

Economic Model of Disability: Implications and Future Prospects of Disability-Inclusive India

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Abstract

One billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability (World Bank). These people are with long-term physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairment, which in interaction with barriers (social, communicational, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional, political, attitudinal or structural) hinders his/her effective participation in society. (NCBI (2023)). There is vicious circle of disability where disable person face problem of adverse socioeconomic conditions like poverty, lower-level employment leading to increasing risk of disability through malnutrition, inadequate access to education and health care and unsafe working conditions. Persons with disabilities face a much higher rate of poverty and unemployment than others. The paper studies the efforts taken by the government and social sector organizations for disability-inclusive India in recent past.

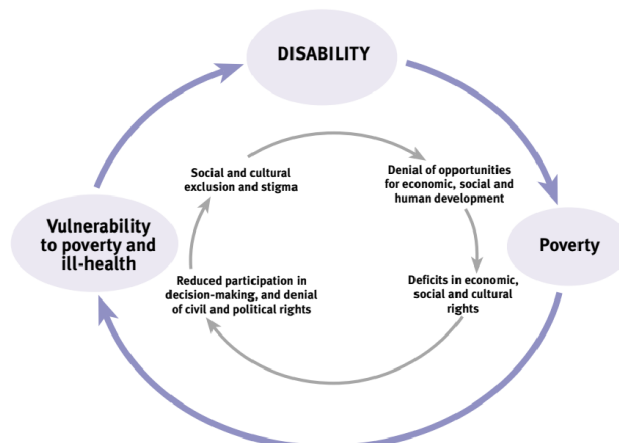
1) Introduction

One billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability (World Bank). These people are with long-term physical, mental, intellectual and sensory impairment, which in interaction with barriers (social, communicational, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional, political, attitudinal or structural) hinders his/her effective participation in society. (NCBI (2023)). The meaningful participation in societal activities is hindered by marginalization at an individual level leading to unemployment and thus poverty. Disability, social exclusion and poverty are closely associated. Therefore, despite poverty alleviation programmes, disability reforms, advocacy and disability acts, these disabled individuals still remain as victims. (Sarkar & Parween, 2021)

In India, extent of disability as a percentage of persons with disability in the population was 2.2 per cent. Rural urban percentage was 2.3 and 2.0 percent respectively. It was also found that magnitude of disability was higher among males than females. It was 2.4 per cent among males and 1.9 per cent among females. (NHFDC 2021).

There is vicious circle of disability where disable person face problem of adverse socioeconomic conditions like poverty, lower-level employment leading to increasing risk of disability through malnutrition, inadequate access to education and health care and unsafe working conditions. Again, this disability may also increase the risk of poverty, through lack of employment and education opportunities, lower wages, and increased cost of living with a disability. This is vicious cycle is explained with the help of following diagram.

Figure 1: Poverty-disability vicious circle



Source: (DFID, 2000)

Barriers to full social and economic inclusion of persons with disabilities are inaccessible physical environments and transportation, the unavailability of assistive devices and technologies, non-adapted means of communication, gaps in service delivery, and discriminatory prejudice and stigma in society (World Bank). Persons with disabilities face a much higher rate of poverty and unemployment than others.

Models of Disability:

The importance of shaping disability-friendly or disability-inclusive models has increasing attention in recent years. Models of disability are tools that are used to define impairment i.e., disability, which are utilized by governments and society to devise strategies and policies and framework for meeting the needs of disabled persons. Models of disability serve number of important purposes e.g., 1) provide definitions of disability. 2) provide explanations of causal attribution and responsibility attributions. 3) are based on (perceived) needs. 4) advocates in effective the formulation and implementation of various policies. 5) are not value neutral. 6) determine which academic disciplines study and learn about PWDs. 7) shape the self-identity of PWDs. 8) can cause prejudice and discrimination (Retief & Letšosa, 2018)

The social model uses the distinction between impairment and disability to reduce disabilities to a single social dimension - social oppression.(Anastasiou & Kauffman, 2013) Levitt J develops a model of disability, called ‘active’, which focuses on the effects on disability of the individual and collective actions of disabled people like engaging in self-help, using support groups and deploying assistive technology can all reduce the limitations of disability. (Levitt, 2017)

