

Landscape of Employment Opportunities and Sustenance for Persons with Disabilities in India

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ABSTRACT

Employment is essential for personal dignity, social stability, and economic prosperity, as every citizen has the right to work, irrespective of physical or social constraints. Ensuring equitable opportunity for all is an integral priority of any nation towards its population. According to the 2011 Census, the number of persons with disabilities (PwDs) in the country is 26.8 million, constituting 2.21 per cent of the overall population. Skill, however, maybe deciphered to bring off a marked task with competence or garner adroitness in a particular sphere or stream. Census 2011 indicates that around 13.4 million PwDs are between the employable age range of 15 to 59 years. This paper thus analyses current organisations, schemes, and programs pertaining to employment prospects for PwDs, encompassing an examination of available provisions, beneficiary access, and a comprehensive report on Budget allocation patterns for different sectors. This study adopts a descriptive survey to examine existing policies, programs, and schemes concerning employment for PwDs. The findings of the study indicate that employment opportunities, skill development missions, and assistance of resources have made an effort to thrive both economically and sociologically. PwDs in India, particularly in Mizoram, have escalated over the past decade, yet access to these initiatives remains limited, as indicated by the study. Moreover, since PwDs have a significant role in shaping the nation's economy, raising awareness and outreach becomes paramount to increase the number of beneficiaries to align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 & Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- 4, 8 & 10, which recognise the economic empowerment of people, including PwDs.

Keywords: Persons with Disabilities, Employment Opportunities, PwD Empowerment, Skill Development, Budget allocation

It is widely observed that differently abled people confront everyday with discrimination that violates equality, equity and social justice, which is considered the foundation of any welfare State. The reliable data of differently abled people can only serve the herculean task of evidence-based policy planning, willful implementation, coherent action, and rigorous monitoring that lead to a transformative future for better livelihood. The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 emphasises the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities (PwDs) as essential for educational inclusion and the nation's economic development

in alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4, 8 & 10 which ensures quality education, decent work and economic growth, and reduced inequalities respectively (Ministry of Human Resource Development [MHRD], 2020 & United Nations, 2017). According to the 2011 Census, the number of PwDs in the country is 26.8

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million, constituting 2.21 per cent of the overall population (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner [ORGCCI], 2011). PwDs represent a significant human resource for the nation, and most of these persons can achieve an improved quality of life if afforded equal opportunities and adequate access to rehabilitation services (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities [DEPwD], 2024). In India, PwDs, especially those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, constitute one of the most vulnerable communities, frequently facing stigma, discrimination, and breaches of their human rights (Angothu & Chaturvedi, 2016; Patel, 2010). To foster an environment that ensures these persons have equal opportunities for protecting their rights and full societal participation, the government has developed and implemented the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (NPPD). The policy delineates explicit measures and methods to safeguard the rights of PwDs and promote their societal inclusion (DEPwD, 2024).

Skill, on the other hand, maybe deciphered as a means of bringing off a marked task with competence or garnering adroitness in a particular sphere or stream. To reinforce skills, vocational education and training can be shown beyond doubt as a double-edged weapon, which may be at odds with the unemployment problem. According to the Census 2011, around 13.4 million PwDs are between the employable age range of 15 to 59 years. Approximately 9.9 million persons with disabilities in the employable age bracket were either non-workers or marginal workers (ORGCCI, 2011). If a comparison is to be drawn between persons without disability and PwDs, the latter are seen to bump into expansive stumbling blocks in acquiring and sustaining purposeful and competitive employment (Lu *et al.* 2022). While there are many roadblocks in attaining employability for PwDs, a noteworthy hitch for this population is the dearth of job-related soft skills. These skills, often overlooked, are crucial for success in the workplace and must be given more attention in the context of PwDs (Lindsay *et al.* 2012; Tulgan, 2015). Very few studies link schemes and programmes with budgeting, beneficiary analysis, and the current evolving policy landscape following the NEP-2020, along with the second, fourth and eighth Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hence, this paper analyses current organisations, schemes, and programs related

to employment prospects for PwDs, examining available provisions and beneficiary access. It also provides a comprehensive report on budget allocation patterns for different sectors.

Research Questions

- ❑ What are the existing organisations, schemes, and programmes related to employment for persons with disabilities in India?
- ❑ What provisions are offered by various organisations, schemes and programmes for persons with disabilities in India?
- ❑ How many beneficiaries have accessed support from various organisations, schemes, and programmes outlined for persons with disabilities in India?
- ❑ What trends can be observed in budget allocations for empowering persons with disabilities in India over the past ten years?

This study used secondary data to examine existing policies, programs, and schemes for employment for PwDs. The purpose of utilising secondary findings is to comprehend the patterns surrounding existing policies, schemes, and programs among various ministries and departments relating to PwDs.

Data Sources and Analysis

The secondary data analysis was carried out to identify patterns in various concerns. The data was collected and analysed from various government documents and reports, specifically budget reports and expenditure data pertaining to disability programs from websites such as the Union Budget (2017-2024), the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. Additionally, media articles, literature evaluations, and census records were utilised for the analytical review. A document-based review analysis of government official documents, policies and budget reports was undertaken to examine the pertinent documents and policies. However, the inclusion criteria, namely, documents and policies from 2014 to 2024, and the exclusion criteria, precisely skills pertaining to general employment rather than solely disability, were provided to evaluate the manuscript. The statistical data is analysed through different modes of representation in charts and graphs based on various findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

(I) Employment Opportunities and Schemes for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)

The framework encompasses numerous organisations, initiatives, and programs across various Ministries and Departments. Wherein, inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to screen the manuscript. Inclusion criteria pertinent to employment for PwDs encompass active organisations, schemes, programmes, budget allocation, and the availability of relevant statistics. Conversely, exclusion criteria were established based on non-employment emphasis, inactive, minor, and redundant organisations, programmes, schemes, and budget allocations for different sectors.

1. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), Department of Empowerment for Persons with Disability (DEPwD)

The Department of Empowerment of Persons

with Disabilities (DEPwD), established in May 2012 under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), seeks to enhance the empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities and functions as the principal agency supervising all developmental activities for PwDs. Empowering PwDs is a multidisciplinary approach that includes prevention, early identification, intervention, education, health, vocational training, rehabilitation, and social inclusion. The vision of this department is to empower PwDs through various acts, institutions, organisations, rehabilitation schemes, and programmes, thereby fostering an enabling environment that ensures equal opportunities, safeguards their rights, and facilitates their participation as independent and productive members of society (DEPwD, 2024). Thus, various organisations, acts, schemes, and programmes have been introduced under this department to promote inclusion and equal opportunities for PwDs. These include- the National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (NAP-SDP), Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of

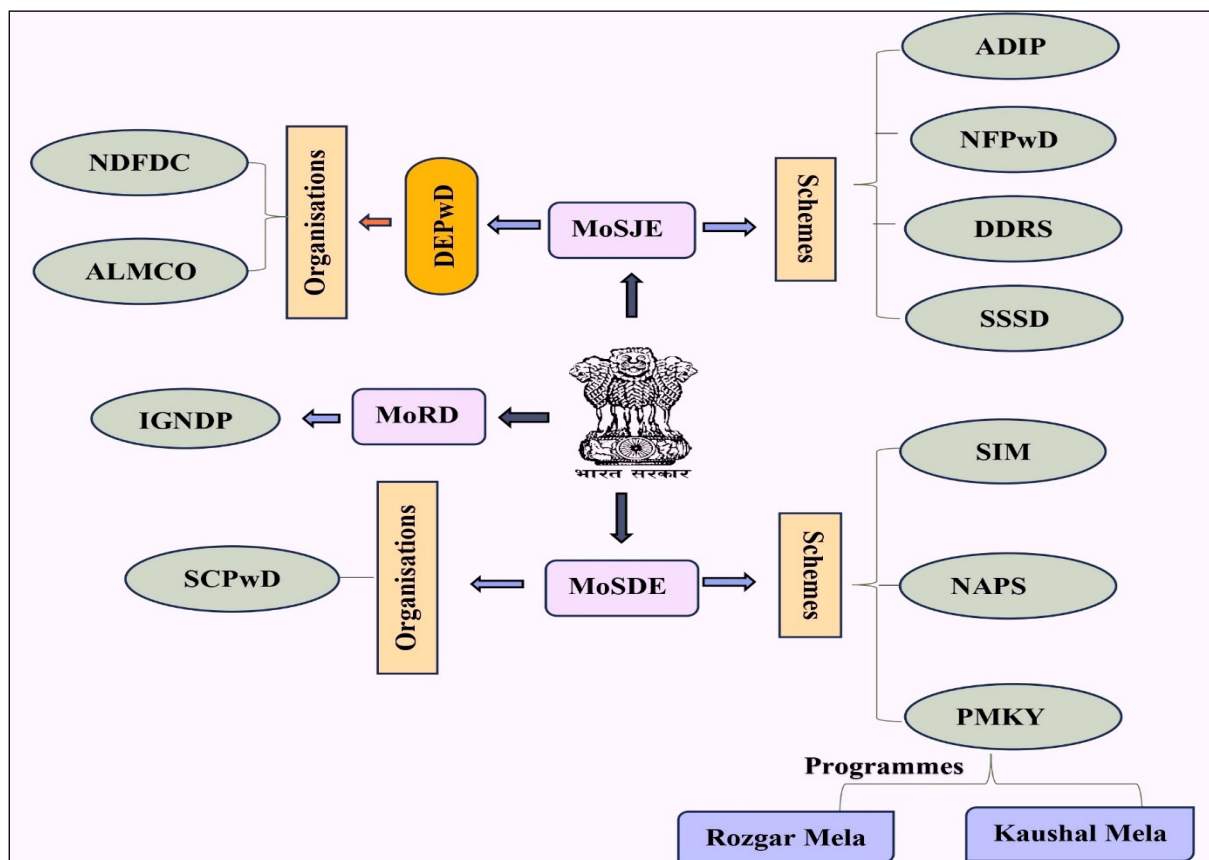


Fig. 1: Intersection of Government Bodies and Schemes for PwD Employment

Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA), National Fund for PwDs (NFPwDs), Scheme of Assistance to Persons with Disabilities for Purchase/Fitting of Aids /Appliances (ADIP Scheme), Deendayal Divyangjan Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS), District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRC), Scholarship for Students with Disabilities (SSSD).

