



## Person with Disabilities in India

This article is based on [“The great omission in the draft disability policy”](#) which was published in The Hindu on 15/07/2020. It talks about the inclusiveness and empowerment of persons with disabilities in India.

**For Prelims:** United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons, Directive Principles of State Policy, Electronic voting machines, Comprehensive Newborn Screening, Unique Disability Identification Portal.

**For Mains:** Constitutional Framework for Disabled in India, Issues Related to Persons with Disability in India, Recent Initiatives to Empowerment of Disables.

**Disability** results from the **interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers** that **hinder their full and effective participation in society** on an equal basis with others.

**As per Census 2011**, at the all India level, disabled persons constitute **2.21%** of the total population. **7.62% of the disabled persons belong** to the age group **0-6 years**.

India signed the [United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability](#), and subsequently ratified the same on **October 1, 2007**. Enactment of a new disability legislation ([Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016](#)) increased the number of disabilities from 7 conditions to 21.

Focus on disabilities has been shifted from the individual to society, i.e., **from a medical model of disability to a social or human rights model of disability**.

### What are the Various Models of Disability?

#### ▪ **Medical Model:**

- In the medical model, individuals with certain **physical, intellectual, psychological and mental impairments** are taken as disabled.
  - According to this, the **disability lies in the individual as it is equated with restrictions of activity** with the burden of adjusting with the environment through **cures, treatment and rehabilitation**.

#### ▪ **Social Model:**

- The social model focuses on the **society which imposes undue restrictions on the behaviour of persons with impairment**.
  - In this, **disability does not lie in individuals, but in the interaction between individuals and society**.

### What is the Constitutional Framework for Disabled in India?

- **Article 41** of the [Directive Principles of State Policy \(DPSP\)](#) states that the State shall make effective provision for **securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance** in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and **disablement**, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
- The subject of '**relief of the disabled and unemployable**' is specified in the **state list of the Seventh Schedule** of the constitution.

## What are the Issues Related to Persons with Disability in India?

- **Discrimination:**
  - Continuous discrimination on the basis of the stigma attached to persons with disabilities, **compounded by a lack of understanding of their rights**, makes it difficult for them to attain their valued "functioning".
    - **Women and girls with disabilities** are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of [gender-based violence](#).
- **Health:**
  - A **large number of disabilities are preventable**, including those arising from medical issues during birth, maternal conditions, malnutrition, as well as accidents and injuries.
    - However, **there is a lack of awareness, lack of care, and lack of good and accessible medical facilities**.
- **Education and Employment:**
  - **Lack of availability of special schools**, access to schools, trained teachers, and educational materials for the disabled.
  - **Even though many disabled adults are capable of productive work**, disabled adults have far **lower employment rates than the general population**.
- **Political Participation:**
  - The exclusion of disabled people from the political space happens at all levels of the political process in the country, and in different ways such as:
    - **Lack of live aggregate data** on the exact number of the disabled people in the constituencies.
    - **Inaccessibility of the voting process** (no widespread adaptation of **braille electronic voting machines**).
    - **Barriers to participation in Party Politics**.
  - **Political Parties** in India **generally do not find the disabled as the large electorate** to specifically address their needs.
- **Lax Implementation:**
  - The government has had some admirable initiatives to improve the condition of PwDs.
    - However, even now, **most buildings in India are not disability-friendly, despite** the government of India, under the [Accessible India Campaign](#), instructing all ministries to make their buildings accessible to persons with disabilities.
    - Similarly, the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act** has **provided for a quota of reservation for persons with disabilities** in government jobs and higher education institutions, but the **majority of these posts are vacant**.

## What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Preventive Actions:**
  - **Preventive health programs need to be strengthened and all children need to be screened at a young age.**
  - **Kerala has already started** an early prevention programme.
    - The **Comprehensive Newborn Screening (CNS)** programme seeks early identification of deficits in infants and reduces the state's burden of disability.
- **Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Approach:**
  - The [CBR approach](#) is needed to ensure that people with disabilities are able to maximise their physical and mental abilities, have access to regular services and opportunities, and **achieve full integration within their communities**.
- **Increasing Public Awareness and Understanding of Disability:**
  - **Governments, voluntary organisations, and professional associations** should

**consider running social campaigns** that change attitudes on stigmatised issues related to PwDs.

- In this context, **mainstream media has taken the right path by increasingly showing positive representations of people with disabilities, from the movies like Taare Zameen Par and Barfi.**
- **Special schools** with the label **special** needs can have a stigma or negative connotation. Students may only learn and interact with peers with special needs.
  - **They won't be exposed to a wide range of influences.**
  - There should be a **proper channel of transition between special schools and the outer world to promote inclusiveness** among the disabled.
- **Collaboration With States:**
  - **Awareness regarding care for pregnant mothers** and good and accessible medical facilities across the **rural heartland** are the **important pillars for addressing the occurrence of disabilities.**
    - For facilitation of both these factors, the **state governments should be actively supported by the union government for [fiscal decentralisation](#) in their health sector** as health comes under the 'state subject' in our constitution.

## What are the Recent Initiatives to Empowerment of Disables?

- **India:**
  - [Unique Disability Identification Portal](#)
  - [Accessible India Campaign](#)
  - [DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme](#)
  - [Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances](#)
  - [National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities](#)
- **Global:**
  - **Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.**
  - **United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability.**
  - [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)
  - [UN Principles for People with Disabilities](#)

### ***Drishti Mains Question***

How far do you think that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act will facilitate inclusivity and empowerment of persons with disabilities in India? Discuss.

## **UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)**

**Q. India is home to lakhs of persons with disabilities. What are the benefits available to them under the law? (2011)**

1. Free schooling till the age of 18 years in government run schools.
2. Preferential allotment of land for setting up business.
3. Ramps in public buildings.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: (d)**

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