept and Characteristics
- 1.8 Structural Determinants of Disparity/ Discrimination/ Access
- 1.9 Drivers of Social Exclusion and Marginalisation
- 1.10 Summary

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The word vulnerability commonly resembles a situation of risk and crisis. A person in any situation is vulnerable as (s)he is continuously affected by multiple factors of his/ her immediate environment. It can be stated that the more a person is dependent on its surrounding factors, more the chances for the person to be at risk. The state of dependency is not always a matter of choice. In many cases, dependency on others becomes a compulsion for wellbeing of a person. Similarly, children are dependent

on the adults (caregivers) because of their inability to take rational decision, to predict the consequences of their own action, to understand meaning of actions happening around them and, accordingly, they are vulnerable. Vulnerability of children leads to child labour, children in conflict with law, victim of substance and drug abuse etc. In this unit, we will be talking about the concept and types of vulnerability, how a child becomes vulnerable and how the cycle of vulnerability and social exclusion goes hand in hand.

1.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, a student is expected:

- To understand the concepts and characteristics of the term ‘vulnerability’.
- To gain insight on the various causes and factors those are associated with child vulnerability.
- To understand the concept of social exclusion
- To gain knowledge about the various determining factors of social exclusion and marginalization.

1.3 VULNERABILITY: CONCEPTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The term *vulnerability* is derived from the Latin word ‘*vulnus*’ meaning ‘wound’. Etymologically, signifies the human potential to be wounded, that is, to experience physical trauma. In the present situation, vulnerability means both physical and psychological harm (psychological, moral, spiritual) to an individual.

The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR, 2004) defines vulnerability as “the conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors, which increase the susceptibility of a

community to the impact of hazards”. The definition highlights various factors that are directly affecting the coping ability of the community to encounter risk or any difficult situation.

According to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) vulnerability is “a human condition or process resulting from physical, social, economic and environmental factors, which determine the likelihood and scale of damage from the impact of a given hazard”. Here also emphasis is given on the physical, social, economic and environmental factors in deciding the magnitude of hazards due to a crisis situation.

According to Cardona (2006), vulnerability represents the physical, economic, political or social susceptibility or predisposition of a community to damage in the case of a destabilizing phenomenon of natural or anthropogenic origin. It can be stated that vulnerability is a political ecological concept, which focuses mainly on the relationship between people and their environment along with the political and economic forces that shapes the lives of the people. Cannon (1994), is of the opinion that vulnerability is a characteristic of individuals and groups of people who inhabit a given natural, social and economic space, within which they are differentiated according to their varying position in society into more or less vulnerable individuals and groups. It is a complex characteristic produced by a combination of factors derived especially (but not entirely) from class, gender and ethnicity

Vulnerability is usually portrayed in negative terms as the susceptibility to be harmed. The central idea of the often-cited Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) definition (McCarthy et al., 2001) is that

vulnerability is degree to which a system is susceptible to and is unable to cope with adverse effects. In all formulations, the key parameters of vulnerability are the stress to which a system is exposed, its sensitivity, and its adaptive capacity.

Thus, the concept of vulnerability can be understood as the diminished capacity of an individual or group to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of a natural or man-made hazard. The concept is relative and dynamic. Vulnerability is mostly associated with poverty, but it can also arise when people are isolated, insecure and defenceless in the face of risk, shock or stress and people differ in their exposure to risk as a result of their social group, gender, ethnic or other identity, age and other factors.

1.4 TYPES OF VULNERABILITY

Depending upon the nature, vulnerability has been categorized in multiple types. Brief accounts of such types are given below:

Social Vulnerability

In India, people are categorized into different groups based on their caste, class, ethnicity, gender and so on. This categorization leads to discrimination, which adversely influences their resiliency, or ability to recover from hazards caused by a crisis (Cutter and Emrich 2006).

There are many factors, which influence and affect the social vulnerability. Social class is one of the largest contributors to social vulnerability (Burton and Cutter 2008). It includes employment, education levels, the quality of human settlements, tenure type, built environment, family structure, population growth, medical services, and special needs

population (Zahran et al. 2008; Burton and Cutter, 2008; Dwyer et al., 2004; Bolin & Stanford 1998; Cutter et al., 2003; Buckle et al., 2000; Morrow, 1999). The two other important factors which affects social vulnerability are race and ethnicity which actually controls access to resources (based on language, culture, educational levels).

According to Schmidlin (2009), *“social vulnerability to natural hazards is the potential for loss and is complex interaction among risk, mitigation, and the social fabric of a place”*.

The factors affecting social vulnerability are:

- Lack of access to resources such as information, knowledge, and technology,
- Limited access to political power and representation,
- Social capital including social networks and connections,
- Beliefs and customs,
- Building stock and age,
- Weak and physically limited individuals, and
- Type and density of infrastructure and lifelines (Cutter et al., 2003).

A community which is socially vulnerable may tend to have weak family structures, no leadership for taking decision or conflict resolution, lack of community organizations, and discrimination on the basis of racial, ethnic, language or religion. Factors such as culture, tradition, religion, local norms and values, economic standard, and political accountability also contribute to social vulnerability of a community. Social vulnerability is mostly seen among the poor and within the groups of children, women, elderly, disable people etc.

Gender is another vital aspect of social vulnerability. It is visible worldwide that how men, women and transgender are getting oppressed and how their sexuality creates a situation of crisis for them. Thus, to deal with this issue a deep understanding and knowledge is required about the local condition and all the factors which are mentioned above.

Economic Vulnerability

Economic vulnerability can be defined as the proneness of an economy of a state or a community to outer risks which are beyond its control. Mostly it can be seen that the states or the communities which are small in size are more economically vulnerable than other bigger states or communities. The magnitude of economic vulnerability is characterized by high degree of fluctuations in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and in export earnings. Economic vulnerability of a community can be understood by analysing certain aspects like sources of income, the ease of access and control over means of production. Various variables have been utilised to measure economic vulnerability, which include exposure to external forces, internal structures and the magnitude of shocks.

The *United Nations (UN) Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI)* includes following indicators:

- Population size;
- Remoteness from world markets;
- Merchandise export concentration;
- Share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in gross domestic product;
- Share of the population in a country that lives in low elevated coastal zones

- Homelessness owing to natural disasters;
- Instability of agricultural production; and
- Instability of exports of goods and services.

Economic vulnerability is a major risk factor for a community as well as for an individual. The people in India who belong to Below Poverty Line (BPL) category have less access to resources like food, clothes, health facilities, regular materials for fulfilling the basic needs of life. This creates crisis in their life when a major problem arises to them, which can be a health issue, livelihood issue or may be any disaster situation. The people with economically challenged situation fail to create any economic back up, such as savings, which can help them to do future crisis management. This economic vulnerability can carry forward to other types of vulnerability as well.

Physical Vulnerability

The concept of physical vulnerability is linked with the geographic proximity to the source and origin of the disasters. Further, any area that is located near the coastlines, fault lines, unstable hills etc. are highly vulnerable comparing to the region that is located far away. Physical vulnerability consists of difficulty in access to water resources, means of communications, hospitals, police stations, fire brigades, roads, bridges and exits of a building or/an area, in case of disasters.

1.5 MEASURING VULNERABILITY

Vulnerability is a phenomenon, which is continuously fluctuating and influencing the biophysical and social processes that shape local conditions and the ability to cope (O'Brien et al., 2005). Thus, measurement of vulnerability should include social processes as well as

material outcomes. In other words, vulnerability is a complicated phenomenon with multiple causal factors. Again, some factors are specific to a social group or people in a specific geographical location. Hence, it is difficult to reduce the vulnerability measurement into a single metric and, many a times, quantification (numeric representation).

The factors leading to vulnerability can be identified to translate into a quantitative metric and may prove beneficial to reduce its impact (Alwang et al., 2001). However, such identification and quantification may not be generalized as it may ignore the socio-economic, political, cultural, or geographical variance. The ultimate aim of measuring vulnerability is to incorporate both human well-being and recognize the relative and perceptual nature of vulnerability.

Much of the researches concerned with vulnerability are focusing on poverty, rooted in development economics. It focuses on consumption of the poor as the key parameter. However, the presence varying factors leading to vulnerability restrict the universal application of such methodology (Alwang et al., 2001). For example: Poverty may become a social problem in any nation because of faulty government policy, natural disasters, war, terrorism, weak inter-governmental relationship and alike. Further, a social group may find itself in poverty because of forced displacement, discrimination, inadequate government policy, inadequacy of traditional skill in contemporary job market and so on. Likewise, it might result into different outcomes such illiteracy, malnutrition, high maternal and infant mortality rate, low fertility rate (to reduce expenditure) or high fertility rate (inability to buy contraceptives or for increasing the earning members), child marriage, child trafficking, child labour, child prostitution, selling of body organs, suicide, migration for

employment etc. It is important to mention here that consistent framework for measuring vulnerability is important but it should be complimented with qualitative aspect of vulnerability (Luttrell, 2001; Winkels, 2004).