Table1: Models of Disability

Model	Description	Policy interventions
Moral / Religious Model	Disability is regarded as a punishment from God for a particular sin or sins that may have been committed by the person with disability or their parents and/or ancestors.	No policy intervention since disability is God given.
The medical model	This model treats disability as a disease. Disability is seen as a medical problem that asides in the individual. Olkin (1999)	Persons with disabilities are expected to avail themselves of the variety of services offered to them. Olkin (1999) Important role of medical professionals.
The social model	Disability is called as a socially constructed phenomenon.	Government intervention for social inclusion of PWDs with subsidies, schemes and legal measures. Focus on NGOs, society and PWDs organizations.
The identity model (Affirmation model)	Disability as an identity. Under the identity model, disability is a marker of membership in a minority identity, PWDs.	Group identity can be effective in disability-inclusive initiatives form government, NGOs, society and PWDs organizations.
The cultural model	The cultural approach does not seek to define disability in any specific way but rather focuses on how different notions of disability and non-disability operate in reference to a specific culture.(Retief & Letšosa, 2018)	Government intervention for social inclusion of PWDs with subsidies, schemes and legal measures. Focus on NGOs, society and PWDs organizations.

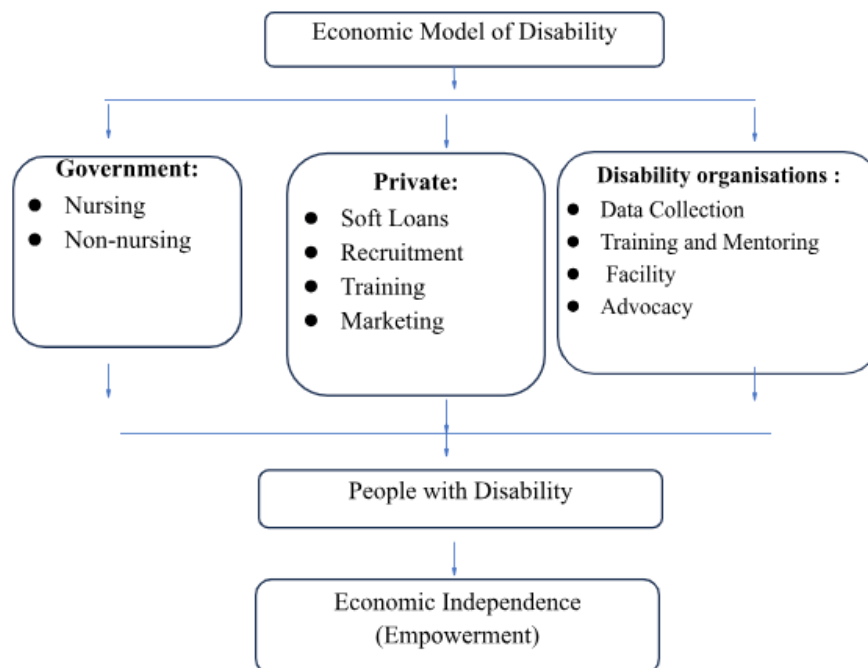
The economic model	Treats disability as a challenge to productivity. It focusses on effects of disability on productivity, capabilities, labour and employment.	Government intervention for social inclusion of PWDs with subsidies, schemes and legal measures. Focus on NGOs, society and PWDs organizations.
The charity model	Disability as victimhood. PWDs are victims of their impairment who should be pitied.	Charity and social activities.

