



NCPEDP - Javed Abidi Fellowship on Disability

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Baseline Report

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Betul

**Empowering Students with Disabilities
through Inclusive Higher Education**

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1 Executive Summary

This baseline report delves into the theme of empowering students with disabilities through inclusive higher education. It explores various dimensions of inclusive higher education, examining government initiatives, college-level efforts, the transition to tertiary education and employment, and the role of student-centric organisations.

The report highlights the significant potential contribution of PwDs to the economy and thus underscores the need for holistic development and inclusion, and concludes by recommending the development of a Disabled Resource Development (DRD) model which is essential for PwDs participation in the mainstream workforce.

2 Overview

The report, titled "Empowering Students with Disabilities Through Inclusive Higher Education," comprises four chapters that thoroughly assess the framework of inclusive higher education.

2.1 Central and State Government Initiative

There have been significant achievements in Indian legislation surrounding the higher education system. Nonetheless, numerous gaps pertaining to achieving the goal of an inclusive education system persist. The primary hindrance to union and state initiatives for inclusive higher education is absence of data, which leads to absence of initiative or initiating arbitrary/whimsical programmes and hence, allocating an insufficient budget. To determine the exact figure of this fallacy, this study analyses these problems through present data and its usage calculation, the feedback and opinions of programme participants, and observations of the researcher and the practitioner in this sector. Further, showcasing the budget comparison at three levels Inter-Country, Inter State, and Inter Department.

2.2 College Level Initiative

The study of college-level initiative is the ultimate trigger to raise the performance of inclusive higher education since this is where the performance of students is evaluated. Through the secondary research and baseline survey, we found a lack of transparency due to stakeholders' ignorance; the main cause of impact in the effectiveness of government-run disability programmes. To arrive at the estimates of the sidelining approach, we leant on government schemes and college initiatives, and their turnout ratio. Furthermore, we evaluated the structure of the Indian college education system, which resulted in creating a disability-specific need-based approach.

2.3 Transition to Tertiary Education and Employment

In every budgetary allocation, the Union Government of India continues to invest in improving access to education and employment programmes, which lead to increasing the economic self-reliance of youths. However, when it comes to youths with disabilities or female participation, the investment is stable or growing at a stagnant rate. To calculate the transition, the study considers the following points.

- a. Transition ratio from School to Higher Education and then, from Higher Education to Employment or Higher Secondary Education.
- b. Invisible disability problems in and impact on total workforce of India

- c. Effectiveness of Indian legislation in employment, i.e., Anti-Discrimination law.

2.4 Student-centric – NGOs, Welfare Associations or Students Association

The absence of an NGO/association which welcomes students, faculty, staff and visitors with disabilities working with or at universities/colleges, leads to the absence of integral and rich diversity that provides leadership to the students for raising their voice in the university/ College and ensure an accessible, inclusive, welcoming, learning and working environment for individuals with disabilities, while complying with union, state and University Grant Commission (UGC) regulations.

3 Background

Economists highlight the significantly low investment in the disability sector, emphasizing an oversight in estimations. However, Rich Donovan, CEO of The Return on Disability Group, notes that the global population of PwDs, along with their networks, holds over \$8 trillion in annual disposable income, a substantial but largely untapped resource.

This potential can only manifest within the real sector when there's holistic development—from education and employment to prenatal care, rehabilitation, and complete inclusion and representation across all platforms.

The impressive potential contribution of PwDs to the real economy underscores a challenging query: how to effectively include them in this sector? Addressing this necessitates a broad, intersectional approach for efficient integration. However, success stories from Scandinavian and certain Western nations demonstrate that achieving this goal is feasible. The crux lies in establishing the DRD (Differential Resource Development), focused on enhancing PwDs' effectiveness through accommodating measures, thereby creating a tailored, need-based model distinct from the conventional Human Resource Development approach used for both individuals without disabilities and PwDs.

4 Objectives of the Study

- a. To analyse the enrolment rate of YwDs in higher education
- b. To assess the knowledge of YwDs related to fundamental rights and other statutory rights
- c. To evaluate the knowledge and practice of YwDs related to assistive devices required for their full and effective participation
- d. To understand the situation of life hindrances affecting higher education and other core work
- e. To assess the grievance redressal mechanism of colleges/universities

The outcome of this baseline report will be valuable for policymakers, Disability Rights activists, NGOs and other pressure groups working to improve the quality of higher education for YwDs. In turn, improved education will increase the Disabled Capital Formation and showcase the spillover effect in the literacy rate of YwDs.

