



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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