



# Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in India

This country profile on India was developed as part of the regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education commissioned by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in India. This profile focuses on the country's progress in four domains of an inclusive education system: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Monitoring and Measuring Quality. Cross-cutting issues, such as gender and humanitarian situations, are also addressed in this document, although not in great depth. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping study can be found in the full mapping report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)  
P.O. Box 5815, Lekhnath Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: +977-1-4417082  
E-mail: [rosa@unicef.org](mailto:rosa@unicef.org)  
Website: [www.unicef.org/rosa/](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/)

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# **Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in India**

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| <b>B. Ed</b>       | Bachelor of Education  |
| <b>CBR</b>         | community-based rehabilitation                                   |
| <b>CFM</b>         | Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning              |
| <b>CRPD</b>        | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities            |
| <b>CSO</b>         | civil society organization                                       |
| <b>ECE</b>         | early childhood education  |
| <b>ECCE</b>        | early childhood care and education                               |
| <b>GDP</b>         | gross domestic product   |
| <b>ICDS</b>        | Integrated Child Development Services                            |
| <b>MoE</b>         | Ministry of Education  |
| <b>NCF</b>         | National Curriculum Framework                                    |
| <b>NEP</b>         | National Education Policy  |
| <b>NIOS</b>        | National Institute for Open Schooling                            |
| <b>OPD</b>         | Organization of Persons with Disabilities                        |
| <b>p.</b>          | page   |
| <b>PINDICS</b>     | Performance Indicators for Elementary School Teachers            |
| <b>RCI</b>         | Rehabilitation Council of India                                  |
| <b>RPWD Act</b>    | Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016                     |
| <b>Rs.</b>         | Indian rupee   |
| <b>RTE Act</b>     | Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009      |
| <b>SE</b>          | special education  |
| <b>SSA</b>         | Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan  |
| <b>SWAYAM</b>      | Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds           |
| <b>VHND</b>        | Village Health and Nutrition Day                                 |
| <b>UDISE+</b>      | Unified District Information System for Education Plus           |
| <b>UNESCO</b>      | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| <b>UNICEF</b>      | United Nations Children's Fund                                   |
| <b>UNICEF ROSA</b> | UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia                            |
| <b>WG</b>          | Washington Group on Disability Statistics                        |



Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



# 1

# INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), specifically Article 24, strengthened the global shift towards inclusion by mandating States parties to improve education systems and undertake measures to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities to quality inclusive education.<sup>2</sup>

Despite overall progress in education attainment globally, children with disabilities remain one of the most marginalized groups. They are less likely to participate in and complete their education compared to their peers without disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

In South Asia, an estimated 29 million children – 12.5 million at primary level and 16.5 million at lower secondary level – were out of school in 2018.<sup>4</sup> Of these, a considerable proportion was estimated to be children with disabilities. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is not possible to generate statistics that

are regionally or globally representative of the status of persons with disabilities with regard to education because of the scarcity of national data.<sup>5</sup> This is true for the South Asia region as well.

The lack of disaggregated education data poses a significant challenge for policy and programme development and implementation. In this regard, the United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA) commissioned a study to:

- map inclusive education policies, strategies and practices implemented at all levels of the education system in the South Asia region that are effective, or promise to be effective, in increasing access and/or learning outcomes of children with disabilities in education and have the potential for scaling up; and
- inform the development and strengthening of regional and country-level advocacy and programming for advancing disability-inclusive education across South Asia.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization and The World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, 'Out-of-School rates and numbers by SDG region, 2018', n.d.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Education and Disability: Analysis of Data from 49 Countries', Information Paper No.49, 2018, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip49-education-disability-2018-en.pdf>, accessed 18 December 2020.

The mapping covered interventions towards establishing disability-inclusive education initiated at all levels of the education system in eight countries in the region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

A theoretical framework was developed to guide the mapping exercise. The framework conceptualized inclusive education through four main domains: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Measuring and Monitoring Quality. Cross-cutting issues, albeit brief, were included in the review to provide an overview of the intersectionality

between disability and gender, and disability and humanitarian issues.

This country profile on India was developed as part of this regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in India. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping survey can be found in the full report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Grimes, P., et al., *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2021.



India remains committed to affirming the rights of all children to quality education, including children with disabilities.



# 2

## COUNTRY CONTEXT

As the second largest country in the world in terms of population, one of India's competitive assets is its human capital.<sup>7</sup> Over the years, the country has shown significant reforms in improving its human capital through critical advances in literacy<sup>8</sup> and the provision of free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years.<sup>9</sup> Despite these achievements, challenges in achieving quality educational outcomes remain.

UNICEF reported that about 135.5 million children and adolescents live in urban slums or peri-urban areas and are equally deprived as those living in rural areas in access to basic social

services, including quality education.<sup>10</sup> Poor quality teaching and learning practices have been identified as key challenges in the education system, alongside the low school attendance rate due to child marriage, child labour and various reports of abuse.<sup>11</sup>

These challenges affect vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities,<sup>12</sup> compounded by various inaccessibility issues, negative attitudes and practices towards disability, among other factors.<sup>13</sup> In spite of these challenges, India remains committed to affirming the rights of all children to quality education, including children with disabilities.