1.1 Organisations under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)

(a) National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC)

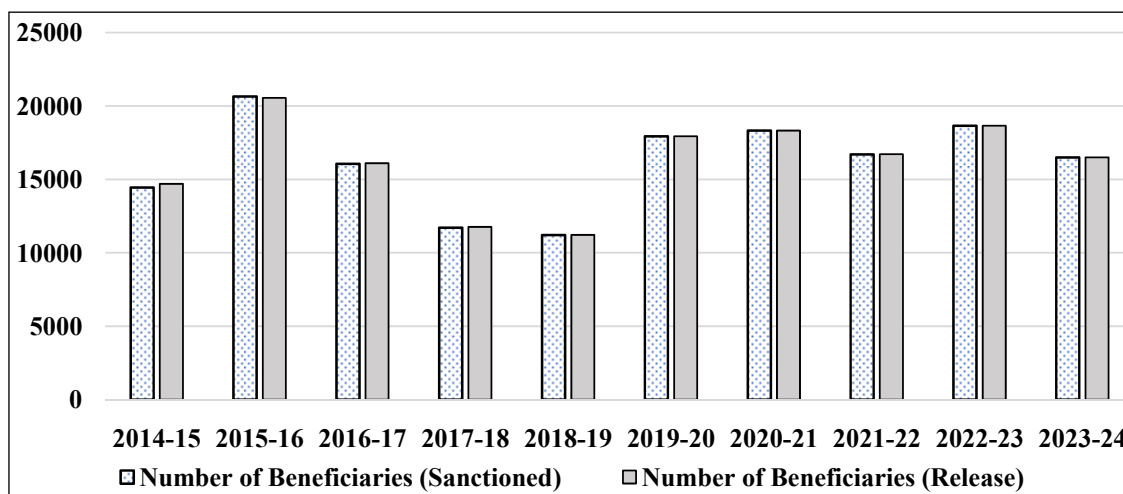
The National Divyangjan Finance and Development Corporation (NDFDC) is a Central Public Sector Undertaking operating under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India. NDFDC serves as a principal institution for directing funds to enhance economic development initiatives and self-employment opportunities for PwDs via State Channelising Agencies (SCAs) appointed by the respective State or Union Territory Governments and collaborating Banks (Public Sector Banks and Regional Rural Banks). NDFDC promotes the socio-economic empowerment of PwDs. NDFDC has two primary programs for facilitating concessional loans via its partner organisations National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC) and DEPwD.

❑ The **Divyangjan Swavalamban Yojana (DSY)** is individual-centric. Financial assistance: Education Loan for studies in India and abroad up to ₹ 50 Lakhs with a 1% rate of interest.

❑ The **Vishesh Microfinance Yojana (VMY)** aims to assist Self-Help Groups and Joint Liability Groups via many partner agencies to enhance the welfare and rehabilitation of PwDs in the nation. The project's unit cost shall not be beyond ₹ 60,000.

NHFDC offers a 1% rebate on self-employment loans for disabled women other than OH, but no interest rebate for higher education loans is permitted. The NHFDC will directly credit a 1% APR subvention to the account of the PwD borrower through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

Fig. 2 displays data regarding beneficiaries (sanctioned/released) from 2015-16. The overall beneficiaries appear to have fallen from 2015 to 2019, influenced by outreach, effectiveness, and potential impediments. However, the number of beneficiaries tends to increase from 2019 to 2023, implying enhanced awareness of the plan and its outreach to beneficiaries, with a slight stabilisation during 2021-22, possibly attributable to the pandemic. Moreover, in recent years, 2023-24, there has been a significant concern regarding strategic interventions in the programs aimed at reaching PwDs. Furthermore, as of 16.09.2020, 179 beneficiaries in Mizoram and 187,917 in India



Source: National Divyangjan Finance and Development Cooperation.

Fig. 2: Number of beneficiaries sanctioned/number of beneficiaries released as of 30/04/2024

were covered, and Rs. 54.25 Lakhs in Mizoram and 113077.97 Lakhs in India were released for PwDs under the NHFDC Scheme. The source of this report is Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1414, dated September 20, 2020 (Indiastat, 2020).

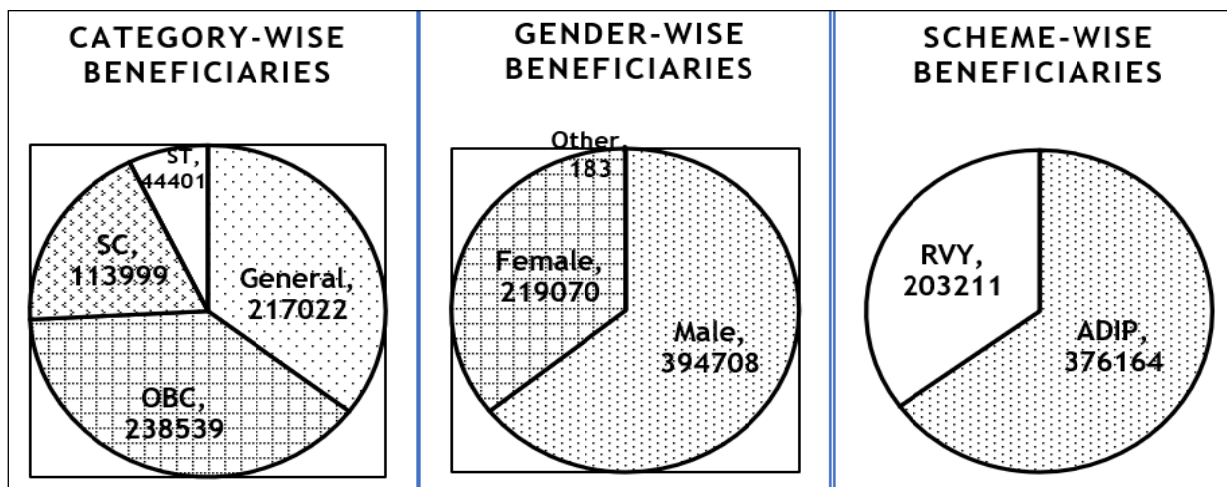
(b) Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALMCO)

The Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALMCO) is a Schedule 'C', Mini-Ratna Category II Central Public Sector Enterprise operating under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, and is designated as 'Not for Profit Motive'. The corporation began producing aids and assistive devices in 1976 (DEPwD, 2024). The primary objectives of the corporation are to promote, encourage, and enhance the availability, utilisation, supply, and distribution of artificial limbs and assistive devices at affordable prices nationwide, encompassing a diverse range of products for persons who are orthopedically impaired, visually impaired, hearing impaired, and intellectually impaired (DEPwD, 2024). To improve the outreach of benefits from the ADIP scheme by supplying aids and assistive devices to PwDs nationwide, ALIMCO has initiated the establishment of Pradhanmantri Divyasha Kendra (PMDK) at National Institutes (NIs) and Satellite/Regional Centres operating under DEPwD, Government of India, on a pan-India scale (Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India

[ALMCO], 2024). However, to avail themselves of this organisation's various support, the beneficiaries must register themselves on the ADIP and RVP Joint Interface for Unique Nomination (ARJUN) portal.