5 Research Methodology

The policy tinkering and action for the topic 'Empowering the Disabled Through Inclusive Higher Education' were studied along with the information given by YwDs. However, to cover the approach comprehensively, this study includes a few other stakeholders: teaching staff, students without disability, assistive device facilitators, and parents/guardians.

To showcase the research questions and transit the core message to the reader, the research undertakes both, empirical and theoretical evidence. In addition, to manifest a clear understanding of the grassroots, theories in the form of case studies, testimonials, and the experiences of practitioners are also included.

The research was conducted through both, primary and secondary studies.

5.1 Tools and methods for secondary study

The secondary study incorporates highlighting the lack of inclusivity in various dimensions of education. This is done via the evaluation of initiatives undertaken by stakeholders, i.e., pressure groups, NGOs and the government - data, schemes and programmes. It depicts the stage of development and helps identify the way.

5.2 Tools and methods for primary study

An evaluation of SwDs enrolled in colleges and other higher educational institutes was undertaken through a baseline survey. The survey was conducted in the tribal-dominated district of Madhya Pradesh, Betul, through Google forms and in-person form filling. The survey was conducted in three colleges in the town block, and public institutions.

26 YwDs participated. 57.1 per cent of the participants reported living with locomotor disability, 18.6 per cent with a neurological disorder, 9.8 per cent with visual impairment, and others with cerebral palsy.

6 Findings and Analysis

6.1 Enrolment Rate

To put into effect Article 41 of Part IV (Directive Principle of State Policy), the GOI initiated six scholarship schemes for SwDs that cover all stages of education from primary to the doctorate level. These include scholarships for overseas education, and expenses for private coaching, academia and related matters.

This apart, the IGNOU (institution for distance education) established the National Centre of Disability Studies to cater to the educational, vocational and rehabilitation needs of PwDs through a wide range of activities. The university enrolled only 6426 disabled students in 2022 and extended student support through Special Learners Support Centres spread across the country.

This shows that the scheme's intent is identified correctly by the government to provide affordable education at every stage. However, the beneficiaries who avail scholarships are limited in number and the intent is left unfulfilled.

This is also evident in the following:

The Right to Education Act, 2009 provides for the right of children to free and compulsory education for children in the 6-14 age group, including children with special needs. Given below is the enrolment of children with special needs in Higher Secondary and Higher Education, as per the U-DISE report.

Enrolment in Higher Education			Enrolment in Higher Secondary	
Year	Total	PwD Students	Total	PwD Students
2014-15	34211637	64298	23501798	61046
2015-16	34584781	74435	24735397	60869
2016-17	35705905	70967	22625448	62649
2017-18	36642378	74317	24681195	74014
2018-19	37399388	85877	25506817	78648

1. According to a parliamentary committee report, no SwD availed the free coaching scholarship scheme during 2019-2022¹.
2. Overseas Education Scholarship for PwDs has only 11 beneficiaries in the past 7 years².
3. The sponsored Saksham Scholarship Scheme for the differently-abled has only 624 students as beneficiaries during the year 2021-22.
4. Further, according to the 2011 Census report, 250+³ students should be enrolled for higher education in Betul, Madhya Pradesh, but only 26 SwDs are enrolled in college or for competitive examinations.

¹<https://indianexpress.com/article/education/no-specially-abled-student-availed-free-coaching-scholarship-scheme-from-2019-2022-7835533/>

²<chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcqlclefindmkaj/https://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/schemewise%20and%20yearwise%202013-14%20to%202021-22.pdf>

³[The number 250 does not include migration and immigration](#)

6.2 Knowledge of Fundamental Rights and other Statutory Rights

The Constitution of India guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens, including those with disabilities.

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 provides for equal opportunities for people with disabilities in areas such as education, employment, affirmative action, non-discrimination, research and manpower development, social security, and grievance redressal⁴. In addition to these laws, there are several other acts.

The levels of awareness of fundamental rights are key to ensuring the socio-economic development of citizens. For this, we used an observational method based on the questions:
a) Are YwDs aware of rights?

Are YwDs who are already aware of their rights taking action to address their concerns?

The primary study responses showed that 32.7 per cent of all respondents are aware of their rights. The figure rises to 75 per cent for respondents from urban areas. However, only 6.6 per cent from both, rural and urban areas, have pursued litigation or activism action against discrimination faced by them or for the aggrieved person.