<sup>7</sup> South Asia Youth Skills & Solutions Forum, United Nations Children's Fund and Ernst & Young India, 'Developing Skills in Youth to Succeed in the Evolving South Asian Economy: India Country Report' 2019, [www.unicef.org/rosa/media/4496/file/India%20Country%20Report.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/4496/file/India%20Country%20Report.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Asian Development Bank, *Human Capital Development in the People's Republic of China and India: Achievements, prospects, and policy challenges*, Asian Development Bank, Mandaluyong City, 2015, [www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/178614/human-capital-prc-india.pdf](http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/178614/human-capital-prc-india.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> UNESCO New Delhi, *N for Nose: State of the Education Report for India 2019, Children with Disabilities*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization New Delhi Cluster Office, New Delhi, 2019, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000368780?posInSet=1&queryId=61d8f754-79af-400a-ae81-8b3700e24397>.

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF India, *Country Office Annual Report 2019, India*, New Delhi, 2019, [http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/India-2019-COAR\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/India-2019-COAR(1).pdf).

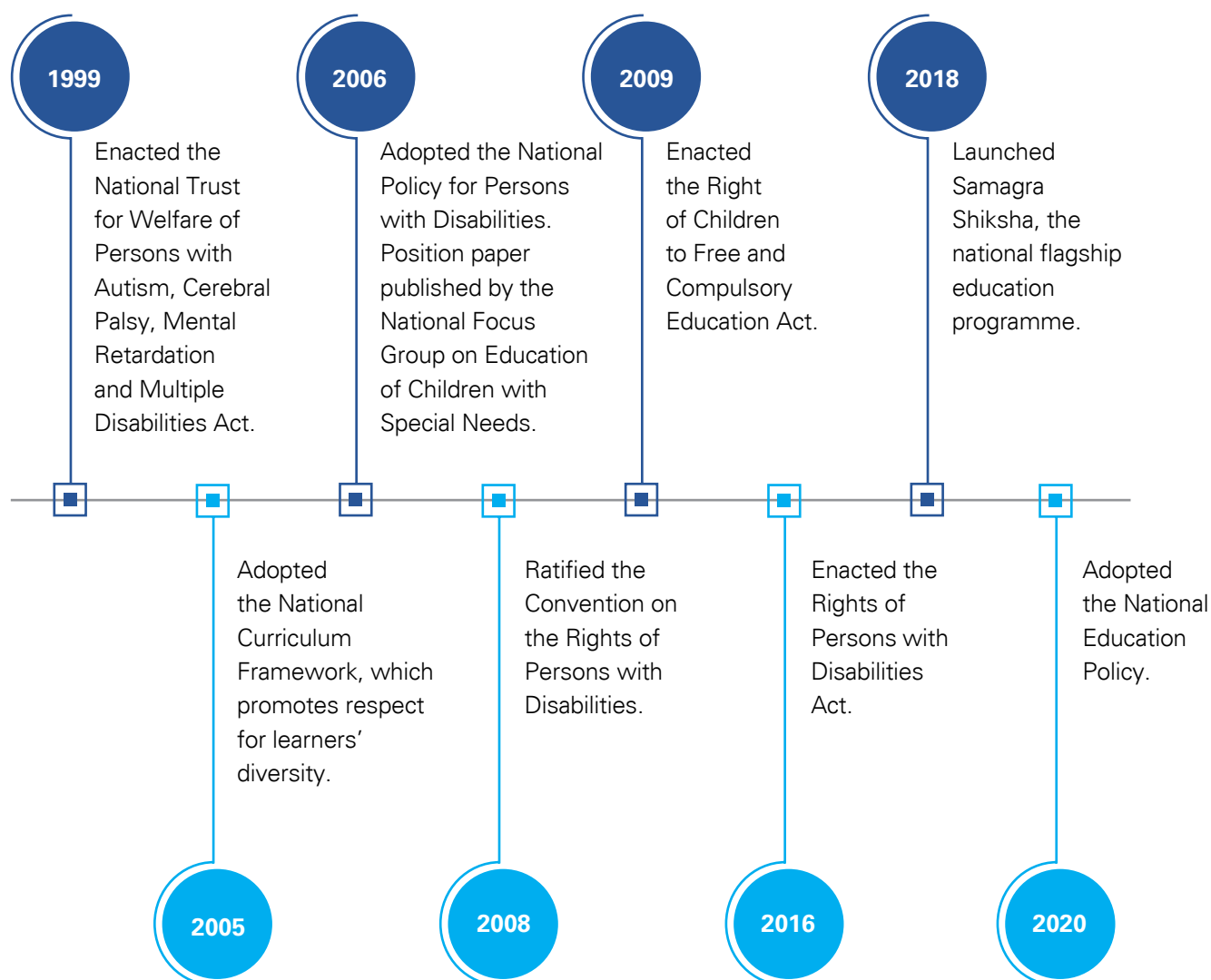
<sup>11</sup> UNICEF India, 'What we do: Education', n.d., [www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/education](http://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/education), accessed 29 November 2020.

<sup>12</sup> The term 'children with disabilities' is used throughout this document. In India, the terminology used is 'children with special education needs'.

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF India, *Making Schools Accessible to Children with Disabilities*, New Delhi, 2016, [www.unicef.org/india/media/1191/file/Making-Schools-Accessible.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/india/media/1191/file/Making-Schools-Accessible.pdf).



## Milestones in disability-inclusive education





Significant milestones in legislative reforms support the inclusion of all children in education.