ADIP and RVP Joint Interface for Unique Nomination (ARJUN) portal

The ARJUN portal is a collaborative platform established by the DEPwD to assist ADIP and Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) beneficiaries. The RVY program specifically targets senior citizens classified as BPL who experience age-related disabilities or infirmities, such as low vision, hearing impairment, dental loss, and locomotor disabilities. These persons will receive assisted-living devices designed to restore near-normal bodily functions, thereby mitigating the impact of their disabilities or infirmities (National Portal of India[NPI], 2019 & Government of India [GoI], 2019). As per the source Press Information Bureau, dated July 26, 2022, 1 camp, 364 beneficiaries, 1,209 appliances, and ₹ 35.9 Lakhs distributed under RVY in Mizoram and on the other hand, 250 camps, 251,787 beneficiaries, 895,524 appliances, and ₹ 19,469.72 Lakhs distributed under RVY in India during the year 2017-22 (Indiastat, n.d.). The primary objective of the ARJUN portal is to facilitate various services by enabling online registration, tracking aid distribution, and submitting complaints for equipment repairs. Furthermore, the website generates national-level statistics for the beneficiaries as follows:



Source: GoI, DEPwD, 2024. ADIP Scheme Data GoI, DEPwD, 2024. ADIP Scheme Data in India (Data retrieved September 28, 2024).

Fig. 3: National-level statistics for the beneficiaries under the ADIP Scheme

1.2 Schemes under the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)

(a) National Fund for PwDs (NFPwDs)

The National Fund for PwDs is a scheme under DEPwD to provide a framework that facilitates financial assistance, such as through the Fund, for specific core areas pertinent to the empowerment of PwDs, which are excluded from the government's Fiscal support program (National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities [NIEPID], 2024). The National, Regional, and State levels of the program offer full tuition cost reimbursement for students who are either deaf or entirely blind and are studying STEM disciplines at National Institutes and Composite Regional Centres. Furthermore, PwDs possessing two years of expertise in organising exhibitions or seminars are eligible for help in sports, fine arts, music, and dance participation once per financial year. This aid is allocated once per event type every fiscal year for persons demonstrating excellence in specific domains (DEPwD, 2024). For the fiscal year 2023-24, 22 organisations received a total of ₹ 9,73,04,392.00 (Total Expenditure under G.I.A.+Administrative Expenses) from the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities. Mizoram, while now included under the Guwahati subregion, requires an organisational presence because of its geographical remoteness and inherent constraints, to benefit local residents and provide a more robust and efficient support structure (NIEPID, 2024).

The condition applicable to all approved organisations/persons under this scheme is to be available through the department website; however, it is mandatory to have registration on the Unique Disability ID (UDID). The UDID sub-scheme is being executed to establish a National Database for Persons with Disabilities nationwide (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, [MoSJE], 2024). Aggregated statistics from the UDID portal indicate that a total of 6,535 persons with various disabilities, aged 0 to 60, have been registered throughout 11 districts in Mizoram, as updated on September 04, 2024 (MoSJE, 2024).

(b) Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids and Appliances (ADIP Scheme)

ADIP works under the DEPwD to look after

their inclusion and expedite their growth and development, thus targeting empowerment. A different approach for registering beneficiaries is the ARJUN Portal. Beneficiaries can now register themselves directly for the necessary appliances and aids by logging onto the MIS portal. Its implementing agencies may be subdivided into two broad categories: National Institutes, Other Implementing Agencies, and ALIMCO. We have the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID), Pt Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities (PDUNIPPD), Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities (AYJNISHD), National Institute of Rehabilitation Training & Research (SVNIRTAR), National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD), National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), and National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities (NILD). Under Other Implementing Agencies, more than 100 centres are working relentlessly in each state. ALIMCO is entirely operated by the GoI's Central Public Sector Enterprises to maximise the availability and accessibility of artificial limbs and other aids required for the rehabilitation of PwDs (DEPwD, 2024).

Achievements under the ADIP Scheme since 2014

- ❑ At a cost of ₹ 2055.42 crore, aids and assistive devices were provided to 28.79 Lakhs *Divyangjan*.
- ❑ The nation has successfully performed 6764 cochlear implant surgeries (5960 under the ADIP Scheme and 804 under CSR).
- ❑ A total of 65786 motorised tricycles have been given to qualified *Divyangjan* (DEPwD, 2024).
- ❑ ATD (ADIP) Scheme records outstanding successes, with grant-in-aid amounting to ₹ 368.05 crore being used in 1582 camps for the benefit of 2.91 lakh beneficiaries (*Press Information Bureau, December 27, 2023*).

Furthermore, as per source MoSJE, Lok Sabha Unstarred/Starred Question No. 175/393, dated December 12, 2018/January 08, 2019, from 2014-15 to 2023-24 (till July 2023), ₹ 158.02 Lakhs have been used by implementing agencies in Mizoram

under this scheme, covering 1996 beneficiaries and conducting 39 camps. Yet revised records for 2023–24 have not been discovered. Also, during the year 2018-19, 547 in India and only 1 in Mizoram cochlear implant surgery were conducted under this scheme (Indiastat, n.d.).