Source: Compiled by author

2) Economic Model of Disability

The economic model of disability addresses disability by a person's inability to participate in work in full extent. It also assesses the degree to which disability affects an individual's productivity and the economic consequences for the individual, employer and the state. It also assesses the degree to which impairment affects an individual's productive capacity and the economic effects on the individual, employer and the state. These effects include i) loss of earnings and payment for assistance by the individual ii) lower profit margins for the employer; and state welfare payments. The economic model is used by policy makers to assess distribution of benefits to those who are unable to participate fully in work. Persons with disabilities face a much higher rate of poverty and unemployment than others. They face barriers to accessibility to basic services and find themselves excluded from every aspect of life-political, social, economic and cultural. In brief, the economic model of disability is a tool that not only identify disability (Identity Model) but assesses impact of disability on socio-economic conditions of disabled persons which is helpful to governments and society to formulate policies and framework for meeting the needs of disabled persons.

Figure 2: The Economic Model of Disability



Source: Economic Empowerment Model of People with Disability in the Creative Industries (Pujianto & Tjahjono, 2019)

However, there are drawbacks of Economic Model. Firstly, it is difficult to justify and support socially desired policy of employment generation in purely economic terms. Secondly, private entrepreneurs may refuse to provide jobs for the disabled persons because of low production capacity. Thirdly, it is difficult to determine the level of aid or subsidy. And, lastly, there are difficulties in determining the degree of disability with reference to productivity.

In India, the main drivers of discrimination against people with disabilities (PwDs) and arguably the largest barriers to disability inclusion are stereotypes, stigma, and bigotry/intolerance. Whether it is physically inaccessible infrastructure, negative societal response, unsubstantial policies, gender discrimination, rigid education system, labour market accessibility issues or systematic ecosystem that obstructs certain people with some disadvantages. As a consequence of that they are not able to avail all opportunities and face real-life barriers day by day. To eliminate this discrimination wide range of policy options should be followed for disability inclusive India like 1) Participation in local governance 2) Inclusive education 3) Entrepreneurship 4) Social Entrepreneurship 5) Inclusive employment trends 6) Poverty and social inequality 7) Future inclusive development plans.

Education of PWDs is crucial for inclusion of disable persons. It is imperative that equitable access to education in India. It is essential to extend beyond the label of learning difficulties to also more aptly identify any co-occurring socio-economic disability that may hinder the implementation of the Right of Children to Free and compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE) and further provide more appropriate and effective strategies for addressing learning challenges. (Richards et al., 2016)

3) Government Initiatives for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities

As per Census 2011, it is noted that disabled persons constitute 2.21% of the total population in India. 7.62% of the disabled persons belong to the age group 0-6 years. In India, efforts were taken for welfare of PWDs. The brief information about government initiatives is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Schemes of Government of India for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities

Sr. No.	Name of the Scheme	Aims
1	Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)	Central sector scheme of the DEPwD to provide grant-in-aid to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for projects relating to rehabilitation of persons with disabilities aimed at enabling them to reach and maintain optimal, physical, sensory, intellectual, psycho-socio functional levels
2	District Disability Rehabilitation Centers (DDRCs)	Creation of infrastructure and capacity building at district level for awareness generation, rehabilitation, training and guidance of rehabilitation professionals
3	Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase / Fitting of Aids / Appliances (ADIP)	To assist the needy disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances to promote physical, social, psychological rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) by reducing the effects of disabilities and at the same time enhance their economic potential.
4	Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016	Implementing the Scheme for Implementation of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA) for providing financial assistance for undertaking various activities outlined in the RPwD Act, 2016