# 3

# ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The enabling environment includes interrelated conditions that enable or facilitate the development of a disability-inclusive education system, including policies, disability data, plans, leadership, coordination and financing.

## 3.1 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

**Significant milestones in legislative reforms support the inclusion of all children in education.**

The Constitution of India guarantees education for all children aged 6 to 14 years (Article 21A). Although it prohibits discrimination “on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them” (Article 29.2)<sup>14</sup> in access to state or state-supported educational institutions, the constitution lacks explicit mention of anti-discrimination of persons with disabilities in educational institutions.

The main domestic laws enacted after the ratification of CRPD in 2007 support inclusive education, albeit in varying degrees:

- The **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (RTE Act)** echoes the promotion of “free and compulsory education for all children in a neighbourhood school”,<sup>15</sup> but is silent on specific provisions to support children with disabilities in school, such as reasonable accommodation and assistive devices, among others. State-level RTE rules provide for specific interventions for children with disabilities. Transportation for children with disabilities and participation of school management committees in implementing inclusive education are guaranteed by almost all states. Only 1 out of 29 states referred to special schools.<sup>16</sup>
- An UNESCO report describes the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 (RPWD Act)** to be highly aligned with CRPD.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> India, Constitution of India (As on 9th December, 2020), [https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/COI\\_1.pdf](https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/COI_1.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> India, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009).

<sup>16</sup> *State of the Education Report for India 2019*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

**Table 1. Main laws, policies and programmes on disability and education**

| <b>Government's action on international policies</b>  | <b>Ratification</b> |
|---|---------------------|
| Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)  | 1992                |
| Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)  | 2007                |
| Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Optional Protocol (2006)                                      | No action           |
| <b>Main domestic laws and policies on disability and education</b>  | <b>Adoption</b>     |
| Rehabilitation Council of India Act   | 1992                |
| National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act | 1999                |
| National Charter for Children   | 2003                |
| National Policy for Persons with Disabilities   | 2006                |
| Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act  | 2009                |
| National Policy for Children  | 2013                |
| Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act   | 2016                |
| Samagra Shiksha   | 2018                |
| National Education Policy   | 2020                |

While there is no specific policy on inclusive education, the RPWD Act provides a strong legislative framework for inclusive education, defining it as “a system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities”<sup>18</sup> (see Table 2).

While the focus on children with disabilities is notable, it is recommended to broaden the conceptualization of inclusive education as a process that encompasses all learners and not only those with disabilities. Furthermore, the law sets out a definition of disability referring to the definition advocated by CRPD.

The RPWD Act expressly mandates all education institutions funded or recognized by the government and local authorities to provide inclusive education; admit children with disabilities (aged 6–18 years, beyond the 14 years age limit of the RTE Act) without discrimination; provide reasonable accommodation; ensure accessibility of facilities, infrastructure and transportation; and provide individualized support when necessary and attendants for children with high support needs.<sup>19</sup>

Specific measures to promote inclusive education are articulated, ranging from identifying children with disabilities; establishing teacher training institutions and building capacities of teachers, professionals

<sup>18</sup> India, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016), p. 3, <http://legislative.gov.in/actsofparliamentfromtheyear/rights-persons-disabilities-act-2016>.

<sup>19</sup> The RPWD Act defines ‘high support’ as intensive support, physical, psychological and otherwise, which may be required by a person with benchmark disability for daily activities to take independent and informed decisions to access facilities and participate in all areas of life, including education, employment, family and community life and treatment and therapy.



and staff at all levels of the system; setting up resource centres; promoting use of and providing free assistive learning materials and devices and alternative modes of communication (e.g., Braille, sign language); providing scholarships; and modifying curriculum and assessment methods.

The law endorses education in the neighbourhood school and special education as approaches for supporting the learning of children with disabilities. According to the RTE Act 2009, home based education is recommended for children with multiple or severe disabilities.

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** reaffirms the provisions in the RPWD Act regarding inclusive education. The policy takes on a broader inclusion perspective and aims to achieve learning for all, particularly addressing the exclusion of socio-economically disadvantaged groups.<sup>20</sup>

The policy emphasizes the importance of inclusion of children with disabilities from early childhood education to higher education, with the provision of assistive devices and teaching and learning materials.

**Samagra Shiksha** is India's flagship education programme implemented throughout the country through a single State Implementation Society at the state/union territory level. It subsumes three previous schemes:

1. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
2. Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan
3. Teacher Education

The schemes were the primary strategies of the country to move towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 targets. The Ministry of Education<sup>21</sup> (MoE) envisions universal access, equity and quality, as well as vocationalizing education and strengthening teacher education institutes. Inclusive education is among the major interventions identified under Samagra Shiksha.<sup>22</sup>

A zero-rejection policy has been adopted under Samagra Shiksha.<sup>23</sup> This ensures that no child is left behind. A continuum of educational options, learning aids and tools, mobility assistance and other support services are being made available to students with disabilities. "This includes education through an open learning system and open schools, alternative schooling, distance education, special schools, wherever necessary home based education, itinerant teacher model, remedial teaching, part-time classes, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and vocational education."<sup>24</sup>

## 3.2 DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE SECTOR PLAN

Planning for education interventions is carried out at the state level in India. Evidence of focus on disability and education issues can be found in the approved annual work plan and budget of the states in the last financial year (2020–2021).