(c) Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)

Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme is the Central Sector Scheme of the Government of India that offers financial support-Grant-in-Aid (GIA) to voluntary organisations engaged in educating and rehabilitating PwDs. The initiative was initiated in 1999 and revamped and rebranded in 2003 (Government of India, 2024). The beneficiaries must register from the MOSJE e-ANUDAAN (e-Application for National Unified Portal for Direct Benefit Transfer) portal, GoI. The GIA will be determined according to the number of eligible beneficiaries outlined in the inspection report. Beneficiaries present in the institution for a minimum of 15 days within the preceding 30 working days before the inspection date shall be considered for this purpose (MoSJE, n.d.).

The expected GIA releases under DDRS for the financial years 2022-2024 in Mizoram are 1,725,750 in 2023-24 (1 district) and 2,922,338 in 2022-23 (districts). Moreover, the GIA in Mizoram has proven to be inconsistent. Since 2014, the GIA has been allocated to Mizoram only 22 times. However, no GIA has been granted in the financial year 2021-22 (DEPwD, 2024). This signifies the absence of a support structure in Mizoram, which may impede essential assistance for those with disabilities in the state. On the other hand, as per source Lok Sabha unstarred Question No. 2048 and 3003, dated August 01, 2023 and August 08, 2023, ₹ 40.95 Lakhs in Mizoram and ₹ 29,876.68 Lakhs in India funds were released and 81 in Mizoram and 97,064 in India disabled children benefitted under the DDRS scheme in Mizoram during 2020-21 and 2022-2023 (Indiastat, n.d.).

(d) Scholarship Scheme for Students with Disabilities (SSSD)

Scholarship Scheme for Students with Disabilities is a scheme under DEPwD that empowers and provides financial support to students with disabilities. To execute the mandates, DEPwD,

GoI, has implemented the “Scheme of Scholarships for Students with Disabilities,” which comprises six components: Pre-matriculation Scholarship (For Grades IX and X), Post-Matriculation Scholarship (For Class XI to Post-graduate Degree/Diploma), Superior Education (For Graduate and Post-Graduate Degree/Diploma in designated institutes of educational excellence), National Overseas Scholarship (For Master’s Degree/Ph.D. in foreign Institutions/Colleges/Universities), National Fellowship for M.Phil and Ph.D. at Indian Universities, and Complimentary Coaching (DEPwD, 2024). A total of 257,917 beneficiaries are covered under this initiative, with a budget allocation of ₹ 830.32 crore from 2013-14 to 2023-24 in India. Conversely, a total of 126 persons received an allocation of ₹ 0.36 crore in Mizoram (DEPwD, 2024).

2. Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Department of Rural Development (DoRD), Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDP)

The Indira Gandhi National Disability Scheme was initiated in February 2009 by the Ministry of Rural Development under the Central Government to assist those with disabilities throughout the country. This initiative, established under the National Social Assistance Program (NSAP), offers a monthly pension to those with disabilities to enhance their quality of life. Anyone with a disability of 80% or greater, aged over 18 years, and classified as living below the poverty line is eligible to apply for this initiative. A monthly pension of ₹ 300/- is provided to Divyangjan between 18 years and 79 years. For persons who are 80 years old and above, a pension of ₹ 500/- per month will be provided (GoI, 2024). This scheme has 8,81,394 beneficiaries in Mizoram (GoI, 2024). The beneficiaries have to register themselves in the UMANG App (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance) and navigate to NSAP for further registration.

3. Organisation under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE)

3.1 Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD)

SCPwD is an effective organisation evolving

with a cornerstone of upskilling PwDs. It was in October 2015 that the Skill Council for Persons with Disability was established to overture PwDs purposeful, pertinent to the industry and skill-deployed training. This establishment was moved up by the Confederation of Indian Industry under the patronage of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE). It singles out developing skills among People with Disability as per the exigency of the industry, which can be of assistance to them, such that they gain market-worth, gainfully get employed, and give rise to the building economy of the nation.

All stratagems intrigued by SCPwD delegating PwDs, approximately giving a voice to the local and national level, proposed actions for hewing the henceforward of PwD in India. SCPwD has its objective set for a thriving enterprise for PwD by getting to grips with the skilling gap and sparing the right kind of tools and workspace to compellingly effectuate their jobs. SCPwD, piloted by a National Vision and outreach, is now unruffled for future headway, with a conviction that designates weightage for PwD to syndicate not only in the government sector but also in industry and individual skillfulness. According to the records, there are currently 376 training centres, and the total number of trained candidates is 168,584. A total of 154,424 candidates were evaluated by 11 assessment partners, with 129,304 candidates successfully certified. Six expository developments and 384 QP/NOS alignments exist. SCPwD has assembled 220 industrial partners for collaboration and industry partners (Skill Council for Persons with Disability [SCPwD], 2024).

Pwdnaukri.com is a peculiar on-hand digital platform that bestows a job look into PwDs and also traverses the breathing space between “industry’s PwD manpower demand and PwD skilled resources.” The industry on this website posts about the manpower requirements of PwD and makes efforts to hire skilled and adept candidates. Thus, probing for PwD candidates through the proper channel becomes trouble-free. Thus, PwD candidates can look for attainable jobs based on their respective inclination and adequacy and register for the job according to their preference. SCPwD-affiliated Training Partners also benefit

from an opportunity to upload and exchange the data of candidates who have completed proper certification, such that registered candidates can receive interview calls through this platform. According to the data, there are currently 9197+ job seekers and 500+ positions that have been awarded (PWD Naukri, 2024).