Research on mapping vulnerability increasingly attempts to validate and triangulate data to derive more robust measures for both policy analysis and intervention (Downing et al., 2001; Yohe and Tol, 2002; Haddad, 2005; Brooks et al., 2005). Such mapping most often involves cross national or spatially mapped comparisons of indicators. A common critique of comparative statistical research, particularly focused on country-level analysis, is that it fails to capture the sub-national spatial and social differentiation of vulnerability and local conditions that mediate the capacity to adapt (Cutter et al., 2003).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Enumerate any three characteristics of vulnerability.

2. What are the types of vulnerability?

3. How many indicators are there in the United Nations (UN) Vulnerability index?

1.6 CHILDREN AND VULNERABILITY

Risk and crisis, to some extent, are synonymous to vulnerability. A child in any situation is at risk and crisis by virtue of their dependence on the caregivers in their immediate environment. Their mental and physical inabilities make them dependent and vulnerable to different types of abuse and exploitations. In this segment, we would talk about the cause and effect relation of child vulnerability. In any country protection of children and young people is of prime importance. Therefore, the responsibility to provide healthy atmosphere to the children to their fullest physical and mental development rests on all the civilized society.

1.6.1 Causes and Factors of Child Vulnerability and Marginalization

The development of a nation depends on the status of children with regard to their health, education, wellbeing etc. Child vulnerability occurs across socio-economic, religious, cultural, racial, and ethnic groups. Identification of specific causes is yet to be explored that lead a parent or other caregiver to abuse or neglect a child. Research has recognized a number of risk factors or attributes commonly associated with maltreatment. The vulnerability of children is high within such families and environments where these factors exist. These factors are discussed below:

- a) Any inability on the part of the child may make him or her vulnerable for neglect and rejection. Children with learning disability may become a victim of bullying at school and may result into parental neglect and rejection. Again, child with physical disability may face similar challenges. It is worthy to mention here that the sex selective abortion, which is a

manifestation of gender-biased discrimination, pose severe threat to children and childhood.

- b) Family plays a very important role in the life a child. Family is responsible for meeting the basic requirement of the child. However, the family income, educational status and outlook of parents, parental occupation, and caste are the vital factors which contributes towards child vulnerability and marginalization. These factors decide the relationship of children with their peer group and community.
- c) Community holds a larger responsibility towards the wellbeing of children. It is a socializing agent and ensures that traditional beliefs and norms are passed on to the next generation. Community is also responsible for framing the rule and regulation for the members and device mechanisms, like imposition of fines/ tax or other punishment, to implement such rules and regulations. In India, there is existence of customary law/ traditional rules that are followed and implemented by communities and many of such rules are against the best interest of the child. Caste based discrimination, restriction on higher education of girls, dowry, child marriage etc. may be cited as examples to elucidate role of a community in marginalizing of child.

Summing up, vulnerability of children is not only influenced by external factors (factors outside the family) but also affected by internal factors. The following sections would examine risk factors in each category. Available research suggests that different factors may play varying roles in accounting for different forms of child maltreatment

(physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and psychological or emotional abuse).

1.6.2 Impacts on Child

Different factors that makes the child vulnerable and marginalized, has wide range of impacts on their life. Such impacts are mentioned below:

- In absence of caregivers because of death or imprisonment may make a child homeless. This may result into death of a child due to starvation, force them to commit crimes, or to become a victim of drug and substance abuse.
- Children, majorly girl child, who are victims of trafficking and forced prostitution may not be taken back by their families because of societal pressure. Such situation leads to deprivation of their rights to education, health, development and participation. Finally, such children might join the defamed profession because parental rejection.
- A Child victim of armed conflicts may face different life threatening situations. Armed conflict may result into losing parents or becoming physically challenged or joining any party into the conflict as a child soldier. Further, children placed in relief/ rehabilitations camps without parents are also exposed physical and psychological abuse.
- Children with disability (mental or physical) face neglect and rejection from their parents, siblings, peer groups and other responsible stakeholders in their immediate environment. Such rejection and neglect results into low self-esteem, emotional crisis and isolation.

- Displacement due to armed conflict or because of natural disaster has adverse impact on children. Displaced families often find it difficult to meet the basic needs of their children. Further, many of the displaced families engage their children in economic activities (child labour) and become susceptible to mental and physical hazards.
- Children affected by HIV/AIDS are also at the risk of many challenges. Children of HIV/AIDS infected parents are likely to face rejection and isolation in the community and among their peer group. In India, employability of HIV/AIDS infected people is very less which may push a family to absolute poverty and may force children to take up economic activities to support family income.

Thus, from above discussion it can be said that in any crisis situation children are the worst victim. We can see some common impact such as dropout from school, engagement in economic activities and vulnerability to abuse and exploitations.

1.6.3 Forms of Child Vulnerability

It is recognised that a high number of children in the society are at risk of being deprived of their fundamental rights. The following categories of children are considered at special risk and requiring protection and/or assistance:

- Children living in households headed by children
- Children in foster care
- Street children
- Children living in relief camps

- Children in conflict with the law
- Children with special need
- Children affected by armed conflict
- Children who are sexually exploited and/or abused
- Working children
- Children affected/infected by HIV/AIDS
- Infants with their mothers in prison
- Refugee and displaced children
- Children of single mothers
- Children who are married before their majority

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Any inability on the part of a child contributes to his/ her vulnerability.
a) TRUE b) FALSE
2. Primarily children experience social exclusion through the exclusion of their parents
a) TRUE b) FALSE
3. Children are dependent on their parents or primary caregivers for support and care because of the physical inability.
a) TRUE b) FALSE

1.7 SOCIAL EXCLUSION: CONCEPTS AND CHARACTERISTICS

Social exclusion can be defined as the continuous lack of an individual's access to functioning compared with other members of society, and it is manifested as the state of deprivation over time. Deprivation has two basic

determinants: the lack of identification with other members of society, and alienation (Bossert. et. al. 2007).

England's Social Exclusion Unit (1997) defined social exclusion as '*a shorthand for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown*'.

Social exclusion acts as a gateway to discrimination and oppression, which takes place when people are excluded from participating in the mainstream economic, social and political life of their community. Such restrictions are based on social class, category or group. In India, social exclusion occurs on the basis caste, ethnicity, religion, gender and disability.

According to Lenoir (1974) quoted in Silver (1994:532) wrote:

'the excluded made up one tenth of the French population: the mentally and the physically handicapped, suicidal people, aged invalids, abused children, drug addicts, delinquents, single parents, multi-problem households, marginal, asocial persons, and other social misfits'.

It means the people in the society who are out of the mainstream society can be designated as socially excluded. The reasons of exclusion are physical characteristics, any habit as well as any socio-economic aspect. As Silver (1994) notes that,

'the literature says people may be excluded from: a livelihood; secure, permanent employment; earnings; property, credit or land; housing; the

minimal or prevailing consumption level; education, skills and cultural capital; the benefits provided by the welfare state; citizenship and equality before the law; participation in the democratic process; public goods; the nation or the dominant race; the family and sociability; humane treatment, respect, personal fulfilment, understanding'

There are some other perspectives as well, according to which social exclusion is not only a particular state of a person but a mixed process of weakening economic and social structures. According to Estivill (2003):

'Social exclusion must ... be understood as an accumulation of confluent processes with successive ruptures arising from the heart of the economy, politics and society, which gradually distances and places persons, groups, communities and territories in a position of inferiority in relation to centres of power, resources and prevailing values'.

Social exclusion is multidimensional which encompasses social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, and operates at different social levels. It is very dynamic in nature and impacts in different ways and degrees. It can be said that social exclusion is a relational perspective which has two dimensions. On the one hand, it focuses on exclusion as the rupture of relationships between people and the society resulting in a lack of social participation, social protection, social integration and power. Alternatively, a relational perspective points to exclusion as the product of unequal social relationships characterised by differential power.

The three features of social exclusion

Social exclusion as a concept has three distinguishable features:

1. It involves culturally defined social categories, rooted in cultural perceptions, values and norms that shape social interaction.

2. It is embedded in social relations.
3. It affects people's rights and entitlements, denying them the opportunities they need to attain and maintain a universally acceptable standard of living and to fulfil their potential.

Types of Exclusion

Social exclusion may be categorized under following headings:

Political exclusion can include the denial of rights of a citizen by restricting political participation, right to organize agitations, the rule of law, freedom of expression and equality of opportunity. Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) argue that political exclusion also involves the notion that the state, which grants basic civil and political liberties, is not a neutral agency but a vehicle of a society's dominant classes, and may thus discriminate between social groups.

Economic exclusion may be explained as the lack of access to markets, credit and any kind of 'capital assets'.

Social exclusion takes place because of discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and age, which decreases the scope for such groups to gain access to any socio-economic resources.

Cultural exclusion is defined as the extent to which a diverse values, norms and ways of living are not accepted and respected.

