



## ECI Promotes Respectful Dialogue on Disabilities in Politics

**For Prelims:** [Election Commission](#), [Persons with Disabilities](#), [Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016](#), [Directive Principles of State Policy](#), [Accessible India Campaign](#), [DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme](#), [National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities](#)

**For Mains:** Constitutional and Legislative Framework for PwD in India, Major Challenges Related to PwD in India.

**Source:** [IE](#)

### Why in News?

The [Election Commission \(EC\)](#) has issued guidelines to [political parties](#) to use disability and gender sensitive language, and refrain from using derogatory references to [persons with disabilities \(PwD\)](#) in public speeches, campaigns and writings.

### What are the Key Guidelines of the EC?

- **Prohibition of Derogatory Language:** Political parties and their representatives are urged to refrain from using **derogatory, insulting, or offensive references** related to disability or PwDs in any **public statements, speeches, writings, articles, or campaigns**. And make sure that all campaigns remain accessible to all citizens.
- **Avoidance of Ableist Language:** Specific terms considered ableist or offensive towards PwDs such as "dumb," "retarded," "blind," "deaf," "lame," etc., are highlighted as language to be avoided.
- **Internal Review and Rectification:** All campaign materials, including speeches, social media posts, advertisements, and press releases, should **undergo internal review within the political party** to identify and rectify instances of offensive language.
- **Declaration of Use of Sensitive Language:** Political parties should **declare on their websites their commitment to using disability and gender-sensitive language**, respecting human equality, equity, dignity, and autonomy.
- **Adoption of Rights-Based Terminology:** Parties are encouraged to use rights-based terminologies as outlined in the **Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**.
- **Legal Consequences:** Any violation of the guidelines may fall under the provisions of **Section 92 of the [Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016](#)**.

### What is the Status of Persons with Disabilities in India?

- **Status:** As per the **76<sup>th</sup>** round of [National Sample Survey \(NSS\)](#), **2.21%** of the Indian population identifies as having a disability.
  - The incidence of disability is **highest in the age group 10-19 years**, highlighting the need for early intervention and support.
- **Constitutional and Legislative Framework for PwD in India:**
  - **Constitution:**

- The Constitution of India ensures **equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all individuals** through [Fundamental Rights](#) and implicitly mandates an inclusive society for all including the persons with disabilities.
- **Article 41 of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy)** 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.
- **Legislation:**
  - The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act)** which replaced the **Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995**, is the most comprehensive legislation for PwDs in India.
    - Government job reservation for PwD is **4%**, while in government or aided higher educational institutions, seats reserved for students with disabilities is **5%**.
- **Other Related Initiatives:**
  - [Accessible India Campaign](#)
  - [DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme](#)
  - [National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities](#)
- **Major Challenges:**
  - **Accessibility:** Many **public spaces, transportation systems, and buildings lack proper accessibility features** like ramps, elevators, and designated spaces for PwDs, making it challenging for them to move around independently.
    - Only **around 3%** of public buildings in India are accessible to PwDs (Census of India, 2011).
  - **Inadequate Healthcare:** Only **37% of PwDs in rural India** have access to healthcare facilities, according to the Census of India, 2011.
    - A **recent report by the World Health Organization** identified a shortage of healthcare professionals trained in disability management across India, limiting access to specialised care.
  - **Limited Educational Opportunities:** Access to quality education for PwDs remains a challenge. Schools often lack adequate facilities and trained teachers to cater to diverse learning needs, resulting in exclusion from mainstream education.
  - **Employment Barriers:** PwDs encounter significant hurdles in finding suitable employment. **Discrimination, lack of accessible workplaces**, and a dearth of accommodations to meet their needs often lead to high unemployment rates among PwDs.
  - **Stigma and Discrimination:** There is **still a prevailing stigma surrounding disabilities in India**, and PwDs often face prejudices that limit their opportunities and acceptance in society.
  - **Legal and Policy Gaps:** While there are laws and policies in place to protect the rights of PwDs in India, **implementation and enforcement remain inconsistent**. This gap affects the actual realization of their rights and access to resources.

## Way Forward

- **Reimagining Assistive Technology:** Government can partner with tech giants and design institutes to create a robust ecosystem of accessible and affordable assistive technology using [Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things](#), catering to diverse disabilities.
  - It can include **self-navigating public spaces**, adaptive traffic signals, and voice-controlled interfaces for effortless access.
  - Also, promote open-source hardware and software development for PwDs to **customize and repair devices**.
- **Revolutionising Education and Skill Development:** Implement mandatory disability sensitivity training for educators and integrate it into teacher training programs.
  - Deploy AI-powered learning assistants, interactive tools, and accessible e-learning platforms to cater to diverse learning needs.
- **Employment Landscape Shift:** Mandatory PwD friendly infrastructure in corporations and facilitate PwDs' participation in flexible **online gig work** suited to their skills and abilities, empowering them with remote work options.

- Incubating **PWD-led startups offering accessible products and services**, fostering self-reliance and creating employment opportunities.
- **Towards Inclusive India:** Organizing community-based workshops and sensitization programs to promote **understanding and inclusivity of PWDs**.

### 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)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/eci-promotes-respectful-dialogue-on-disabilities-in-politics>