The factors/government schemes contributing to the spread of knowledge of fundamental rights and other statutory rights are as follows:

1. Digital accessibility of news plays a pivotal role in raising awareness among students with disabilities about their rights by ensuring information is readily available and easily understandable. Implementing accessible formats, such as screen readers, captioned videos, and alternative text descriptions, enables students with visual or auditory impairments to access news content. Moreover, providing multiple formats and ensuring compatibility with assistive technologies fosters inclusivity. When news platforms prioritize these accessibility measures, students with disabilities gain equal access to crucial information, empowering them to understand their rights and stay informed about pertinent issues that affect them directly.
2. Peer support groups: These groups/clubs/societies can share information and experiences related to rights advocacy. In the recent past, many groups have started working at PAN India for the welfare and empowering of the voices of the marginalised. These include Enactus, Global Youth and SPIC MACAY.
3. Establishing a feedback mechanism enables authorities to identify specific concerns and create targeted awareness sessions. For instance, at Daily College Indore, the school

⁴

<https://vikaspedia.in/education/parents-corner/guidelines-for-parents-of-children-with-disabilities/legal-rights-of-the-disabled-in-india/>

counselor and psychologist conduct open talks to raise awareness and promote healthy dispute resolution among students. Similarly, the government introduced the KIRAN telecommunication helpline scheme to address such issues, offering a platform for individuals to seek guidance and support. These initiatives illustrate how a structured mechanism can facilitate tailored awareness sessions and accessible support systems for addressing various concerns effectively.

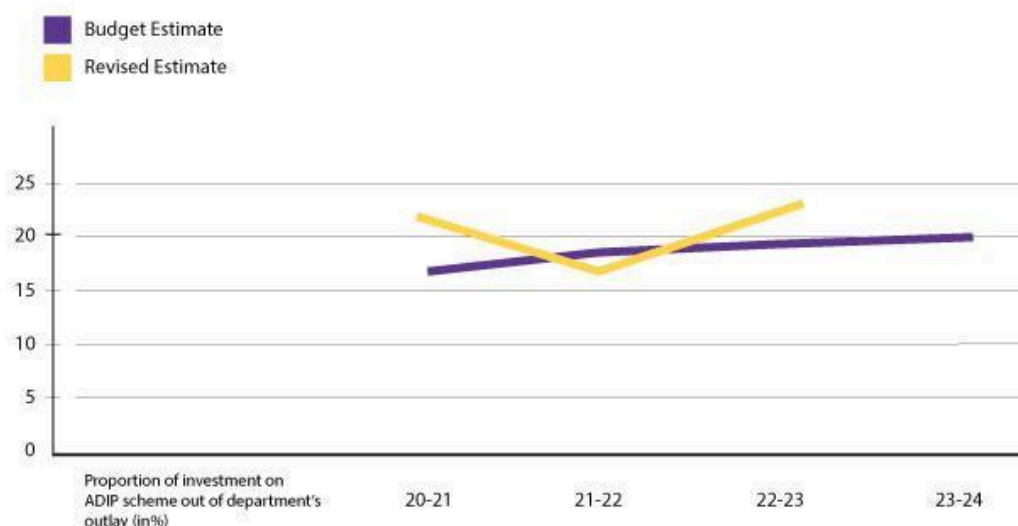
6.3 Serviceability, Distribution, and Training of Assistive Device

Central and state governments have undertaken the following special measures for PwDs, with regard to assistive devices:

1. No GST/Indirect Taxes on an assistive device
2. Free distribution to Persons with Benchmark Disability
3. No-cost renting facility at colleges/universities
4. Corrective surgeries whenever required before providing an assistive device

These measures by the Central Government are provided under the Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/Appliances (ADIP) Scheme. The budget summary provided by NCPEDP shows that the total utilisation under the scheme is rising (graph follows).

The primary study underscores a similar trend in the state of affairs, revealing that only 39% of the sample group received training in effectively using assistive devices. Such training is crucial as it empowers individuals with disabilities to pursue independent learning and livelihood opportunities.