Relationship between the causal factors is complicated and overlapping, thus, it is impossible to identify a single specific cause in the context of social exclusion. The process of social exclusion leads to poverty, suffering and sometimes death.

1.8 STRUCTURAL DETERMINANTS OF DISPARITY/DISCRIMINATION/ACCESS

Social structure refers to the interaction pattern within and among groups in a society. Social, economic, cultural and religious forces shape individual lives. Individual's wellbeing is determined by the inter play of these forces. In this section, we will learn about the structural determinants of disparity/ discrimination and access in the Indian context.

Caste

Indian society is organized around the principle of caste. According to A.R. Desai (1969) caste plays a prominent role in Indian society by determining functions, status and opportunities for an individual. *Caste is defined as endogamous hereditary group which decides the social status and occupation of an individual.* The economic and social lives of individuals are governed by the customs, norms and rules emerging from the caste organization.

Box 1.1:

Dr. Ketkar Defines caste as

“a social group having two characteristics: (i) membership is confined to those who are born of members and includes all persons so born; (ii) the members are forbidden by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group.”

Suggested Reading : Castes in India : Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development, B.R. Ambedkar (1917)

Source:

http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealc/pritchett/00ambedkar/txt_ambedkar_castes.html

Important characteristics of caste are

- Ascribed status: An individual's caste status is determined by birth. Membership in a caste is permanent and does not vary with changes in economic status, education or occupation.
- Strict rules in dining: Strict rules and regulation govern the food habits and dining habits of different castes.
- Prescribed occupation: In caste system the occupation is hereditary. Occupations for various castes are prescribed under the *Varna* system. Members of a particular caste are only allowed to practice the occupation prescribed for them.
- Endogamous marriage: People are allowed to marry only within their respective caste.
- Endogamous marriage plays an important role in maintaining the rigid character of caste. Inter-caste marriages are discouraged through various forms of punishments.

Caste is a complex system of governance in which individuals are divided into groups based on their birth. Not all castes are entitled to equal rights and opportunities. The upper caste enjoys all rights and privileges. The lower caste enjoy minimum right and privileges. The operation of caste is structured in such a way that the rights and entitlement gets narrower as the caste status in the hierarchy decreases.

Caste system through its restriction on physical and social mobility has resulted in the discrimination of lower castes in social, economic and political spheres of life. Caste identity of an individual may act as a determinant in securing his/her rights and entitlements as a citizen. Discrimination in access to services like health, education, housing, water,

and sanitation is common in many parts of the country. Caste identity also hinders meaningful participation of lower castes particularly the dalits in social, economic and political life.

Suggested Reading: Ambedkar, B.R. (2014). Annihilation of Caste. The Annotated Critical Edition New Delhi :Navayanya Publications

Class

Class is characterized by unequal distribution of economic resources. Class position is determined by wealth, income, education, and occupation. It is manifested by the differences in the pattern of life style and consumption. *Class can be defined as an economical stratification of society in terms of shared status, income, occupation and cultural values.* Class refers to the objective location of individuals in a production-distribution system. An individual or group may be located in upper class, middle class or lower class based on their income or wealth. Class also determines the accessibility of an individual or a group to income generating resources or assets.

The present form of class structure has its origin in the British colonial rule. Several socio economic changes that happened during the British period led to the growth of new classes in India. The agricultural reforms lead to rise of the Zamindars and tenant class. This period also saw the emergence of the working class with the introduction of railways and establishment of industries in Bombay (Mumbai) and Calcutta (Kolkata). Introduction of western education led to the rise of the professionals and the administrative class.

The role of class as a structural determinant of discrimination and disparity has received scholarly attention. The contribution of Karl Marx

and Max Weber in understanding the various dimensions of class is important. They have also inspired large number of scholars to further class analysis in their respective traditions. Weber explained that class determines an individual's opportunity to exchange one's resources, skills and labour in the market for income, which in turn determines an individual's experience and wellbeing. The capitalist class by virtue of their ownership to resources and the middle class by the virtue of their ownership to skills are in better position in class structure and has better opportunities for market exchange. The working class on the other hand neither has the resources nor the skills for exchange in the market. As a result the working class has limited opportunities for achieving material standards of living.

The structure of class by limiting opportunities deprives individuals and groups from accessing services like health, education, housing, safe water and sanitation facilities. Deprivation of basic services leads to discrimination and exclusion of individuals and groups from meaningful participation in the social, economic and political life. Marx's analysis of class prominently looks at the concept of exploitation of working class by the capitalists and middle class. Class operates as a system of inequality and exploitation to maximize the profit in capitalist mode of production. Such exploitation leads to poor health and working conditions.

Suggested Reading : Wright, E.O. (2004) "Social Class", in George Ritzer (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, Sage Publications : Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi

Ethnicity

Ethnic identity plays an important role in determining the position of an individual in the social structure. Ethnic identity of individuals and groups, particularly those of minorities are source of discrimination and exclusion. According to Horowitz, ethnicity is an umbrella term used to identify groups based on color, language and religion. It also used to denote tribes, races, nationalities and castes. Giddens defines ethnicity as the '*cultural practices and outlooks of a given community of people that set them apart from the others*'. According to Giddens, members of an ethnic group consider themselves as culturally distinct from other groups in the society. Language, history or ancestry, religion and styles of dress or adornment are the common characteristics that distinguish ethnic groups from one another.

Ethnicity becomes a source of discrimination and exclusion by virtue of the differences in religious beliefs, language, national origin and cultural practices of different ethnic groups. Ethnic identity is exploited by vested interests in the society as they can be easily mobilized. Mobilization based on ethnic identities leads to conflict and further discrimination and deprivation. Discrimination against ethnic groups takes multiple forms which leads to exclusion. A major form of discrimination based on ethnic identity takes place in the labour market leading to exclusion and deprivation.

Religion

Religion is a 'cultural system of commonly shared beliefs and rituals that provides a sense of ultimate meaning and purpose by creating an idea of reality that is sacred, all-encompassing and supernatural' (Giddens, 2006). Religious identity is a crucial determinant of discrimination and exclusion

for individuals and groups. Religious identity leads to exclusion at multiple levels. There is also a tendency on the part of the dominant religious groups to discriminate and exclude religious minorities. Discrimination based on religious identities are widely seen in access to health, education and housing services, employment opportunities or depriving individuals from enjoying their fundamental rights.

1.9 DRIVERS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND MARGINALIZATION

Major drivers of exclusion can be classified into demographic, economic, social, education, health and housing. Regional and spatial factors also drivers of exclusion. The following section will discuss these drivers and show how these drivers contribute to exclusion and marginalisation.

Demographic Drivers

Demographic structure of a given region or nation influences the well-being of the people in the region. Demographic drivers include fertility, ageing and change in family structure. For example, increased fertility rate at a particular point of time leads to unemployment and exclusion as there will be more people entering the labour market. Increased fertility rates place children at the risk of exclusion as this may result in poor care and support to children. Large sized families have differential impact on children depending on their age. Infants and toddlers might be deprived of parental care and attention. Infant, toddlers and preschoolers from poor families might also get deprived of material resources and nutrition. Children in the middle childhood and young teens might also be deprived from parental care and attention leaving them vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse or trafficking. They might also be deprived of educational

opportunities. Young teens and teenagers are most likely to miss their schools as the responsibility of caring the younger siblings falls on them. They might also end up in child labour as they will be forced to support their family income.

Family structure is also an important driver of exclusion as it predisposes individual and groups to exclusion. Women headed families in areas affected by armed conflict and families headed by unwed mothers are at high risk of exclusion. They might be excluded from quality housing and opportunities for livelihood. Migrant population is at high risk of exclusion and may fail to have access to health and educational services. Migrated children may tend to lose their identity or even nationality and hence access to services.

Economic Drivers

- ***Parental Income:*** Households with relatively low income have high probability of social exclusion. When the parental income is low, the children will be deprived of goods and services which are considered as necessities. Health, education and nutritional needs of the children of the household will suffer from low income, which would lead to the social exclusion of the individuals and families (Bradshaw, 2004). There is a strong relationship between increased child mortality and poverty. Children from poor households are likely to have low birth-weight; congenital anomalies, infectious diseases, obesity and poor diets. Further, it may result into physical abuse, child labour, trafficking, child marriage, female infanticide etc.

- **Employment status:** Lack of participation in the labour market leads to exclusion as well as contributes to other drivers of exclusion like poverty, homelessness and ill-health. Not only unemployment but the changes that have taken place in the nature of work and wages leads to exclusion. Wage inequality between skilled and unskilled workers, between male and female workers, increases inequality and leads to exclusion. Parental unemployment leads to deprivation of children in terms of nutrition, education, health care services etc.