It is unclear in the literature whether a comprehensive analysis of the sector and in particular of the situation on children with disabilities was used as the basis for work planning. Nevertheless, across states, there is a set of inclusive education-related items and activities that are funded:

<sup>20</sup> Socio-economically disadvantaged groups can be broadly categorized based on gender identities (particularly female and transgender individuals), sociocultural identities (such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward castes and minorities), geographical identities (such as students from villages, small towns and aspirational districts), disabilities (including learning disabilities), and socio-economic conditions (such as migrant communities, low income households, children in vulnerable situations, victims of or children of victims of trafficking, orphans including child beggars in urban areas, and the urban poor).

<sup>21</sup> Formerly called the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

<sup>22</sup> Ministry of Education, 'About Samagra Shiksha', New Delhi, n.d., <https://samagra.education.gov.in/about.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Sanjeev, K., and K. Kumar, 'Inclusive Education in India', *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, vol. 2, no.2, 2007, <https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/ejie>.

<sup>24</sup> Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, *National Policy for Persons with Disabilities*, New Delhi, 2006.

**Table 2. Definitions of disability and inclusive education according to national laws and policies and international definitions**

| Terminology                | Definition based on national laws and policies  | International definition   |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Disability</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A person with 'benchmark disability' means a person with not less than 40 per cent of a specified disability where specified disability has not been defined in measurable terms and includes a person with disability where specified disability has been defined in measurable terms, as certified by the certifying authority.</li> <li>A person with disability "means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others".</li> <li>A person with disability having high support needs "means a person with benchmark disability who needs high support".</li> <li>Major categories of disabilities include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical disability (locomotor disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech and language disability)</li> <li>Intellectual disabilities</li> <li>Mental behaviour/illness</li> <li>Disability due to chronic neurological conditions</li> <li>Multiple disabilities (more than one of the specified disabilities)</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>– Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016</p> | <p>"Disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."</p> <p>– Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006</p>  |
| <b>Inclusive education</b> | <p>A system of education wherein students with and without disability learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities.</p> <p>– Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016</p>  | <p>"Inclusive education is the result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminate barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students."</p> <p>– General Comment No. 4 (2016) to Article 24, Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p> |

1. Assistive devices, equipment and teaching and learning materials
2. Braille stationery material
3. Corrective surgeries
4. Environment building programme
5. Escort allowance
6. Identification and assessment (medical assessment camps)
7. In-service training of regular and special educators
8. Orientation of principals, educational administrators, parents/guardians
9. Provision of aids and appliances
10. Purchase/development of instructional and training materials
11. Reader allowance
12. Salaries
13. Sports events and exposure visits
14. Stipends for girls
15. Therapeutic services and resource rooms

### 3.3 DATA ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

**Approaches to disability measurement and collection need to be aligned with the social model of disability.**

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is establishing a national database for persons with disabilities. The issuance of a unique disability identity card for all persons with disabilities is envisaged to increase transparency, efficiency and tracking the progress of service delivery.

A useful tool for monitoring children with disabilities, the national database could link to the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+) to enable the development of comprehensive profiles of children in school and track those who remain outside the education system. The national database can be

the centralized source of uniform information on children with disabilities and presents an opportunity for better coordination among education, health and social protection ministries.

It should be noted, however, that in the database, the identification of disability is based on medical categories. The Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) question sets have not yet been integrated into the major data collection initiatives in the country (see Table 3). Adopting one disability measurement tool, such as the WG questions, across all databases, national surveys and censuses will generate more reliable statistics on children with disabilities.

**An estimated 1.7 per cent of children aged 0–19 years have a disability.**

The most recent data sets available on child disability prevalence are from the census in 2011. Analysis from the UNESCO report summarized data on prevalence and access to education, which showed that overall disability prevalence in India is 2.2 per cent,<sup>25</sup> significantly below the World Health Organization and World Bank estimate, which is that 15 per cent of any population live with a disability.<sup>26</sup>

Among children aged 0–19 years, 1.7 per cent have a disability. Further, more boys (1.81 per cent) than girls (1.58 per cent) in India have a disability, across age groups (see Figure 1). Among children with disabilities aged 0–14 years, 24 per cent have ‘any other’ disabilities (e.g., autism) that include conditions not specified in the list of disabilities in the latest census. ‘Hearing’ (21 per cent) is the second most common impairment, followed by ‘seeing’ (19 per cent) and ‘moving’ (11 per cent).

Geographically, the number of children with disabilities are higher in populous states such as Bihar, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *State of the Education Report for India 2019.*

<sup>26</sup> *World Report on Disability.*

<sup>27</sup> *State of the Education Report for India 2019.*

**Table 3. Main sources of child disability data**

| Method                     | Data collection activity/system   | Responsible agency   | Frequency                | Latest report available | Includes data on children with disabilities | Adopted CFM or WG Questions |
|----------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Administrative data</b> | National Database for Persons with Disabilities                                   | Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment | Ongoing                  | Not applicable          | Yes   | No                          |
|                            | UDISE+  | Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education                                 | Ongoing                  | 2018/19                 | Yes   | No                          |
| <b>Census</b>              | India Census  | Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner  | Every 10 years           | Census 2011             | Yes   | No                          |
| <b>Survey</b>              | National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure or the Living in India Survey | National Council of Applied Economic Research  | No information available | 2012                    | No information available                    | No information available    |

CFM: WG/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning; WG: Washington Group on Disability Statistics.