6.4 Availability and Redressal Rating of Grievances

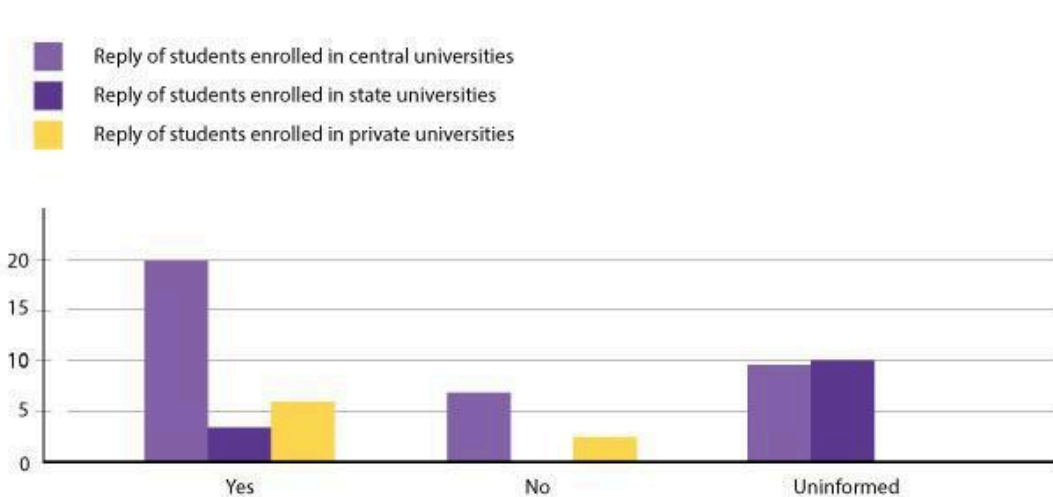
The availability and redressal rating of grievances for disabled students is of paramount importance for several reasons:

1. Equality and non-discrimination
2. Academic performance
3. Emotional well-being
4. Legal compliance
5. Redressal of grievances
6. Accountability
7. Continuous improvement
8. Inclusivity benefits everyone

These elements are not only crucial for disabled students but also contribute to the overall inclusivity and excellence of educational institutions.

According to the following bar graph, 25 students enrolled in central universities and private institutions are able to benefit from cells/clubs/societies/NGOs/associations. And six students are unaware of any kind of such facility.

On the other hand, only 3 of 13 students from state universities have this facility or are unaware of any kind of such facility.



postulate result describes the unwillingness of colleges/universities to implement the UGC-sponsored 12th-Year-Plan Scheme. As per the scheme guidelines, the UGC sponsors a minimum of INR 100,000? to colleges/universities to establish an enabling unit.

The UGC 12th-Year-Plan Scheme was launched for ‘enriching higher education learning experiences of differently-abled persons and creating awareness’⁵ by creating enabling units in every institution recognised by the UGC.

⁵ https://www.ugc.ac.in/pdfnews/1112642_Person-with-Disability-guidelines.pdf

The following case study of Rajesh Kohli explains the importance of cells/clubs/societies/NGOs/associations in the educational institute.

Rajesh Kohli, aged 21, is a Person with Locomotor Disability from Kalanour, Rohtak district, Haryana. His family owns a 2-acre plot of land near Kalanour. The majority of the portion is used for farming and a small patch for animal husbandry.

"I was a very hard-working student since childhood and I scored very well at every school examination. The main reason is, I was told by my parents since the very beginning and repeatedly that farming is much harder than studying and that it is a low-paid profession nowadays. I am glad that my parents never let me involve myself in domestic chores and instead, motivated me to go to Delhi for free counselling sessions organised by coaching institutions," said Rajesh.

"So, during my school days in Rohtak, I was aware of career choices and with this clarity in mind, I worked hard to transform my personality and dreamt of studying Economics at a top-notch college of the University of Delhi. And, fortunately, I was able to secure a seat in the Economics department of Hansraj College in 2020."

"However, dreaming and actually shifting to Delhi are two different ball games. It was hard due to disability and a weak economic position. But I managed to arrange everything with the help of the enabling unit of Hansraj College, which played a proactive role in providing a subsidised hostel and covering my miscellaneous expenses through scholarships," he concluded.

7 Conclusion

The study began with the question: Why are SwDs missing from India's educational institutes? Through preliminary research, the study observed their absence in institutes and sought to study the factors that led to it. After a careful analysis, it can be concluded that broadly, there are two types of factors that hinder a disabled student from enrolling in institutes or completing academic education.

1. Accessibility-inhibiting factors such as inaccessible infrastructure and lack of assistive devices.
2. Grading-inhibiting factors such as parental expectations, student result and education-to-employment ratio

The UGC has formally recognised the need for creating an inclusive and accessible institute for SwDs by implementing the Teacher Preparation in Special Education (TEPSE) and Higher Education for Persons with Special Needs (differently-abled persons) (HEPSN) schemes. However, these remain inadequate due to a lack of funds, gaps in the policy, and partial implementation. Resultantly, the schemes have failed to achieve their objective.