Social drivers

Social exclusion in India is mainly based on the group identity of individuals like caste, ethnicity and religion. Caste is a major social driver of exclusion in many parts of India as caste system is practiced in the day to day socio-economic relations. The caste determines the rights and privileges to be enjoyed by an individual. Individuals belonging to higher caste enjoy more freedom comparing to individual from lower strata of caste hierarchy. As a result, individuals with lower caste status are deprived of social, economic and cultural rights. Inability to exercise rights hinder participation of individuals in social, cultural, political and economic spheres of life and there by result in to exclusion. Inhuman practices like, untouchability maintains the discrimination, perpetuates inequality between different caste groups.

Education

The role of education in preventing exclusion is considered to be very important. Education plays an important role in facilitating participation in the labour market. Children who complete schooling,

achieve qualifications with good scores are more likely to lead a better quality of life. Children who fail to complete schooling results in poor basic skills are at a higher risk of experiencing social exclusion. Similarly, adults who lack the basic literacy and numeracy skills are at a very high risk of exclusion. There is a strong correlation between parent's educational attainment and academic progress made by children. Children with parents who have good educational attainment are like to complete schooling and have better educational attainment comparing to children with illiterate parents.

Health

Health inequalities exclude individuals, families and communities from meaningful social and economic participation. Health inequalities results from structural factors like caste, class, ethnicity, gender, religion and region. Health inequality not only leads to exclusion but also pave way for other drivers of exclusion like unemployment, poverty, housing, etc. Health care costs are also an important cause of poverty particularly among the lower class of the population. Families with the chronically ill patients and families where head of the household fall sick are at high risk of exclusion.

Housing

India is home to a slum population of 65 million (Census, 2011). Homelessness is a major driver of social exclusion particularly in urban communities. Homeless people are devoid of documents that establishes their identity. Lack of documents for establishing identity deprives their access to services rendered by financial institutions, educational institutions, and social welfare programmes. People in slums are at a constant threat of evacuation by government and police.

They are harassed by law enforcement agencies which have implications for the physical and mental health. Children who are homeless are at higher risk of exploitation and abuse. They are more likely to dropout from schools, engage as child labour, may become victim of trafficking and other forms of abuse and exploitation.

Region

Regional or geographical location (remote area) with poor connectivity and difficult terrain leads to exclusion of communities. Some places irrespective of their urban and rural characteristics are vulnerable to exclusion. Slums in urban areas, hilly and remote villages that are populated by tribes, ethnic and religious minorities are also vulnerable to exclusion.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Match the Following

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| a) Demographic drivers | i) Caste |
| b) Economic drivers | ii) Fertility rate |
| c) Social Drivers | iii) Employment |

True or False

- 1) Class is characterized by unequal distribution of economic resources.
a) True b) False
- 2) Class is an economic stratification of society.
a) True b) False

1.10 SUMMARY

In nutshell, vulnerability explains the preparedness of an individual or a group or community to combat adverse influence of a crisis situation. There are many factors such as social, economic, cultural, religious, ethnicity, physical ability, employment, caste, class which influence the vulnerability of an individual, group or a community. Children are considered as the most vulnerable group because of their mental, cognitive and physical inability. They are constantly dependent upon their caregivers for their necessities. Further, parental educational status, employment, social status is also directly linked to child vulnerability. Thus, adequate actions are required to be taken to address the issues while considering existing diversities.

Suggested Questions

1. Define vulnerability. Explain the social and economic vulnerability.
2. Define child vulnerability and illustrate the various types of child vulnerability with examples.
3. What is social exclusion? Explain the various types of exclusion with example.

Further Readings

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UNIT 2: THEORIES OF VULNERABILITY

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Objectives
- 2.3 Fineman's Theory of Vulnerability
- 2.4 Social Risk Management Approach
 - 2.4.1 The Community Sector as agents of Social Risk Management
 - 2.4.2 Social Risk Management (SRM) Strategies
 - 2.4.3 SRM with Vulnerable Groups: A World Bank Approach
- 2.5 Gender Perspective
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 - 2.5.2 Vulnerability and Gender Perspectives
 - 2.5.3 Vulnerability and Gender Equality
- 2.6 Victim Blaming
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 - 2.6.2 Causes of Victim Blaming
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- 2.7 Sub-culture Theory
- 2.8 Subaltern Theory

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theories of vulnerability are seen as useful constructs to design social policies for addressing the vulnerabilities of children and child protection issues (Gear, 2013). In this unit; we will try to understand the different aspects and perspectives related to the concept of vulnerability. This

conceptual clarity will guide us through the other units when we will understand the specific vulnerabilities in the context of children and with emphasis to the North-East regions. To understand the nature and manifestation of violation of the rights of children and how those need to be addressed, it is important to understand the connotations and theories of vulnerability.

2.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, a student is expected:

- To understand the various theories related to the concept of vulnerability;
- To explain the Social Risk Management Approach aligned to addressing vulnerability issues;
- To understand and explain the connotations of gender perspectives concerning vulnerability;
- To understand and comprehend the concept and issue of Victim Blaming.

2.3 FINEMAN'S THEORY OF VULNERABILITY

Martha Albertson Fineman's theory of vulnerability has emerged as an influential framework for substantive and formal equality. It proposes that vulnerability is inherent to the human condition, and therefore that the governments have a responsibility to respond affirmatively to that vulnerability to ensure that all people have equal access to the societal institutions that distribute resources (Fineman, 2017). The theory provides an alternative basis for defining the role of government and gives a justification for broad and expansive social welfare policies. It also

suggests that vulnerability can replace group identity (e.g., race, gender, poverty) as a basis for targeting social policy. Specifically, the theory provides a helpful framework for understanding social responsibility and the role of the state. (Kohn, 2014)

The basic idea behind Fineman's theory of vulnerability is that all human beings are vulnerable and prone to dependency, both continually and episodically, and therefore the state has a corresponding obligation to reduce, ameliorate, and compensate for that vulnerability. According to the theory, it is neither just nor reasonable to expect that mere equal treatment will meet individuals' needs in a world in which no one is assured of avoiding injury, illness, or other adverse life events (Kohn, 2014). Fineman suggests that the state in order to meet its obligation to respond to human vulnerability must provide equal access to the "societal institutions" that distribute social goods and services such as healthcare, employment, and security. Therefore, it is understood that since the human situations cannot be equated or generalized, there is a need for substantial equality in the access of the state's services and institutions. In her words, Fineman said:

“Our vulnerability and the need for connection and care it generates are what make us reach out and form society. It is the recognition and experience of human vulnerability that brings individuals into families, families into communities, and communities into societies, nation states, and international organizations.”

Moreover, in Fineman's view, it is the State that has legitimized and given power to social institutions that increase resilience for some while undermining the resilience of others; thus the state must accept its

consistent obligation and responsibility for the "effects and operation" of those institutions (Kohn, 2014).

Fineman has explicitly developed vulnerability theory as an alternative to theories of social justice and responsibility that focus on achieving formal equality (i.e., equality that results from sameness of treatment). To promote substantial equality is the underlying goal of Fineman's theory. She posits the vulnerability theory as capable of advancing substantive equality (i.e., equality that results when people are equally benefited or disadvantaged by a law or policy) in a way that traditional approaches to equality cannot (Rosenfeld, 1986; Hughes, 1999). She argued that a formal equality approach fails to achieve meaningful social justice because it treats vulnerability as limited to special populations, which both obscures the fact that not all persons within protected populations are disadvantaged and mistakenly treats as invulnerable people who are not members of groups that are recognized as deserving special protection. As Grear(2013) argues, Fineman's theory of vulnerability represents not only an opinion that "formal equality approaches" fail because they do not recognize group differences, but her argument also further attributes this failure to oversimplification of identity.

Implications of Fineman's Theory

If the applicability of the vulnerability theory is to be considered, then it has the potential to support further understanding of social policy in three primary ways. First, by articulating that vulnerability is a universal condition of the human race, the theory emphasizes both the importance of the state and the importance of the state's acceptance of responsibility for creating and supporting systems that promote resilience across the lifespan and across populations. In this way, it helps provide a justification for the

adoption of laws that create and sustain important social welfare systems. For an instance, it helps to justify the existence of the entitlements programs for children such the Right to (Free and Compulsory) Education Act, 2010 which provides children (6-14 years) with safety nets that is essential when risks to their protection, growth and development or well-being is concerned.

Second, by detaching vulnerability from the notion of specific vulnerable groups and emphasizing the fact that all people are vulnerable and may experience dependency, vulnerability theory may help society to re-imagine the term "vulnerability" and ultimately reduce the stigma associated with vulnerability. Referring Fineman, Kohn (2014) has explained that vulnerability need not be equated with weakness.

The premise of the theory that vulnerability is universal, it promotes for comprehensive policies rather than piecemeal, population by population by population policy approach (Kohn, 2014), this implication is of great significance as it prevents policies to become unreasonably paternalistic and have pan applicability for all population.

2.4 SOCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Social risk management (SRM) is a conceptual framework developed by the World Bank, specifically for its Social Protection and Labour sector under the leadership of Robert Holzmann, since the end 1990s. Holzmann; Jorgensen (2001) used the term “social risk management” to refer to the social management of risks – that is, how society manages risks (not how to manage social risks). SRM focuses specifically on the poor, who are the most vulnerable to risk and more prone to suffer or face economic shocks. Through its strategies, SRM aims to reduce the vulnerability of the poor

and encourage them to get involved in riskier but activities having higher-return in order to cause transition and come out of chronic poverty.