### **Less than 1 per cent of all children enrolled at the primary level have disabilities.**

According to UDISE+, the proportion of children with disabilities to total enrolment at the primary level is 0.98 per cent in 2019–2020. This indicates that many children with disabilities may not be in school or are already in school, but are unidentified. A comparison of enrolment figures

between 2014–2015, 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 shows a decreasing trend across all school levels, except in higher secondary in 2016–2017. (see Figure 2)

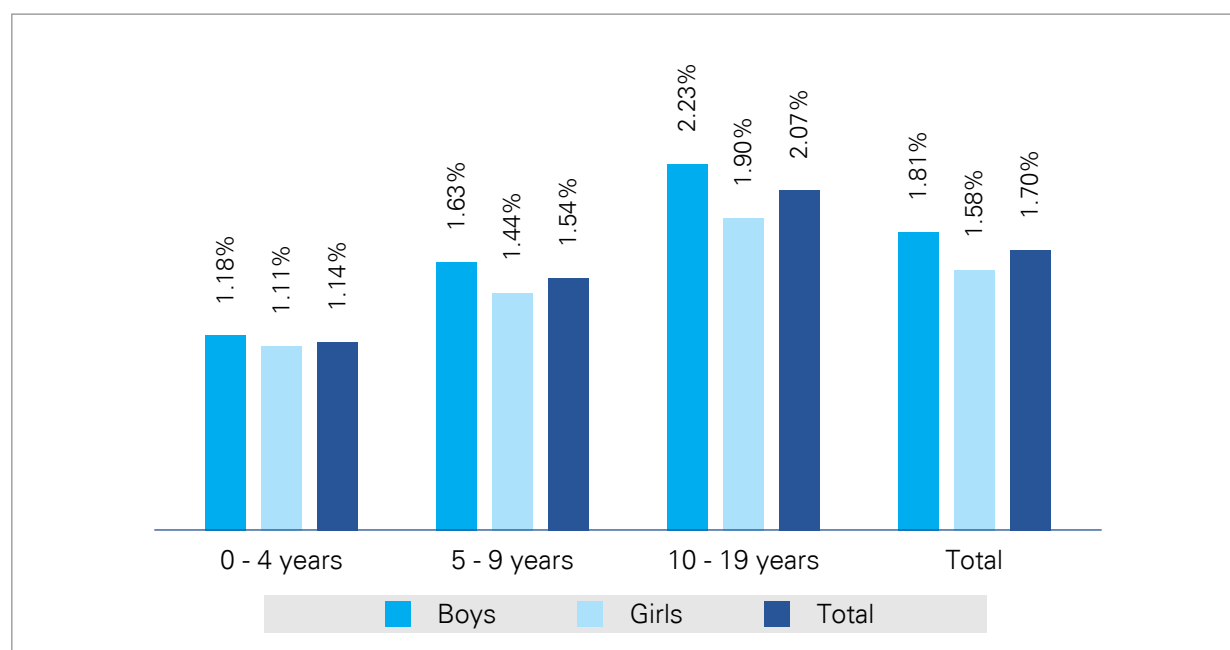
### **UDISE+ collects selected data on disabilities.**

UDISE+<sup>28</sup> is one of the largest education management information systems in the world,

<sup>28</sup> Originally called District Information System for Education (DISE) when it was initiated in 1994–1995 and renamed Unified DISE when improvements were instituted in 2012–2013. It became UDISE+ when further enhancements were made in 2018–2019.