The following recommendations can be implemented to bridge the aforementioned gap and ensure the integration of SwDs.

Valuing disability as an integral part of our rich diversity and promoting it to represent disability as a person's first identity: This underscores the importance of acknowledging disability from the outset. It is essential for people with disabilities to accurately represent themselves to lead guilt-free lives, and rid themselves of the shame associated with reservations and the fear of discrimination. Conversely, individuals with invisible or hidden disabilities may find themselves lost in the ableist crowd, grappling with trust issues, and facing unrealistic expectations of perfection. To avoid these challenges, it is crucial to promote disability pride.

are and self-acceptance.

Developing advocating and leadership qualities: There is a need to empower YwDs by nurturing leadership qualities. This will enable them to advocate for their own rights and raise their voices within universities and colleges, ultimately leading to effective solutions for issues related to disabilities.

Holistically promoting the participation of students with disabilities in all aspects of campus life and across disciplines: This work should be diverse from increasing the campus enrolment of the disabled to addressing other concerns such as an inclusive syllabus, accessible infrastructure,

special educator and career counsellors and a repository resource on disability-related information.

Accommodative flexibility rule in disability-related services (Every recognised and unrecognised disability has an attached spectrum to it, which varies from body to body and thus, it is necessary to cater to every variable factor)

Awareness of Youth without Disabilities and other stakeholders: to build a healthy relationship between YwDs and other stakeholders

8 Annexure

8.1 Site Information

Baseline survey was conducted at J.H. College in Madhya Pradesh. It was established in 1957 and affiliated to Barkatullah University, to provide a variety of courses that generate employment opportunities for a new generation, and develop their personality as per the needs of their profession, for effective productivity for the society and the nation⁶.

⁶ <https://www.jhgovtbetul.com/about-us/>



8.2

राजा शंकर शाह विश्वविद्यालय में पढ़ने वाले विकलांग छात्रों का सर्वेक्षण

यह सर्वेक्षण एन॰सी॰पी॰ई॰डी॰पी॰ और ABVP का आयाम स्टूडेंट फ़ोर सेवा, राजा शंकर शाह विश्वविद्यालय में पढ़ने वाले सभी विकलांग छात्रों की समस्याओं जानने व उनकी आपूर्ति के लिए करवाया जा रहा है।

पूरा नाम *

:::

Short-answer text

उम्र *

Short-answer text

लिंग *

- पुरुष
- महिला

ब्लॉक/ ग्राम पंचायत/ गांव *

Short-answer text

आपको क्या विकलांगता है *

- शारीरिक निर्भरता
- हियरिंग लॉस
- दृष्टिक्षीणता
- बौद्धिक असमर्थता
- Other...

Questionnaire

The baseline survey was conducted through Google form, a screenshot of which is reproduced below.

महाविद्यालय का नाम *

Short-answer text

महाविद्यालय में आप किस विषय/पाठ्यक्रम में नामांकित हैं *

Short-answer text

आपको महाविद्यालय में विकलांगता के कारण किस कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ता है?

Short-answer text

⋮

आरक्षण श्रेणी

General

ST

SC

OBC

EWS

क्या आपने सरकार से विकलांग व्यक्तियों के लिए ऋण सुविधा प्राप्त की है? *

हाँ

नहीं

आपने सरकार विकलांग व्यक्तियों के लिए कौनसी ऋण सुविधा प्राप्त की है?

Short-answer text

आपने सरकार विकलांग व्यक्तियों के लिए कौनसी ऋण सुविधा प्राप्त की है?

Short-answer text

क्या आप वर्तमान में कार्यरत हैं? *

- हाँ
- नहीं

अगर हाँ, तो रोजगार स्थिति क्या है?

- जॉब
- स्वरोजगार
- खेती
- इंटरशिप/ फेलोशिप/ पार्ट-टाइम जॉब
- अन्य
- Other...

यदि कृषि है, तो भूमि का स्वामित्व है, किराए पर है या भागीदार है? भूमि की माप भी लिखिए?

Short-answer text

क्या आप विकलांग व्यक्तियों के अधिकार अधिनियम 2016/विकलांगता कानूनों के बारे में जानते हैं? *

- हाँ
- नहीं