The central thesis of Social Risk Management (SRM) approach is that all individuals, households and communities are vulnerable to multiple risks from different sources, whether they are natural (such as earthquakes, flooding and illness) or manmade (such as unemployment, environmental degradation and war). The premise of the approach is that the aforementioned shocks hit individuals, communities in a manner that cannot be predicted, hence prevented pushing them to poverty. The relation of poverty is to vulnerability since they are more exposed to risk while having limited access to appropriate risk management instruments to deal with those risks (Holzmann, 2003). The exposure to risks and lack of addressing it has its consequences on poor namely, it stresses poverty and the poor become averse to risks, unwilling to undertake risky activities that may ensure higher return. Thus, the provision and selection of appropriate SRM instruments is highly recommendable in reducing vulnerability and paving a path to come out of poverty (Holzmann, 2000)

Risk is endemic in our world and forms a powerful influence, both constructive (as an enticement to positive gains) and destructive (as adverse events beyond our control undermine our well-being). People are exposed to (or concerned by) many of the same risks. The management of these risks has long been a preoccupation for us as individuals, and for our families, and the larger communities and societies in which we live.

While the last century saw unprecedented improvements in our collective ability to deal with many of the adverse risks encountered over the course of our lives, it also saw the emergence of new risks that we continue to grapple with still. As well as, it revealed that our perception of risks is at

least as important as – and often at variance with the ostensibly objective properties that we can also attribute to them. If anyone needed a reminder that the pattern of risk and risk perceptions is not constant over time, they need to only look at the worldwide financial and economic turmoil during recent years and a seemingly regular stream of epidemics and both natural and man-made disasters. It is an undeniable fact that significant progress has been made in our ability to manage a wide range of specific risks.

The social risk management or the “social management of risk” refers generically to an approach that takes a broad view of the potential actors involved in pursuing societal objectives in relation to risk. Though by no means limited to thinking about social policy, SRM’s distinct approach to meeting social challenges, notably through a wide range of interventions by a diverse “ecosystem” of actors working sometimes autonomously, and sometimes in conjunction with others. In particular, the SRM approach acknowledges that a wide range of social actors have always played a significant role in helping individuals manage a wide variety of risks and that direct interventions by governments have long been supplemented – and in fact, predated – by the efforts of the following:

- Individuals themselves;
- Their immediate and extended families;
- Their local communities and broader social networks (ranging from local community based organizations to the broader voluntary sector – including unions, profession based associations, religious communities – as well as informal networks of friends and acquaintances both “in real life” and, increasingly, online); and

- Market based organizations (including employers and intermediaries in the social protection and broader financial sectors).

Since the SRM approach involves sometimes uncoordinated and sometimes orchestrated coming together of a large number of actors and their multiple efforts, it has somewhat a broader conception of the role of government policies. In particular, the direct interventions by governments may not always be dominant (or even particularly central) elements in a SRM strategy. For example, governments may have better chances to mobilize resources and orchestrate large-scale responses to more or less homogeneous challenges that occur simultaneously. However, families and informal social networks of which individuals form part (as well as formal organizations in the community and market sectors) may have better scope than governments:

- To take measures – tailored to the circumstances “on the ground” – for preventing risks that are idiosyncratic (or very localized in nature) from materializing;
- To identify when such risks nevertheless materialize;
- To mobilize resources from the family or the corresponding community to respond quickly and in context-appropriate ways to mitigate damage or to help cope with the situation;
- To use the more immediate reciprocity of family or community support to build stronger social networks (and directly enhance well-being more generally)

- To experiment with a wide range of alternative strategies and adapt quickly to the changing circumstances on the ground (Holzmann, 2001).

Moreover, the relative strengths and weaknesses of various social actors (or, at least, our understanding of those strengths and weaknesses) are themselves evolving. This may be particularly true as increasing numbers of perceived risks may be the manifestations of complex processes that resist the one-size-fits-all solutions that governments have traditionally been most comfortable with, while others may have systemic aspects requiring large-scale interventions. For reasons like these, an SRM approach may imply the need for government policy makers to pay at least as much attention to facilitating interventions by others (those better placed to play key roles in particular circumstances) as they pay to how they themselves intervene directly in support of citizens (Figure 1).

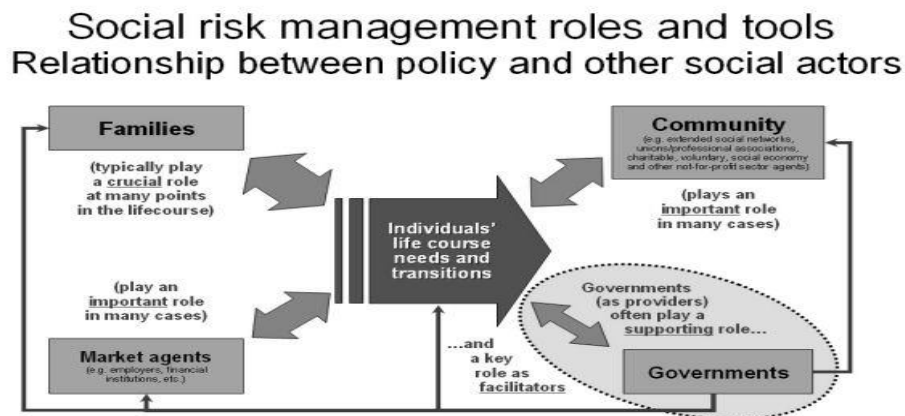


Figure 1: The SRM Approach

2.4.1 The Community Sector as Agents of Social Risk Management

Multifaceted and diverse in its form, function, and scope (though often geographical in range, or “place-based,” given the power of face-to-face

interactions), the “community sector” constitutes a highly heterogeneous class of social actors that straddles the spaces occupied by families, the market sector, and governments (Figure 2).

Although there are a variety of different ways in which one can classify, organize, and name the sector, it is important to note that it can involve informal networks (interest-based networks of friends, acquaintances, colleagues, co-religionists, etc.) as well as the formal community-based organizations that are often the focus of attention for both policy makers and researchers. Yet the importance of informal networks as sources of support cannot be underestimated. As a source of help in dealing with many risks, the breadth, depth, and intensity of one’s connections and reciprocal obligations to others can be as important as formal community institutions (and typically more so) and even, in many cases, as important as families.



Figure 2. The Community Sector

Taken together, community sector networks and organizations occupy a broad (and often unique) range of “ecological niches” in responding to the needs of individuals and society. With membership extending beyond kinship, the community sector has the potential to provide social support through a more diversified portfolio of resources than families alone,

sometimes with levels of commitment and intensity that can exceed those found within families. The primary social orientation of the community sector also distinguishes it from the market sector, which, although it too can be a major source of self-support and social support, driven predominantly by the financial bottom line. Often flexible and well attuned to the realities “on the ground,” community networks and organizations are also typically viewed as the key sources and vectors for social innovation. As noted by Gardner (2011), comprehensive community-based initiatives have significant strengths that may make them much more effective than traditional approaches when tackling complex problems.

Having this approach described supported by an example from the community sector, it can be said that it is also relevant in any situation where social actors respond to and manage risks in a multi-player environment. In these kinds of situations, the diversity of players, acting together with varying degrees of autonomy and coordinated action, provide a distinct and powerful approach to managing risk (Péloquin, 2011).

2.4.2 Social Risk Management (SRM) Strategies

Risk management can take place at different moments - both before and after the risk occurs. The goal of *ex-ante* measures is to prevent the risk from occurring, or, if this cannot be done, to mitigate the effects of the risk. Individual efforts, such as migration, can prevent risks, but, in many cases, this requires support from the government (for example, disaster prevention). Mitigating the effects of risk through risk pooling by definition requires people to interact with other individuals, and poor people are typically less able to participate in formal as well as informal

arrangements. This leaves most poor households with the residual option of coping with the risk once it has occurred. They are generally poorly prepared to do this and, therefore, often experience irreversible negative effects (Holzmann 2001).

Prevention Strategies: These strategies are implemented before a risk event occurs. Reducing the probability of an adverse risk increases people's expected income and reduces income variance, and both of these effects increase welfare. There are many possible strategies for preventing or reducing the occurrence of risks, many of which fall outside of social protection, such as sound macro-economic policies, environmental policies, and investments in education. Preventive social protection interventions typically form part of measures designed to reduce risks in the labour market, notably the risk of unemployment, under-employment, or low wages due to inappropriate skills or malfunctioning labour markets.

