

**On the Road to Disability-Inclusive Education in India:
Using an Economic Development Lens
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India has [4.9 million children with disabilities](#) within the ages of 6-17 years old. At the most typical extreme, most of them lack any education at all; at the least, those children are compelled to quit school due to the challenges from supply side-the limited pedagogy system, non-inclusive policies, and limited financial resources. Denying educational opportunities to persons with disabilities puts them at a grave disadvantage by depriving them of their fundamental rights and their existence in society, in addition to significant losses to their communities and societies. This need not be the case, since [Article 46](#) of the Indian Constitution empowers state governments to make special laws to protect the socially and economically disadvantaged population from social injustice and exploitation – although this policy does not include persons with disabilities as a named category.

The World Bank [Disability-Inclusion framework](#), as well as its [social inclusion](#) approach to sustainable development, provides an ample economic development lens to show how India's pedagogy system lacks knowledge of educational inequalities, in addition to being under-capacitated to address the sensitive needs of children with disabilities. Specifically, government budgets are under-reserved to provide better infrastructure for this vulnerable group and thus cannot develop an inclusive curriculum. State policies are generally formulated by a committee which does not have a voice from persons with disabilities. This only leads to incomplete understanding of the hiccups in the system and ineffective implementation of policies and initiatives. Altogether, this negatively limits the human capital and socioeconomic outcomes of children with disabilities, particularly as they grow into adults who cannot fully participate in social and economic functions.

International and National Frameworks

The World Bank framework was prepared under its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) – 4: “inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. The Disability-Inclusion framework identified that 15% of world population suffers from some form of disability. Persons with disabilities suffer more socio-economic challenges than persons without disabilities. To tackle this, the two-fold strategy proposed by The Bank were 1) including disability in Bank's policies, operations and practices and 2) build internal capacity for client countries implementing Bank's projects. As a World Bank client and a signatory to the United Nations SDGs, the government of India enacted the “Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act” in 2016.

Based on the [2016 Act](#), state governments are required to enact appropriate laws and rules to design inclusive education programs; its implementation; monitoring the administration of such programs and intervene at appropriate times for checks and balance. Although the Act outlines the overall requirements, not all the States have acted upon it, utilizing all available resources and creating an inclusive education system in the region.

Act Now

A [2018 report](#) submitted to the 14th Finance Commission Recommendation committee in India shows that states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal together constitute 60 percent of children with disabilities in India. A state level data shows about 136,000 [students with disabilities](#) enrolled in Tamil Nadu government-owned and aided schools in 2017-2018, yet only around 10% of that group received the support and facilities to enable them complete access to school system.

As [human capital and economic output](#) are interrelated, it is important to provide uniform access to education and make it inclusive for persons with disabilities. In an ideal scenario, an innovative education system that relies on inclusive teaching methods and services can produce a multitude of diverse and productive skill sets. This then promotes a greater equality of opportunity to find employment at various levels and fields, as well as promoting a more diverse workforce and output. [Education](#) is the key to a better standard of living as it provides employment opportunities that ensure one's economic growth

It is time to act quickly and diligently as the [road to development](#) will not be effective unless it tackles the socioeconomic inequality faced by persons with disabilities and ensures their participation in all levels and phases of the development programs and policy discussions. To truly "leave no one behind" and to combat extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity means truly engaging the educational challenges of people living with disabilities.

Recommendations

The right to education can be fully realized when access to education is provided uniformly to all children – regardless of disability status. It must incorporate the tools and methodology that can be applied to children who have different needs versus no such special attention. With a decentralized education governing system in India, States are required to have better policies on needs based education [teaching system](#), access to schools, monitoring and supervision.

1. *Teaching system*: This includes, any special needs to help and support the emotional needs of children with or without disabilities; sensitization programs for teachers and other school staffs to treat children with respect and without prejudice; create a monitoring committee or squad that inspects classrooms to evaluate the teacher's ability to impart a teaching style that facilitates easy learning by both children with or without disabilities; and introduce programs for parents to be sensitized on the subject of non-discrimination against children with disabilities.

2. *Data collection*: knowledge on this topic is sparse. State-wide data collection on persons with disabilities, will allow the governments to design programs integrating the needs of the children with different types of disabilities. Data will also help to measure outputs and outcome of such educational programs. Key learnings will permit necessary intervention by the government or authorities when required for a sustainable teaching curriculum and environment that will support the children with disabilities to fully participate in education.