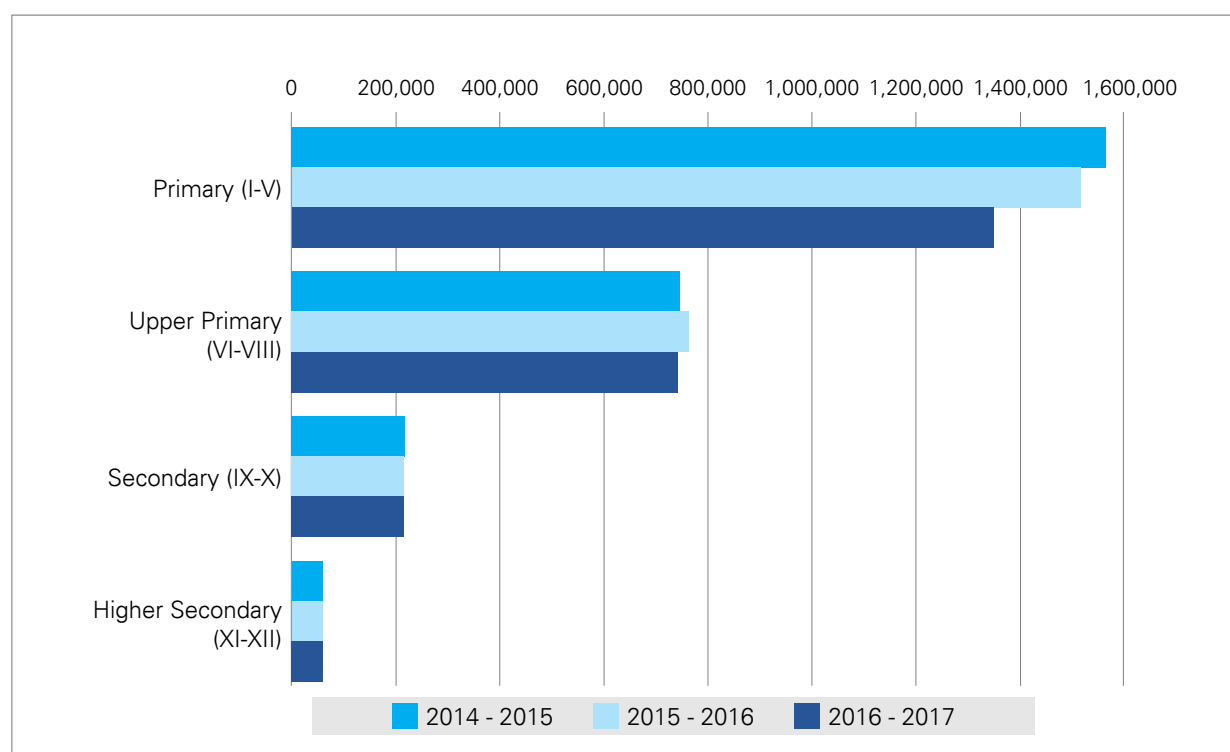


**Figure 1. Disability prevalence by age group (%)**



**Source:** Census 2011, as cited in UNESCO New Delhi, *N for Nose: State of the Education Report for India 2019, Children with Disabilities*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization New Delhi Cluster Office, New Delhi, 2019.

**Figure 2. Number of children with disabilities enrolled in school by educational level, 2014-2017**



**Source:** National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, Flash Statistics, 2018, as cited in UNESCO New Delhi, *N for Nose: State of the Education Report for India 2019, Children with Disabilities*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization New Delhi Cluster Office, New Delhi, 2019.

**Table 4. Disability data in the Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+)**

| Criteria*   | Included in UDISE+ |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Contains data on students with disabilities</b>              | Yes                |
| <b>Approach to identifying disability</b>                       |                    |
| Use of Washington Group set of questions to identify disability | No                 |
| Identified only by 'disability' or 'special needs'              | Yes                |
| <b>Level of data collection</b>                                 |                    |
| Pre-primary   | Yes                |
| Primary   | Yes                |
| Secondary   | No                 |
| <b>Data collected</b>   |                    |
| Participation (enrolment, dropout, completion)                  | Yes                |
| Learning outcomes   | No                 |
| Type of disability/functional difficulty                        | No                 |
| Degree of disability/functional difficulty                      | No                 |
| Barriers to education at the school level                       | No                 |
| Children with disabilities who are not in school                | No                 |
| <b>Disaggregation available</b>                                 |                    |
| Sex   | Yes                |
| By definition of disability/functional difficulty               | Yes                |
| Geographical location   | Yes                |
| Type of institution (government/private)                        | Yes                |

**Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'The Use of UIS Data and Education Management Information Systems to Monitor Inclusive Education', Information Paper No. 60, 2019, and data validated with UNICEF India and Ministry of Education.

\*Criteria adapted from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019.

covering more than 1.5 million schools, 8.5 million teachers and almost 250 million children.<sup>29</sup> Recent system upgrades are aimed at enabling real-time data collection.

UDISE+ collects data on children with disabilities, including enrolment of children, availability of disability-friendly toilets, assistive technology solutions, disability-inclusive facilities and

equipment (e.g., Braille books and kits, hearing aids, braces, crutches, wheelchairs), teacher profiles (including teachers' disabilities and trainings related to disability inclusion) and transition of children with disabilities in between grade levels (see Table 4).<sup>30</sup> Adopting the WG questions in measuring disabilities in children will help improve the inclusivity of the system.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Education, Department of School Education & Literacy, 'Welcome to UDISE+', n.d., <https://udiseplus.gov.in/#/home>, accessed 13 October 2020.

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development, 'Data Capture Format for Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+), 2019–20', 2019, <https://udiseplus.gov.in/assets/img/DCF2021/DCF1-5.pdf>, accessed 13 October 2020.

# 3.4 FUNDING AND FINANCING

**The government endeavours to increase public investment in education, acknowledging its critical contribution to the broader national development agenda.**

The government recognizes the lack of investments on education. Public expenditure on education remains below the recommended percentages by the Incheon Declaration.<sup>31</sup> Although the 4.4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) spent on education in 2018 fall within the Incheon Declaration framework (4–5 per cent), this is less than most developed and developing countries.<sup>32</sup> The government endeavours to increase public investment in the sector to reach 6 per cent of GDP at the very least, acknowledging the critical contribution of education to the broader national development agenda.<sup>33</sup>

Samagra Shiksha is funded through a sharing scheme between the centre [central government] and states with the ratio of 90:10 for the eight north-eastern states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam,