Mitigation Strategies: As the case of prevention strategies, the mitigation strategies aim to address the risk before it occurs. Wherein, preventive strategies reduce the probability of the risk occurring, the mitigation strategies help individuals to reduce the impact of a future risk event through pooling over assets, individuals, and over time. For example, a household might invest in a variety of different assets that yield returns at different times (for example, two kinds of crops that can be harvested in different seasons), which would reduce the variability of the household's income flow. Another mitigation strategy for households that face largely uncorrelated risks is to "pool" them through formal and informal insurance mechanisms.

Coping Strategies: These are strategies designed to relieve the impact of the risk once it has occurred. The main forms of coping consist of individual saving, borrowing, or relying on public or private transfers. The government has an important role to play in helping people to cope (for example, when individuals or households have not been able to accumulate enough assets to handle repeated or catastrophic risks). The smallest income loss would make these people destitute and virtually unable to recover.

2.4.3 SRM with Vulnerable Groups: A World Bank Approach

The World Bank's approach to social protection in a globalizing world recognizes that certain groups of poor people are even more exposed and vulnerable, and that risks are often mutually reinforcing. For an instance, HIV/AIDS orphans as well as children in extremely poor households are at high risk of dropping out of school and becoming working children. Many children, with low human capital and in poor health, tend to grow up to become at-risk and unemployed youth. The disabled individuals in a community are often stigmatized and denied of access to the basic social services and amenities. Evidence also indicates that the sudden loss of income from a working adult (for whatever reason), or a sudden eruption of armed conflict, leads to a high likelihood for child destitution and child labour. As risks multiply and the number of such vulnerable individuals grows, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be possible unless the vulnerabilities and risks that confront these groups are addressed holistically with appropriate public, community and private interventions (Holzmann,2003).

Child Labour is undoubtedly one of the most devastating consequences of persistent poverty. The World Bank in partnership with some internal and

external groups has been working to gain a better understanding of the composition and extent of child labor; various forms of child labour; the interaction between child labor and overall labor markets and human capital. Similarly how to most effectively design interventions and reduction strategies; and how to develop comprehensive SRM strategies to address the issue of child labour have been explored.

Disabled Children and their families are disproportionately poor, and poor people are disproportionately disabled. The fundamental goal of the World Bank's disability work is to reduce poverty among people with disabilities by mainstreaming disability concerns in the World Bank's strategies, policies, programs and projects. From a Social Risk Management perspective, some estimated 80 percent of disabilities can be prevented, in particular before and shortly after birth by access to safe water and sewage, secure nutrition, and access to basic health care services. For the remaining 20 percent, progress/ improvements could be made through a complete integration into the society that includes integrated education and universal access (to buildings, transport and jobs).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Which of the following institution is associated with development of Social Risk Management (SRM)?
 - a) United Nations
 - b) World Health Organization
 - c) Asian Development Bank
 - d) World Bank
2. Which of the following is not a Social Risk Management (SRM) Strategies?
 - a) Prevention strategies
 - b) Mitigation Strategies
 - c) Market Strategies
 - d) Coping Strategies

2.5 GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Gender refers to the socially constructed differences between men and women (male and female or boy and girl). The gender differences in a society are usually manifested through the roles that men and women are assigned, the way in which men and women are expected to conduct themselves in the society, the occupations men and women are expected to take up and the extent of social participation of men and women in society.

As boys grow up, they gradually start imitating their father or any other adult male members in the family. They do so, by dressing like adult males, they walk like them or they imitate their behaviour. Similarly, girls also imitate their mother or adult females in the family by dressing like them, putting on make-up or play with the dolls pretending to be taking care of a baby. Girls and boys by their performances usually emulate the gender roles that have been constructed for men and women in their respective societies. Gender roles in all societies are perceived to be normal and natural. However, gender roles vary from society to society and time to time. Gender roles and norms are often reinforced through many institutions in the society like family, religion and education. Individuals imbibe the gender roles through the socialization process and it affects each and every aspect of the society (Jackson, 1999).

Box 2.1:

Gender: refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those with men (United Nations, 2011).

Suggested Reading: United Nations (2002) Gender Mainstreaming: An Overview.

2.5.1 Gender Discrimination

Gender is a source of discrimination and exclusion in many societies across the world. Gender discrimination against girls starts right from their conception. Sex selective abortion is a gender discriminatory practice found in many parts of the world - the female fetus is aborted due to preference for a son. Gender discriminatory practices against girls lead to increasing vulnerability, deprivation of nutritious food, education, leisure and opportunities that are essential for their development. It also manifests in the power relations in the family. Role of women in decision making in the family and ownership to property are some indicators that determine gender equality in the family. Gender discrimination also leads to practices like child marriage, sexual abuse and domestic violence inside their homes, families. Women are discriminated based on gender in their workplace and other public places. Much of the violence against women in society is a result of gender discrimination. Gender based discrimination leads to deprivation of material resources and opportunities for meaningful participation in social life that also restricts their empowerment. Property rights are one such instance where women have been constantly discriminated. Prior to the Hindu Succession Act 1956, Hindu women had no right to property. The laws that followed the Hindu Succession Act also

had different loopholes and discriminatory clauses that deprived women from having property rights and excluded them from the benefits and opportunities resulting from access to material resources (Jones and Holmes, 2010).

2.5.2 Vulnerability and Gender Perspectives

As Dilley (2005) writes in his book, the most vulnerable populations tend to be the most marginalized, due to the lack of access to information, lack of security, and irregular food supply, which, in lesser developed countries, tend to be women and children (Dilley, 2005). Consequently, they become more vulnerable, and their affliction is more severe during and after the disaster occurs. Even though information about particular cases is scarce, studies, polls, and post-disaster evaluations indicate that women and girls are more likely to die after a natural disaster not because of biological reasons but because of gender norms that commonly forbid women's access to aid, food, and information (Araujo, 2013). Women face a double disaster since they are prone to experience not only material loss but also intangible damages. Unlike men, who are often prioritized in hospital and food distribution, girls and women do not receive immediate medical attention. They are usually forced to leave their homes, and they are often relegated to the margins when aid is distributed. Their health and well-being are further compromised as they are more vulnerable to suffer from sexual violence, trauma, increased workload, and exclusion from education, and girls are frequently pressured to marry older men (Bradshaw, n.d). Therefore, women who are primary caregivers with greater responsibility for household work has less time and capacity to mobilize resources for recovery and consequently will become fatal victims of this kind of emergency (Fitzpatrick, 2006).

Miloon Kothari, a special rapporteur on adequate housing of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, stated:

“immediately after the tsunami, aid was often distributed in places and ways that were more accessible to men. It was a struggle for women to be recognized as the heads of households and receive their dues. Only in a very few cases was special attention given to the needs of single women, including widows. In all countries, compensation was almost always handed out to male members of the family who did not necessarily share it with the women”.

He further added that relief and rehabilitation processes are dominated by men not recognizing the role of women in recovery process (Kothari, 2006)

Consequently, international humanitarian actors need to address gender-specific concerns of single women, including widows and teenage girls. International organizations’ interests must include but must not be limited to poor access to health services, displacement, violence, and poverty. Many of the affected women have not been able to create a household and had not been compensated after the death of their partners, which creates unequal housing opportunities forcing women to live in shelters that affect their privacy and security. According to Izquierdo 2015, “Women are being routinely excluded from decision making. Government policies have failed to offer new opportunities for women” (p 9).

Similarly, the Human Rights Center of the University of California, Berkeley), have stated that

Women and children, especially if they are widowed or orphaned, are at risk of exploitation due to higher rates of morbidity and mortality and continued displacement without the safety net of family and community to protect them. Moreover, aid often undermines self-sufficiency and perpetuates dependency on relief

Human Rights Center, 2005 noted:

‘Many studies were made after the Tsunami of 2004, but none of them found any confirmed cases of human trafficking of survivors. Although it was known that many girls between the ages of 12 and 15 were wed to older men and obligated to establish new households outside their villages’ (p9)

In a disaster, women are generally “affected differently from men” because of their social status, family responsibilities or reproductive role. Furthermore, statistics show that women, boys, and girls are 14 times more likely than men to die during a disaster. Women also confront unique challenges when facing disasters. Despite literature that suggests women are more likely to recognize and respond to risk, women tend to be poorer relative to men and may not have the necessary resources to respond to and recover from disasters. This problem is particularly evident among single mothers, whose poverty rates exceed that of single or married women and who must not only protect themselves but must also safeguard the lives of their children when threats emerge. During the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, women and children were more likely to suffer injuries and fatalities than men and boys were. Women’s vulnerability to disasters is also shaped by the traditional gender roles, power and

privilege, low wages, and secondary responsibilities such as childcare (Enarson, 1998).

Women and girls are also prone to experience more intangible losses (e.g., loss of health, mental illness). They are subject to a number of indirect impacts that arise from the event, including violence and trauma, pressure to marry early, loss or reduction in education opportunities, and an increase in their workload. Thus, they may suffer a “double disaster” and these intangible impacts may be the real “disaster” for women and girls (Bradshaw, 2013).