3.2 Schemes under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE)

(a) Skill India Mission (SIM)

Inept job-related soft skills may be bracketed with high-priced unemployment loss among youths, also suggesting mental health issues (Succi & Canovi, 2020; Lu *et al.* 2022). Skill India Mission is a discursive program rolled out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, with the foresight of making our nation’s youth capable of sustaining themselves and emerging as self-made. Skill development chips in by tweaking the potency and empowering people to operate more competently, thus stirring the nation into a high-yielding, pioneering and vying economy with adept man-force (Behera & Gaur, 2022). Combining all key ministries, viz Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and the Ministry of Labour & Employment, sets the seal on quality discharge and implementation (Chenoy *et al.* 2019). Researchers have found that India is accorded with a ‘demographic dividend’ which computes mileage to our economy, thus propping up the Make in India drive by corroborating a more adroit workforce (Swain & Swain, 2020). The government has set an ambitious target of skilling around 400 million people by 2022 (Arora & Chhadwani, 2019).

In developing countries like India, educational and vocational training is a cause of dropping skilled opportunities and integrating job experience into the economy’s youth. Any economy prerequisites skilled youth who can look out on the pressure and take the risk of starting up a company, therefore promoting the country’s economic growth. It is often noted that PwDs, that is, persons with long-term physical, emotional, intellectual or dramatic impairments, get used to confinement on equal footing with others in any type of industry. Employees, in most cases, hold prejudices while recruiting in favour of the differently-abled. Thus,

the key revenue generated by most differently-abled persons is out of self-employment (Behera & Gaur, 2022).

It becomes a gruelling plight for PwDs India to equip them with employable skills to secure purposeful employment. Even though India has assented to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability (UNCRPD), differently-abled persons still stand being surfaced by various predicaments related to the labour market.

However, in recent past, agencies such as National Institutes under DEPwD, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MOSJE), Career and Guidance Centre for the PwD under Ministry of Labour and Employment, Vocational Colleges, Technical Institutes, Vocational Schemes under the umbrella of MSJ&E, Non-Governmental Organizations, Public Sectors, Skill development agency and others are making efforts to skill PwD for more acceptability and empowerment.

The Department of Persons with Disabilities (*Divyangjan*) (DEPwD) has developed a National Action Plan for skilling people with Disabilities. PM DAKSH - DEPwD serves as a comprehensive platform for PwDs, skill training organisations, and employers throughout India, facilitating participation in the National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities executed by the DEPwD (PM DAKSH DEPwD, 2024). According to PM DAKSH-DEPwD (2024) statistics, under *Divyangjan Kaushal Vikas*, there are 1.34 Lakhs PwD beneficiaries, 87,200 PwDs are trained, and 25724 PwDs are placed. In addition to this, *Divyangjan Rozgar Setu* currently has 11,545 vacancies, 12,992 PwDs registrations and 20 job aggregators/employers (GoI, 2024).

(b) National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)

The Indian Government initiated NAPS in August 2016 with the objective of promoting apprenticeships in India through financial incentives, technological support, and advocacy. The implementing bodies of this Apprenticeship Scheme comprise the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the Chief Executive Officers of the Sector Skill Councils operating under the authority of the Central Government.

Courses classified as optional trades and sanctioned by the Central and State Governments, including PMKVY and DDU-GKY, are to be integrated with NAPS. NAPS now has over 35,229 operational establishments as of December 31, 2022, and there are roughly 32,30,498 apprentices cumulatively engaged to date, September 04, 2024. As per the government website, the number of apprentices engaged in the fiscal year 2021-2022 was 9,31,940, and in the year 2023-2024, it is 602,760 (MSDE, 2023).

(c) Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

A flagship scheme by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE), undertaken by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to enhance the skills of potential differently-abled kids through Short Term Training (STT) courses and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The initiative launched by the government aims to enhance skill training, provide post-placement support, and provide a monthly transport allowance. PMKVY aims to empower a significant number of Indian youths to pursue industry-relevant skill training, facilitating improved livelihood opportunities and a sustainable future. This page highlights the success stories of PMKVY candidates who trusted their abilities and selected esteemed avenues to achieve their career aspirations.

PMKVY has been a pretty promising employment exchange for the youth in India. According to government records data retrieved on September 27, 2024, the Yojana has enrolled approximately 2,808,665 candidates. Nearly 1,855,209 candidates have been trained so far, and training has been assessed for approximately 1,062,759 candidates. What stands out is that close to 926,623 candidates have been certified under PMKVY, and there are around 530,432 trainings ongoing at the moment in India and 2,158 ongoing trainings in Mizoram (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, 2024). From the Mizoram PMKVY implementation, beneficiaries get an average salary of around ₹ 8,000 (US\$110) within and outside the state. It can be statistically proven that Mizoram is one of the best performers in effectuating the PMKVY in full bloom in India. As per the source Lok Sabha Starred Question No. 259, dated August

07, 2023, it is found that 32,266 cumulative number of candidates trained under this scheme in Mizoram during the year 2015-23 (Indiastat, n.d.).

