

## Inclusive Schools for Children with Disabilities

### Why in news?

Developing inclusive and accessible schools will aid in challenging the perceptions about children with disabilities and actualise the zero-rejection policy in schools.

### What is the picture of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in India?

*The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines living with a disability as having long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinders one's participation in society on an equal basis with others.*

- **PwD** - As per Census 2011, Persons with Disabilities (PwD) comprise around **2.21%** of the total population in India.
- The proportion of males with disabilities is higher than the woman with disabilities.
- **CWD** - As per Census 2011, Children with Disabilities (CWD) comprise **1.7%** of the total child population in India.
- They are faced with physical, institutional, socioeconomic and communication barriers from an early age.
- A UNESCO 2019 report mentioned that **more than 70%** of five-year-olds with disabilities in India have never attended any educational institution.

### What are the barriers to accessibility?

#### Barriers to accessibility

- Inaccessible school buses
- Inaccessible facilities in schools (drinking water facilities, canteens and toilets)
- Inappropriate infrastructure in classrooms (uncomfortable seating, slippery flooring and low illumination)
- Misinformed attitudes and perceptions among parents, teachers, staff, and communities
- Lack of inclusive technologies and learning practices
- Inadequate funding for the construction of inclusive infrastructure

#### Need to remove the barriers

- Developing inclusive and accessible schools will be a big step towards
  - Challenging perceptions and the associated discrimination about CWD
  - Actualising the zero-rejection policy in schools

## What efforts were taken by the government to promote inclusiveness?

- **Article 21A** of the Constitution outlines the fundamental right to education.
- **The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** outlines the right to have free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14 years.
- **The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**, which adopted a 'zero rejection policy', emphasises that every child with special needs is provided meaningful and quality education.
- India has also ratified the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.
- The government launched the **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)** in 2015 that aims at achieving universal accessibility for all citizens and creating an enabling and barrier-free environment.
- The government has also been supportive of the principle of **Leave No One Behind (LNOB)**, which is the central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To know more about the initiatives of department of empowerment of persons with disabilities, click [here](#)

## What lies ahead?

- **Creating an enabling environment** - A multi-pronged participatory approach is needed to provide an enabling environment for the empowerment of children with disabilities. This includes
  - Awareness and sensitisation programmes for children, parents, and caregivers
  - Training trainers for upskilling of school faculty and special educators
  - Providing access to updated teaching toolkits and materials
  - Technical training for local government departments
  - Co-learning platform for knowledge-sharing
- **Providing infrastructure services** - The following principles must be embedded for providing infrastructure services in schools. It includes
  - Equitability
  - Usability and durability
  - Affordability
  - Cultural adaptability
  - Aesthetic appeal

## References

1. [The Hindu | Developing schools without barriers](#)
2. [UNICEF | Children with disabilities](#)