2.5.3 Vulnerability and Gender Equality

There are many variables that affect a child’s protection risks, including ethnicity, the existence or absence of effective child protection legislation, war or peace, and access to educational opportunities. Yet one of the most significant factors is the sex of the child and related gender norms. Inequalities between the sexes typically reflect – and can increase vulnerabilities. Boys and girls, including adolescents, may face different protection risks, have different needs and choices, and possess different skills, knowledge and coping strategies.

Gender equality is a rights issue and a precondition for sustainable development. If girls, boys and women are empowered through various programmes of Government and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), gender equality thus then is encouraged and promoted. The facilitation of gender responsive services can help improve boys’ and girls’ access to resources and opportunities to prevent or minimize their vulnerability to identified risk factors, and allow them to live free from violence, exploitation and abuse. For example, a girl’s access to safe

shelter after exposure to sexual violence could include non-formal education activities regarding human rights that allow her to consider life differently, as opposed to life that is predetermined by her gender (UNICEF, 2011).

2.6 VICTIM BLAMING

Psychologist William Ryan coined the phrase "blaming the victim" in his 1971 book, *Blaming the Victim*. In the book, Ryan described victim blaming as an ideology used to justify racism and social injustice against black people in the United States. However, victim blaming usually occurs when the victim of a crime or any wrongful act is held completely or partially at fault for the harm that has been caused. The study of victimology actually explores the avenues to mitigate the perception of victims as responsible. There is a greater tendency to blame victims of rape than victims of robbery if victims and perpetrators know to each other (Schoellkopf, 2012).

The practice of victim blaming is common around the world, especially in cultures where it is socially acceptable and advised to treat certain groups of people as lesser and weaker. For an example, in Somalia, victims of sexual abuse consistently endure social ostracization and harassment. One specific example is kidnapping and rape of 14-year old Fatima: when the police arrived, both Fatima and her rapist were arrested. While they did not detain the offender for long, the officers held Fatima captive for a month and a prison guard continually raped her during that period (Independent, 2015).

There are two key psychological explanations for why people tend to blame rape victims. The first is the Invulnerability theory (André and

Velazquez, 1990). This theory asserts that people would like to believe they are safe from harmful and heinous acts against them. Therefore, they formulate ideas of what someone in displeasing circumstances, such as a rape victim, must have done to invite the rape. Creating ideas of “victim fault” contributes to a sense of invulnerability because people tend to feel they can identify behaviours that would make them vulnerable, and can practice prevention by simply avoiding these attributes. People who subscribe to the Invulnerability Theory are likely to be harsh in their accusations of blame and fault because it is crucial to this framework that victims must have done something to make them vulnerable. Parallel to Invulnerability theory is the Just World theory, which asserts that the world is surely a just place, and therefore, people reap what they sow. Whenever, something bad happens to someone, they must have exhibited some fault to precipitate the crisis (Conaway)

2.6.1 Meaning of Victim Blaming

Victim blaming is a devaluing act that occurs when the victim(s) of a crime or an accident is held responsible – in whole or in part for the crimes that have been committed against them (Victim Blame, 2007). This blame can appear in the form of negative social responses from legal, medical, and mental health professionals, as well as from the media and immediate family members and other acquaintances (Coates, 2006).

Some victims of crime receive more sympathy from the society than from others. Often, the responses toward crime victims are based on the misunderstanding of others. This misunderstanding may lead them to believe that the victim deserved what happened to them, or that they are individuals with low self-esteem who seek out to violence. As a result, it

can be very difficult for victims to cope when they are blamed for the incident they have undergone (Schoellkopf, 2012).

2.6.2 Causes of Victim Blaming

There are numerous reasons why people choose to blame victims for the crimes that have actually happened to them. These reasons stem from misconceptions about victims, perpetrators, and the nature of violent acts. Victims are sometimes wrongfully portrayed as passive individuals who seek out and submit to the violence they endure. Offenders are seen as helpless individuals who are compelled to act violently by forces they cannot control. The most popular reasons for blaming victims include belief in a just world, attribution error, and invulnerability theory (Crime, 2009).

Just World Hypothesis: The just world hypothesis is based on an individual's belief that the world is a safe, just place where people get what they deserve. These individuals believe that the social system that affects them is fair, legitimate, and justifiable (Kay, 2005). Such strong beliefs in individuals can be challenged when they encounter victims of random misfortune, such as violent crimes. The perception of these individuals is that good things happen to good people, and bad things to bad people (Idisis, 2007). Therefore, when people with these beliefs view victims they believe that their victimization was caused through some fault of their own itself (Johnson, 2002). In this way, one who believes in a just world maintains their belief because there is not an innocent, suffering victim, but someone who “deserves” their misfortune (Victim Blame, 2007). Blaming the victim maintains beliefs of personal responsibility and controllability over social outcomes (Kay, 2005). Moreover, this

hypothesis presents the world as a safe and protected place, even in time of hardship.

Proponents of the just world hypothesis judge the harshness of events as a function of harm caused. Thus, if a victim in case is not harmed in a severe manner, then what happened to them can be seen merely as an accident. However, as the severity of harm increases, believers begin to think that ‘this could also happen to me.’ Therefore, a way for these individuals to cope and restore their faith in the world is to blame victims for their misfortunes (Walster, 1966).

Attribution Error: According to Kelly and Heider, there are two categories of attribution: i) internal and ii) external. Individuals make internal attributions when they recognize that a person’s personal characteristics are the cause of their actions or situation. External attributions, however, have individuals identify the environment and circumstances as the cause for a person’s behavior (Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1972).

Attribution error occurs when individuals overemphasize personal characteristics and devalue environmental characteristics when judging others, resulting in victim blaming. People, who make this error, view the individual victim as partially responsible for what happened to them and ignore situational causes. The so-called “internal failings” take precedent over situational contributors in judgement of the subject. On the contrary, these people may have the propensity to attribute their own failures to environmental attributes, and their own successes to personal attributes (Johnson, 2002).

Invulnerability Theory: Invulnerability theory claims that those who subscribe to blame victims as a means to protect their own feelings of invulnerability (Andrew, 2003). The theory is based on subscribers blaming the victim in order to feel safe themselves. Even friends and family members of crime victims may blame the victim in order to reassure themselves.

A common statement would be:

“She was raped because she walked home alone in the dark. I would never do that, so I won’t be raped.” (Blaming the Victim, 1998).

The theory states that victims are a reminder of our own vulnerability. Individuals do not want to consider the possibility of losing control over their life or body; by deciding that a victim brought on the attack to themselves, they create a false sense of security. This reassures people that as long as they do not act as the victim did at the time of their attack, they will be invulnerable (Victim Blame, 2007).

2.6.3 Effects of Victim Blaming:

Victim blaming can have many negative and devastating effects on the innocent victims, who have been deemed at fault even though they bear no responsibility for the crime which has been committed against them (Crime, 2009). One effect of victim blaming is the subsequent effect it has on the reporting of further crime. Victims who receive negative responses and blame tend to experience greater distress and are less likely to report future abuse (Coates, 2006). The victims, who have been blamed, prefer to

avoid secondary victimization in the future, so they do not report further crime.

Victim Blaming, along with effecting a victim's decision to report crime, can also impact on a confidante's willingness to support a victim's decision, a witnesses' willingness to testify, authorities' commitment in pursuing cases and prosecuting offenders, a jury's decision to convict, a prosecutor's decision to recommend incarceration and a judge's decision to impose incarceration (George, 2002).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Match the following

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) Gender | i) Female feticide |
| b) William Ryan | ii) Social construct |
| c) Causes of victim blaming | iii) just world hypothesis |
| d) Internal attributes | iv) Blaming the victim |

2.7 SUB-CULTURE THEORY

The sub-cultural theory was first developed by the Chicago School in 1920s, by exploring the existence of deviant behavior and discussed deviance as a product of social problems within the society. Further, the Birmingham School, added to the theory, investigating the ways in which individuals joined different groups that participates in collective forms of deviance, referred to as sub-cultures (Cohen, 1972). For contemporary theorists, the concept itself is controversial and some align with a “post-

subculture” perspective suggesting that sub-culture no longer describes the collective activities. But sociologists and criminologists continue to study the sub-cultures in order to uncover why sub-cultures form, why sub-culturists choose to engage in deviant group behaviour and what sub-cultural activity can tell us about society as a whole (Fischer, 1995).

Sub-cultural Theorists

Sub-cultural theorists said that deviance is the result of individuals conforming to the values and norms of a social group to which they belong. If one belongs to a social group which does not conform to social norms is termed as deviant.

*Cohen(1955)*said that boys from lower-working class aspires to achieve success that is valued by mainstream culture, however often is unable to do so due to failure in education and dead end jobs. This results in what he called is ‘status frustration’, the boys being at the bottom of the social structure, have little chance of gaining a higher status in society. They reject the norms and values of mainstream society and instead turn to the norms and values of a delinquent sub-culture. In these sub-cultures, the individual who lacked respect in mainstream society can gain it within their sub-culture by committing crimes such as vandalism, stealing and truancy that are generally condemned by the mainstream society. Because the crimes reward the individual with respect, there is not always the need for a monetary value to commit a crime, explaining the sub-cultural perspective of why people commit non-utilitarian crimes (Cook, 2017).