Placement refers to providing wage or self-employment opportunities to persons trained and qualified under PMKVY. The placement performance gets on for 54% varied across different work sectors, which can be broadly classified under apparel (20%), electronics and hardware (54%), retail (10%), beauty and wellness (7%), telecom (7%), logistics (6%), ITs (4%), Construction (4%), BFSI (3%), and agriculture (3%) (SCPwD), 2024). The flagship program also accommodates trainees with PwD-friendly training centres. To establish the idiosyncrasy of training oneself under the PMKVY, an online portal, SMART (Skill Management and Accreditation of Training Centres), is used for all affiliations and consignments of training centres. Provisions have also been made via continual monitoring through various channels and imperative annual re-accreditation. This, however, has now migrated to a unified portal known as the Skill India Portal (SIP). The PMKVY Monitoring Committee has fitted out a penalty grid to provide a more accurate running order. National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) effectuates under MSDE and has so far established training centres for implementing PMKVY 2016-20 guidelines on multiple variables.

❖ *Rozgar Mela Programme*

Rozgar Melas are being carried out by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under the guardianship of the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE), GoI, to proffer inducement to the gamut of employment in the country. Rozgar Melas is a major initiative by the Government of India aimed at facilitating progress in the private industry sector. These Rozgar Melas, by and large, provide for youth between the ages of 18 and 35. The applicants are required to have an academic qualification of either of the following: 8th/10th/12th Pass, ITI, Diploma, or a graduate. In addition, the trained and certified candidates who accede to the National Skills Qualifications Framework are also eligible to apply. The job seekers for the Rozgar Mela are stimulated and deployed through various mediums- bulk SMS, print advertisement, social media, and workshops

conducted by educational institutions (at the college and university levels). As per data reports from April 2018 to February 2020, a total of 1,524 Rozgar Melas were conducted, where 5,61,948 candidates registered themselves, and 2,48,596 were shortlisted /selected (MSDE, 2023).

❖ *Kaushal Mela Programme*

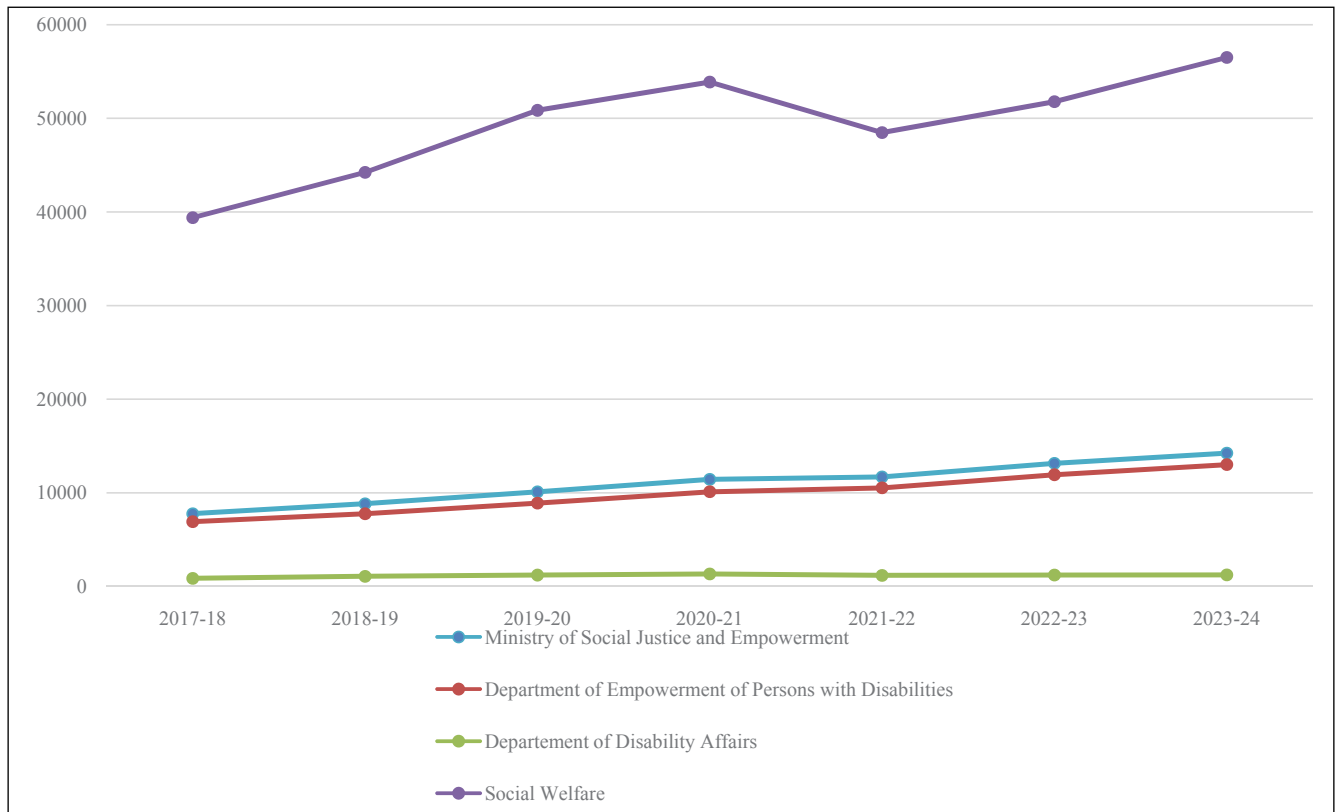
Both community mobilisation and society hold a prominent place in the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana. District Skill Committees and State Skill Development Missions collate Kaushal Melas for all applicants, a preparatory round before their induction, to dispense finesse and general guidance about the courses. This is followed by the enrolment of the aspiring candidates into the course. Kaushal Mela is, by and large, a 'camp-based approach', castoff for edifying awareness, cognisance, and signing up befitting contenders (applicants). Camps like these are presided over to both make information known about copious options related to skill training (under the PMKVY scheme) and delineate the odds-on line of path and other prospective look-ins that can initiate wage.