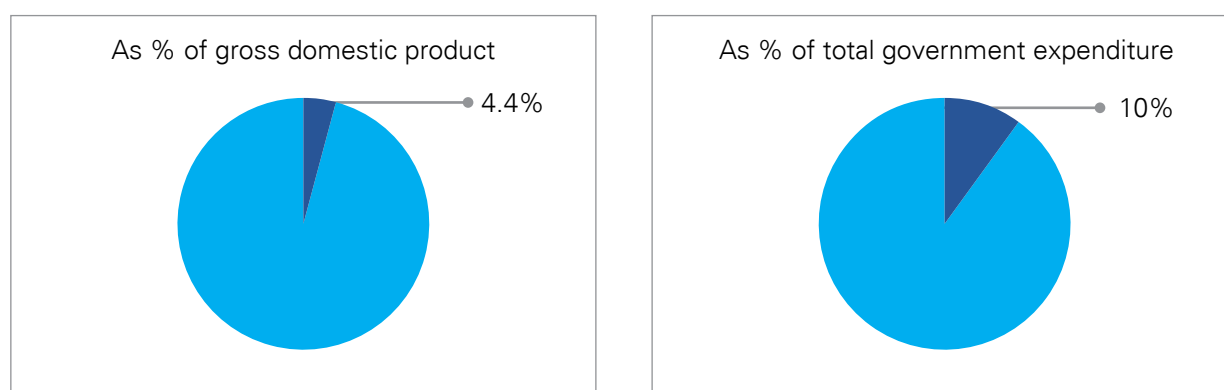
Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura) and three Himalayan states (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand), and 60:40 for all other states and union territories with legislature.<sup>34</sup> The programme is 100 per cent sponsored by the central government in union territories without legislature.

Although it is difficult to retrieve information on budget specific for children with disabilities, some funding mechanisms supportive of participation in education include:

- Children with disabilities are entitled to Rs.3,500 per annum.
- Girls with disabilities from Classes 1–12 are provided with an Rs.200 monthly stipend.
- Escort allowance is available for children with severe or multiple disabilities.
- Transportation, screening and rehabilitation services are supported.

The UNICEF ROSA mapping survey results suggest that the funding pattern tend to favour investments on increasing physical accessibility, with less focus on improving curricula.

**Figure 3. Government expenditure on education (%), 2018**



**Source:** UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Sustainable Development Goal 4, Country Profiles: India, n.d.

<sup>31</sup> UNESCO, Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015, [http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en\\_2.pdf](http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development, National Education Policy 2020, New Delhi, 2020, [www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/NEP\\_Final\\_English\\_0.pdf](http://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> 'About Samagra Shiksha', <https://samagra.education.gov.in/about.html>.

### 3.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

#### **Supportive legislation and policy at the national level promote the establishment of inclusive leadership throughout the system.**

NEP 2020 issued a directive to enable children with disabilities to “fully participate in the regular schooling process from the Foundational Stage to higher education”. The policy provides directives and guidelines as to the support needed in schools to develop disability-inclusive learning environments.

The RPWD Act defines inclusive education as a “system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities” (p. 6).<sup>35</sup> This provides a directive for leaders within the system to perform their roles in alignment with the definition of inclusive education that is supported by the social model of disability. The Act also provides measures for leaders within the sector on how inclusive education can be promoted and facilitated in different levels of the system.

#### **The proposed structure for the development of school clusters in NEP 2020 encourages sharing good leadership and teaching practices within a cluster of schools, potentially providing additional support for teachers and children with disabilities.**

NEP 2020 proposes that schools be structured in a cluster, where possible, for “more effective functioning, coordination, leadership, governance,

and management of schools in the cluster” (p. 29).<sup>36</sup> By structuring schools in a cluster, schools will be able to share resources and teaching-learning content, support children with disabilities and employ a participative and community-based method of management and governance.

The policy suggests the formation of a school complex management committee, which decentralizes governance and decision-making to school leaders, teachers, support staff and members of the school community as the committee will be treated as a semi-autonomous unit. Aggregated schools would be able to determine their own goals and identify contextual needs and find innovative responses to issues encountered within the cluster.

This governance structure allows greater independence in governance decisions, collaboration and contextual response within a cluster of schools, potentially supporting inclusion and responsiveness to the individual needs of students. It also sets out a participative process of planning and school development within the aggregate of schools.

#### **There are tools school leaders can use for inclusive leadership.**

Standards for accessible schools, a school development planning process and a tool for self-assessment for teachers and school management committees are available for school leaders to guide their practice of inclusive leadership. School development planning and involving the school management committee in school governance are institutionalized into school system processes.

<sup>35</sup> Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016).

<sup>36</sup> National Education Policy 2020.



**Table 5. Government units responsible for disability-inclusive education**

| Sector     | Government unit/organization and responsibility  |
|------------|--|
| Disability | <b>Central Advisory Board on Disability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advises the central government and state governments on disability-related policies, programmes and projects.</li> <li>• Facilitates continuous advancement of the fulfilment of rights of persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• Recommends action points to ensure accessibility, reasonable accommodation and non-discrimination of persons with disabilities.</li> </ul>   |
|            | <b>Rehabilitation Council of India</b><br>Primarily responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regulating and monitoring services for persons with disabilities;</li> <li>• monitoring and maintaining a database of qualified professionals and staff working in rehabilitation and special education;</li> <li>• standardizing syllabi and training professionals in the field of rehabilitation, including special education teachers;</li> <li>• developing training modules on inclusive education for teachers; and</li> <li>• developing diploma, Bachelor's degree and postgraduate programmes on special education and inclusive education.</li> </ul> |
|            | <b>Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible for the empowerment of persons with disabilities.</li> <li>• Provides sensitization and awareness-raising training on the rights of persons with disabilities for government offices, including principals and school leaders, faculties of higher education, education officers and teachers.</li> </ul>   |
| Education  | <b>Ministry of Education</b> (formerly Ministry of Human Resource Development)<br>Responsible for primary, secondary and higher education, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing and implementing the national policy on education;</li> <li>• improving access to and quality of educational institutions;</li> <li>• ensuring marginalized groups are able to participate in education;</li> <li>• providing financial help to students who may need financial support; and</li> <li>• working with international development partners to enhance education quality in the country.</li> </ul>  |
|            | <b>Department of School Education and Literacy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fulfils the function of the ministry for basic education.</li> <li>• Responsible for policymaking, regulation and provision of public education. Its role was defined to focus more on monitoring and policymaking to improve the education system and service delivery. Implementation was devolved to the Directorate of School Education in the National Education Policy 2020.</li> </ul>  |
|            | <b>Department of Higher Education</b><br>Fulfils the function of the ministry for higher education institutions in India.  |