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin developed Cohen’s theory. They said that, there are three different types of sub-cultures that the young people

might enter into: Criminal subcultures, Conflict subcultures and Retreatist subcultures.

- *Criminal sub-cultures* tend to emerge in areas where there is a lot of organised adult crime. In those areas, there are criminal role models for young people and they gradually learn how to commit criminal acts. In these sub-cultures, the young people can climb up the professional criminal ladder by committing more crimes. These sub-cultures are normally concerned with utilitarian crimes, which yield financial rewards.
- *Conflict sub-cultures* tend to emerge in areas where there is little organised adult crime, so instead of learning how to commit serious monetary crimes the young people instead focus on gaining respect through gang violence as a medium.
- *Retreatist sub-cultures* are when if the young people who have even failed in the criminal subcultures, are perceived as ‘double failures’. As a result they tend to retreat to drugs and alcohol abuse to deal with the fact that they have been rejected from other sub-cultures (Cook, 2017).

Miller agreed with Cohen that there was a delinquency subculture, but argued that it arose entirely from the lower class way of life (Sub Cultural Theory ; n.d). He said that a deviant sub-culture does not arise from the inability of the members to achieve success; instead a crime is a result of the fact that there is a lower-class subculture with different norms and values to the rest of society. These different values mean that for the members of this sub-culture there are a number of concerns and things people want to achieve, he called these ‘focal concerns’ and they include:

- **Toughness** – Miller said that people within the lower class sub-culture value toughness as an important trait. However, this can manifest itself in assault and violence.
- **Smartness** – This sub-culture also value the ability to outfox each other. This will often lead to people trying to con, pickpocket or steal from each other in ‘clever’ ways.
- **Excitement** – This sub-culture constantly searches for excitement and thrills. This often means gambling, alcohol and sexual adventures.

Instead, the young delinquents are involved in crime only occasionally as part-time law-breakers. He argued that, rather than being committed to delinquency, young people drifted between conventional and unconventional behavior (Cook, 2017). Matza suggested that there is no distinct subculture amongst young people; rather all groups of society actually share subterranean values, which tempt human beings to deviate from social norms (Revised Sociology)

Characteristics of Sub-cultures

It is important to note that there is no one agreed upon definition of a subculture by sociologists. Sub-cultural theorists continue to expand and alter the definition of sub-cultures, as they investigate more sub-cultural groups and incorporate sociological theories of deviance into the sub-cultural framework. Thus, the definition of subculture is contentious. However, a working definition is necessary for an introductory understanding of sub-cultures and sub-cultural theory. Thus, the characteristics of sub-cultures outlined below, incorporate concepts and theories from the most prominent sub-cultural scholars, but by no means

constitute a definitive checklist for determining what counts as a subculture and what does not.

- *Diffuse Networks* – Sub-cultures do not consist of formal leadership, formal membership, or any explicit organizational structure (Haenfler, 2014). Rather, sub-cultures have loose and informal participation, as the boundaries of who and what embodies a sub-culture are contested and fluid. Membership is not exclusive (Williams, 2011); sub-culturists can identify as part of the subculture and simultaneously interact with people in other cultural and social networks. Consequently, the boundaries between mainstream culture and subculture are often indistinguishable, as the two cultural domains can share ideas and co-exist in the lives of individuals.
- *Shared Distinct Meanings* – Sub-culturists not only share an identity, they also share values, practices, and cultural objects (Haenfler, 2014). For example, ‘straight edgers’ value their community and their interpersonal relationships, they practice clean-living (substance-free), and they purchase objects of importance such as the most-popular hardcore punk albums. As sub-cultures emerge, distinct meanings form to define the scene’s unique practices and cultural objects as well as to distinguish the sub-culture from mainstream culture. Meanings are both created and learned through social interaction. The values and expected

behaviours of subcultures often deviate in some way from the generally accepted norms of society (Dotter, 1988).

- *Shared Identity* – Many ethnographers argue that a collective form of self-identification is perhaps the most important distinguisher between a subculture and a simple social group (Jasper, 2001). It is important to distinguish between social groups that develop from common bonds (attachment to other group members) and subcultures comprised of people that share a strong common identity (Gardner, 1996).
- *Resistance* – Resistance, either passive or active, to dominant hegemonic cultural values often accompanies sub-cultural participation in one form or another. There exist three dimensions that comprise sub-cultural resistance (Williams, 2009). First, resistance may either be passive or active, based on participants' intention to resist. Second, resistance may exist at the micro or macro level, depending on what or for whom the resistance is directed. At the micro level, resistance may be developed as a psychological defense mechanism against bullies and peers, whereas macro level resistance is usually directed at politicians or policy makers.
- *Marginalization* – The sub-culture members are considered as marginalized individuals who do not fit well within the dominant culture. Since these individuals cannot meet the norms of the dominant culture and are labeled as deviant,

they are marginalized from fully participating in the dominant culture.

- *Specialized Vocabulary* – Specialized vocabulary illustrates the division between those in the subculture and those who are not, with certain specific words and phrases being understood by either all or a small percentage of the sub-culture (Haenfler, 2014). Thus, specialized sub-cultural vocabulary demonstrates how much individuals are a part of a sub-culture and adds to the internal hierarchy of the sub-culture. Some colloquial vocabularies are modified and re-modified with distinct accent from the mainstream society that on the other hand becomes a trend within their sub-cultural community.

2.8 SUBALTERN THEORY

In post-colonial theory, the term *subaltern* describes the lower classes and the social groups who are at the margins of a society: a subaltern is a person rendered without agency by social status. In Marxist theory, the civil sense of the term *subaltern* was first coined by the Italian communist intellectual, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), through his book on cultural hegemony named “Prison Notebook”, which identified the groups that are excluded from a society’s established institutions and thus are denied the means by which people have a voice in their society. The term *subaltern* designates (Aybar, 2016) “the populations and groups that are socially, politically and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland”

In order to study the history of the subaltern groups, Gramsci designed a plan composed of six steps that are found to be explained in detail in his book.

- Firstly, the subaltern people's formation of objectives by changes taking place in economic production.

- Secondly, their active or passive affiliation to the dominant political formations/organizations and their attempts to influence their programmes.

- Thirdly, the birth of new parties and dominant groups, which are mainly created for the subjugation and maintenance of the subaltern.

- Fourthly, the formations which the subaltern group themselves made to vindicate limited rights.

- Fifthly, the new formations that maintain the subaltern groups autonomy within old frameworks.

- Sixthly, those formations that may help to affirm their entire autonomy (Gramsci, 1971).

Ironically, Gramsci argued that the subaltern classes have the same complex history as that of the hegemonic classes, although the latter constitutes the most officially accepted. The subaltern groups' history in Gramsci's opinion has no evident unity and it seems to be in its very episodic totality because of their submission to the authority of the ruling groups even when they break with the established system (Chaturvedi, 2006).

The terms *Subaltern* and *Subaltern Studies* entered post-colonial studies through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group, a collection of historians of the Indian Subcontinent who explored political-actor role of the men and women who constitute the mass population, rather than the political roles of the social and economic elites, in the history of Indian Sub-continent (Guha, 1982). The distinct difference between the elite and the subaltern is evident when we conceived it through the notion of political mobilization. The elite political mobilization is fulfilled through appropriation of or adjustment to the British parliamentary institutions and laws whereas the subaltern political mobilization is founded on classical forms of social organization such as: blood relationships and kinship, territoriality, traditional and tribal affiliations where popular mobilization take the form of peasant insurgencies and regional demonstrations. No matter how heterogeneous the subaltern groups are, there is a constantly unchanging characteristic that defines them i.e the notion of resistance to the imposed domination of the elite class (Louai, 2012).

As a method of intellectual discourse, the concept of the *subaltern* is contentious because it originated as a Euro-centric method of historical enquiry for studying the non-western people of Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. From its inception, as an historical-research model for studying the colonial experience of the peoples of the Indian Subcontinent, *Subaltern Studies* transformed from a model of intellectual discourse into a method of "vigorous post-colonial critique". The term "subaltern" these days is generally used in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, human geography, literary criticism, musicology and art history(Pandey, 2006).

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Match the following

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| a) Cohen | i) Sub-culture Theory |
| b) Antonio Gramsci | ii) Status frustration |
| c) Chicago School | iii) Focal concern |
| d) Miller | iv) Prison Notebook |

Suggested Questions

1. Elucidate Fineman's Theory of vulnerability.
2. Explain the Social Risk Management Approach aligned to addressing vulnerability issues.
3. Explain the aspects of gender perspectives concerning vulnerability.
4. Describe the concept and issue of Victim Blaming with examples related to children.
5. Write short notes on:
 - i. Sub-culture Theory
 - ii. Subaltern Theory

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