

**UPSC Syllabus Topic : GS paper 2- governance- mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.**

**Empowering Disability Inclusion in India: Unleashing the Potential through the 'By' Approach**

**People with Disabilities (PWD): Understanding the Landscape**

As per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

**Current Status of PWD in India**

In India, approximately 26.8 million people, constituting 2.21% of the total population (2011 Census), are living with disabilities. Among them, 14.9 million are men (2.41% of men) and 11.9 million are women (2.01% of women). Notably, 69% (18 million) of persons with disabilities reside in rural areas, with the highest prevalence observed in the age group of 10-19 years (46.2 lakh people).

**Challenges in the Inclusion of PWD**

1. **Global Prevalence:** Globally, 1.3 billion people have disabilities, with 80% in developing countries and 70% in rural areas.
2. **Economic Exclusion:** Persons with disabilities often face poverty, limited access to education, and restricted job opportunities. Inclusion could potentially boost global GDP by 3-7%, according to an ILO study.
3. **Social Perception:** They are frequently perceived as charity cases rather than capable individuals.
4. **Inadequate Government Schemes:** Some developmental schemes in India exclude the disabled due to a lack of awareness and last-mile connectivity, especially in rural areas.

**Government Initiatives for Inclusion**

1. **UN Convention Advocacy:** Advocating for changing attitudes and perceptions in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. **Government Schemes in India:** Implementation of schemes and the issuance of a unique ID for persons with disabilities (UDID) under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016).
3. **SPARK Project:** The International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), in collaboration with Maharashtra's Women's Development Corporation, initiated the Sparking Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation (SPARK) project. It trains Disability Inclusion Facilitators to integrate women with disabilities into self-help groups, promoting their social and economic development.

**Supporting People with Disabilities: Key Recommendations**

1. **Inclusion in Economic Development:** Recognize and include persons with disabilities in economic activities, as their inclusion could boost global GDP by 3-7%.
2. **'By' vs 'For' Approach:** Shift focus to actions performed by persons with disabilities rather than just for them, ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes.

3. **Private Sector Engagement:** Encourage the private sector to hire and retain workers with disabilities, breaking down employment barriers and stereotypes.
4. **Replicate Successful Projects:** Expand initiatives like the SPARK project, which trains Disability Inclusion Facilitators and integrates women with disabilities into self-help groups for social and economic development.