

NEXT IAS

Daily Editorial Analysis

www.nextias.com

INDIA & DISABILITY INCLUSION

Syllabus: GS2/ Health, Management of Social Sector, Government Policies & Interventions, Issues related to development of social sector involving healthcare etc

In Context

- There need to be more inclusive opportunities and employment in the rural areas as a majority of persons with disabilities live here.

ABOUT DISABILITY - DATA

- Disability as an identity and entity exists at the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities – social, economic and gender.
 - ◆ Each of these facets requires careful consideration when conceptualising action for equity.
- Globally, **1.3 billion people** (which is equivalent to nearly the entire population of India) live with some form of disability.
 - ◆ Of them, **80% live in developing countries**; further, **70% of them live in rural** areas.

CHALLENGES

- **Cost of Exclusion:**
 - ◆ Current systems are designed for persons without disabilities and end up being exclusionary to people with disabilities.
 - ◆ It results in them experiencing higher instances of poverty, lack of access to education and opportunities, informality and other forms of social and economic discrimination.
- **Limited Employment:**
 - ◆ The current employment scenario is limited, providing fewer jobs for persons with disabilities and perpetuating stereotypes that create further barriers for people with disabilities to access the labour market.
- **Political Exclusion:**
 - ◆ India does not have any policy commitment that is aimed at enhancing the political participation of disabled people.
 - ◆ The lack of live aggregate data on the exact number of disabled people in every constituency only furthers their marginalisation.
 - ◆ Disabled people are not represented enough at all three levels of governance.

CHALLENGE OF DISABILITY IN RURAL INDIA

- **Low awareness:**
 - ◆ Disability awareness is **especially important in rural areas**, where persons with disabilities tend to face **greater challenges** when compared to their urban counterparts, with **even more limited access** to education and employment.
 - ◆ Some developmental **schemes, too, exclude them.**
- **Specific challenges for Rural India:**
 - ◆ lack of access to adequate treatments and resources.
 - ◆ Lack of infrastructure. Rural hospitals don't have as many rehabilitation centres as we have in India's urban hospitals.

- ◆ Availability of assistive and adaptive technology and devices.
- ◆ Lack of funding.
- **No-say in decision-making:**
 - ◆ They are viewed as objects of charity and not as persons with agency with an ability to participate in decision-making processes.
- **Combined 'other' challenges:**
 - ◆ Rural areas also have high agricultural dependence and face the heightened risk of climate calamities arising from rising sea levels, reduced access to clean water and food, hurricanes, heatwaves and floods, with rural people at the frontlines of these challenges.

SUGGESTIONS

- **Need of inclusion:**
 - ◆ The goal of social justice cannot be achieved without the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all spheres of development, starting with rural areas and rural resilience.
 - ◆ Evidence shows a bi-directional link to poverty, nutrition, and hunger, and as a consequence, there needs to be more inclusive opportunities and employment in rural areas.
- **Awareness & capacity building:**
 - ◆ In India, the Central and State governments have various schemes for persons with disabilities and a **unique id for persons with disabilities (UDID) card**, established as part of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016).
 - ◆ The first step is **awareness** to ensure last-mile connectivity of the benefits enumerated for people with disabilities by the government, which begins with the **capacity-building of community leaders** who can advocate for this at the grass-roots level.
- **Prioritising inclusion:**
 - ◆ Given the historic marginalisation of persons with disabilities and the backsliding of the progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, a fundamental shift in commitment, solidarity, financing and action is critical.
 - ◆ It is about time that the voices and needs of persons with disabilities be prioritised at the centre of the global development agenda.
- **Role of private sector:**
 - ◆ The private sector holds a key in promoting the employment of persons with disabilities.
 - ◆ In addition to a robust legal framework, experience shows the importance of engaging the private sector and building the confidence of companies to hire and retain workers with disabilities.
 - ◆ Additionally, engagement of employers' federations, including those representing small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as with trade unions, has shown to have great potential to promote the employment of persons with disabilities.

THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2016:

- The Act introduces a regime of inclusiveness in the country by safeguarding the rights of PwDs, as well as enacting special provisions for the empowerment of divyangjans.
- **Rights and Entitlements:** The Act provides for equality and non – discrimination, right to community life, protection from cruelty, inhuman treatment, abuse, violence and exploitation, accessibility in voting, access to justice, provision of guardianship, as well as reproductive rights to divyangjan.

- **Education and Skill Development:** The act also commits educational institutions to certain obligations and provides specific measures to promote and facilitate inclusive education in the country. At the same time, it provides for non-discrimination and equality of opportunity, to prevent discrimination against divyangjan.
- **Reservation:** The Act provides for reservation of PwDs in higher educational institutions as well as employment.
- **Social Security:** The act incentivizes the private sector to employ divyangjan, apart from establishing special employment exchanges for the PwDs. It also has the provision for special health-care and insurance schemes for divyangjan, apart from encouraging participation of divyangjan in sports, recreation and cultural activities.

THE SPARK PROJECT

The ILO and the **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**, in collaboration with the **Women's Development Corporation** in Maharashtra, are implementing the Sparking Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation (SPARK) project.

Through this project, persons with disabilities were put in the lead, being identified from the villages, and trained as **Disability Inclusion Facilitators (DIFs)**.

The DIFs engage with the **community, persons with disabilities, caregivers of persons with disabilities, women from self-help groups** and other stakeholders to raise **awareness** about disability inclusion and barriers to inclusion.

The DIFs identify **women with disabilities** and **mainstream** them in existing self-help groups for social and economic development, where these women have been able to access funds to start an enterprise.

WAY AHEAD

- A bottom-up approach to disability inclusion is crucial to build productive pathways out of poverty and ensure that persons with disabilities are recognised as active members of society and the economy.
- The inclusion of persons with disabilities into the economy can help boost global GDP between 3% to 7%, as per the study by the International Labour Organization (ILO), "**The price of exclusion:**"
 - ◆ The economic consequences of excluding people with disabilities from the world of work".
- The need of the hour is proper sensitization of the community towards the issues faced by PwDs, as well as to remove the social stigma attached to their integration into society.

Daily Mains Question

[Q] Analyse the prominence of the Disability challenge in Rural India. Suggest policy measures for disability inclusion in India.