(II) Fiscal Commitment and Allocation: A Strategic Outlook

1. Disability Funding Trends: Analysing Budget allocations and impact

Budgets are distributed annually to several Ministries and departments to enhance diverse sectors and provide social and structural support. Budget allocation for the cause of disability empowerment in India mirrors the government's strategic priorities in tackling issues related to the challenges these very people face. However, the question remains: Are these adequate and well-implemented? This section looks at the financial frameworks for their allocation patterns, resource utilisation, and impacts brought about in improving the lives of PwDs. A review of the budget conducted for different ministries and departments related to social welfare and empowerment over seven financial years, from 2017-18 to 2023-24, to assess the degree of implementation, indicated that:

- ❑ The previously allocated budget for various departments increases, showing the government's commitment to the various sectors



Source: Ministry of Finance, Government of India. Union Budget of India (2017-24).

Graph 1: Year-wise data for various Ministries/Departments (2017-2024)

of PwDs. However, the budget allocations (2021-23) declined, reflecting allocation due to the pandemic, but the trend continued to resume upward in later years.

- ❑ MoSJE, with an increase in budget from 2017-2024, has a different commitment to the issues of social justice and empowerment.
- ❑ The DEPwD budget almost doubled over seven years, indicating increased disability empowerment.
- ❑ Overall, the department has significantly increased (except during 2021-2023), showing a positive commitment of the government towards disability and indicating continued support.
- ❑ Fig. 4 above also depicts the undisguised emphasis the government has placed on various departments for the differently abled in India.

2. Skill Development Investments for PwDs in India: Evaluating Fiscal Support and Outcomes

Many skill development initiatives are crucial

for the social and communal advancement of PwDs in India. The government assures sustained fiscal commitment and allocations for those with disabilities in India, focusing on equitable and inclusive growth for all. Skill development initiatives boost employment and inclusive growth, and improve empowerment by increasing economic sustainability. However, an issue exists regarding the modernisation of the projects. Most of their skill development schemes are limited to stereotypical sectors such as stitching, spinning, crafts, bookbinding, and other cottage enterprises (Sunny & Xavier, 2023). According to the NSS 76th Round, 64% of the population in India (53% male and 77% female) are engaged in employment, whereas 36% (47% male and 23% female) are non-workers (Sunny & Xavier, 2023). This signifies the continued necessity of increasing the workforce to dismantle the societal and physical obstacles within the community. From this perspective, budget allocations among different sectors must continue to support enhanced empowerment for PwDs.

An analysis of the budget for various Ministries' empowerment initiatives for PwDs over seven fiscal years, from 2017-18 to 2023-24 (Union Budget), demonstrated that the financial allocation for the ADIP has consistently increased from 150 crore in 2017-18 to 245 crore in 2023-24, signifying ongoing support for the empowerment of PwDs. Conversely, funding spending has nearly doubled from 60 crore in 2017-18 to 130 crore in 2023-24 under the DDRS, indicating sustained support for rehabilitation services in India. Moreover, numerous schemes seem to have been consolidated into a singular initiative dealing with scholarships, which was discontinued in 2018-19 and subsequently merged into a unified program known as the SSRD. This program initially experienced an increase and then stabilised from 2019 to 2022, but funding continued to rise after 2022.

A supplementary training, employment, and awareness initiative has been integrated into more comprehensive employment programs. There has been a significant increase in financial allocation to the Centre for Disability Sports and Support for the National Institutes. Furthermore, the National Institute for Inclusive and Universal Design, a fundamental initiative that advocates for universally accessible design, has received minimal yet constant funding over the years. However, no funds have been granted for the years 2021-2023 and 2023-2024. Moreover, Public Sector Undertakings and initiatives like NHDSC and the ALMCO in India have experienced significant investment in some years while receiving negligible allocation in others. A thorough review conducted between 2019 and 2021 revealed that either the inclusion of initiatives into other schemes occurred or the government terminated the schemes. Another issue identified is that the pandemic has significantly influenced budget allocation, resulting in either increases or decreases across numerous departments and programs. However, the consistency of the schemes has endured over the years.

It is the need of the hour to work with differently abled people for inclusion and sustainability. Also, the concerted efforts being made by society to enable differently abled people to realise their hidden potentialities and contribution in Viksit Bharat@2047.

CONCLUSION

Disability can never be an impediment, and a Person with Disability can primarily perform all kinds of jobs given a conducive space to work in. The employment opportunities, skill development mission, and budget allocations in different sectors have been earmarked for aggrandising organisational performance, fostering reach and opportunities, and instituting placement for PwDs. Furthermore, since the PwD holds a significant position in determining the country's economy, the benchmark of labour market performance cannot be solely based on the ratio between the employed and the unemployed. The types of employment opportunities in the market also influence career mobility regarding accreditation. Raising awareness and outreach becomes paramount to increasing the number of beneficiaries to align with the NEP-2020 and SDG Goals-4,8 & 10, which recognises the economic empowerment of PwDs. The PwD has always faced a dearth of reasonable accommodation in formal education and training, constrained exposure to the workspace, and equitable workplace treatment (Tikhute, 2024). Although the suggested strategies for the economic rehabilitation of PwDs (inspired by the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006) offer a strong foundation for empowerment, their success depends on the execution of inclusive policies, access to resources, and continuous support (MoSJE, 2006). It is crucial to tackle systemic barriers to ensure that economic opportunities are not just accessible but also sustainable for PwDs, because, unlike other studies, there is not merely a policy gap but a gap in the ground implementation. While challenges shall prevail, particularly in providing reasonable accommodation in education and training, the increasing availability of digital resources and assistive interfaces is paving the way for greater access to government services and opportunities for PwDs to promote both economic and social inclusion.

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