	i) Components of Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Action Plan (NAP) for skill development of persons with disabilities under SIPDA of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.• Vocational training courses offered by the DEPwD and its affiliate organizations• Ministry of Labour and Employment supervising 24 Vocational Rehabilitation Centers for Handicapped (VRCHs)• More than 10,000 ITIs and approximately 1000 Employment Exchanges.• Technical and Vocational courses, being offered through colleges, IITs and Universities, affiliated with Ministry of Human Resources Development.• National Rural Livelihood Mission of Ministry of Rural Development.• National Urban Livelihood Mission of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs• Vocational training/livelihood programs of various other Central Government Ministries and State Governments.• NGOs focusing on vocational training and skill development Private sector training organizations: Under the CSR initiative, many such organizations have done exemplary work.
	ii) Accessible India Campaign/ Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan	DEPwD, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment launched the Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) on the occasion of International Day for Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December, 2015
	iii. Awareness Generation and Publicity Scheme	To give wide publicity, including event-based publicity etc. through electronic, print, film media, and multimedia, to the schemes, programmes
	iv) Research on Disability Related Technology, Products and Issues	To promote research of service models and programmes
	v) Unique Disability ID Project (UDID)	The Department is implementing the Unique Disability Identity (UDID) and National Database for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)
	vi) Incentive Scheme for providing employment to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in the private sector	To encourage Private Sector to Employ Persons with Disabilities, a scheme of incentives to the employers in private sector for providing employment to PwD was launched in the year 2008-09. The scheme was revised w.e.f. 1st April, 2016, whereby, payment of employer's contribution to the EPF and ESI by the Government has been increased up to 10 years.
	vii) In-Service Training and Sensitization of Key Functionaries of Central and State Government, Local	The objective of the Scheme is to train and sensitize key functionaries of the Central/State Government Local Bodies and other Service Providers on new and important issues facing the disability sector in the changing social and economic scenario

	Bodies and other Service Providers	through State/District/Block level workshops.
	viii) Scheme of “Support for Establishment/ Modernization / Capacity augmentation of Braille Presses”	Central Sector Scheme of “support for establishment, modernization, capacity augmentation of Braille Presses” in November 2014.
	ix) State Spinal Injury Centre	Establishment of State Spinal Injury Centre
	x) Scheme for Financial Assistance to Colleges for Deaf in Five Regions of Country	The objective of the Scheme is to provide equal opportunities to hearing impaired students for pursuing higher education and improving their chances of employability and better-quality life through higher education.
	xi) Scholarship scheme	The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities is presently implementing an Umbrella Scheme ‘Scholarships for Students with Disabilities’.
	xii) National Fund for Persons with Disabilities	In terms of Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, a National Fund for Persons with Disabilities has been setup.
	xiii) Indian Spinal Injury Center (ISIC)	The main objective of the Scheme is reimbursement of funds to ISIC by way of grant-in-aid from the Department for maintaining 25 free-beds and 5 free beds, to be maintained by ISIC for providing indoor treatment to spinal cord injured poor patients and their rehabilitation.
	xiv) The National Trust for the welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation & Multiple Disabilities	The National Trust is a statutory body constituted by an Act of Parliament.
	xv) National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC) National Awards for the Empowerment of PwDs	National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC) was set up.

Source: NHFDC (2021)

It is evident from the above Table 2 that government endeavours in inclusion of disabled persons in India is remarkable. Despite these noteworthy steps there is a gap in implementation of these schemes. Efforts should be taken from implementing agencies to expand outreach of these policies.

However, global framework for disability inclusive development includes -

1) Efforts are made at global level for disability inclusive development The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) ratified by 185 countries, for inclusion of persons with disabilities in all walks of societies (World Bank).

2) The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development clearly states that disability cannot be a reason or criteria for lack of access to development programming and the realization of human rights. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework includes seven targets which explicitly refer to persons with disabilities, and six further targets on persons in vulnerable situations, which include persons with disabilities (World Bank).

4) Recommendations It is important to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in the national development processes. Poverty alleviation to socio-economic inclusion must be initiated. Government

policies should emphasize on providing more opportunities for PwDs specially in employment and self-employment. More measures to be taken to provide skill development facilities for PwDs. It is necessary to Develop policies by government to increase employment of PwDs with special focus on disabled women in the work place. Efficient mechanism must be maintained for ensuring social and health security for PwDs. Strengthen and support research on disability. More significance to child education of PwDs.

5) Conclusion

India is one of the highest disability population countries. Situation of disable persons in India is very poor since large number of PwDs i.e., more than 80 per cent comes under poverty. They are facing social and economic exclusion. It becomes necessary to take initiatives not from government side but also from society and private sector. PwDs must be ensured safe and dignified living with economic self-reliance. Government initiatives in recent decades are proved significant in uplifting the socio-economic conditions and dignity of PwDs in India. But this may not fulfill the full necessity. Despite all measures in place, persons with disabilities continue to face discrimination on an everyday basis.

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