Table 5 (continued)

| Sector    | Government unit/organization and responsibility   |
|-----------|---|
| Education | <b>Directorate of School Education</b><br>Responsible for operations and service delivery within a state. Works independently of the Department of School Education and Literacy in the implementation of policies.   |
|           | <b>National Council for Teacher Education</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans and coordinates teacher development throughout the country.</li> <li>Regulates and monitors the fulfilment of norms and standards for teacher education.</li> <li>Conducts research.</li> <li>Trains pre-service and in-service teachers.</li> </ul>   |
|           | <b>National Council of Educational Research and Training</b><br>Autonomous body with the primary role of advising the government at the national and state level on policies and programmes for improving education quality of basic education. Primary responsibilities are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>developing the national curriculum framework;</li> <li>undertaking and coordinating research;</li> <li>organizing pre-service and in-service training for teachers;</li> <li>developing model textbooks and educational kits;</li> <li>sharing knowledge of innovative teaching techniques;</li> <li>working with non-governmental organizations, universities and other educational stakeholders; and</li> <li>coordinating activities and programmes related to the goal of universalizing elementary education.</li> </ul> <p>According to the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey results, the council has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conducted workshops and training on inclusive education;</li> <li>developed Universal Design for Learning materials; and</li> <li>participated in a review and reform of the pre-service curriculum.</li> </ul> <p>The National Education Policy 2020 recently restructured the institute as a professional standard setting body.</p> |
|           | <b>District Education Officer</b><br>Coordinates, manages and provides support to schools at the district level.  |

**Source:** Rehabilitation Council of India, 'Welcome to Rehabilitation Council of India', 13 September 2020, <http://rehabcouncil.nic.in>; Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, New Delhi, 2006; Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), New Delhi, 2 April 2018, <http://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/content>; Ministry of Education, 'About MoE', New Delhi, [www.education.gov.in/en/about-moe](http://www.education.gov.in/en/about-moe); Ministry of Human Resource Development, National Education Policy 2020, New Delhi, 2020; National Council for Teacher Education, 'NCTE at a Glance: Introduction', n.d., <https://ncte.gov.in/Website/about.aspx>.





The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act emphasizes promoting inclusive values and respect for diversity, as well as capacity building of students, school community and other education stakeholders to increase knowledge of disability and inclusion.

# 4

# DEMAND

This domain focuses on initiatives supporting children with disabilities and their families to improve knowledge on their rights, demand for inclusive services, encourage changes in attitudes and behaviour, and increase participation in education. It includes involving the wider community, forging partnerships and putting in place systems and structures to facilitate meaningful engagement.

## 4.1 FAMILY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

**Participation of families and communities are prioritized in some policies and programmes.**

The active participation of and partnership with families of children with disabilities and their communities are present in a few national policies and programmes.

Samagra Shiksha ensures the participation of children with disabilities in school regardless of disability and background and emphasizes community mobilization and building the capacity of parents and families in providing care and education for their child.<sup>37</sup>

NEP 2020 identifies key strategies in providing education for all children. It complements the Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage<sup>38</sup> and Samagra Shiksha programmes in the work towards transitioning from integration to inclusion. The strategies include building meaningful partnerships with communities in providing needs-based educational and disability-related support. Along with this is the need to develop awareness in the general community and among education and health stakeholders and instill agency and accountability for the inclusion of children with disabilities.<sup>39</sup>

One of the foundational principles in NEP 2020 involves the investment in and facilitation of private and community participation in ensuring education for all citizens of India. The policy

<sup>37</sup> Sanjeev and Kumar, 'Inclusive Education in India'.

<sup>38</sup> This replaced the earlier Integrated Education for Disabled Children programme, [https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/Annexure-14%20%28SE%29%20%28IEDSS%20%29.pdf](https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/Annexure-14%20%28SE%29%20%28IEDSS%20%29.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> Sanjeev and Kumar, 'Inclusive Education in India'.



enjoins communities to be partners in education programmes that will support learners, such as peer tutoring and volunteering in literacy and numeracy projects.

The government's Assistance to Disabled Persons Scheme<sup>40</sup> allows civil society organizations (CSOs) to partner with funding agencies and serve as implementors. Projects focus on the procurement and distribution of accessibility tools and devices for those with visual, hearing, locomotor, cognitive and multiple disabilities.

Operationalization of policy provisions regarding participation is limited, however, as data suggest little participation of parents and children with disabilities in their education and policy planning and programming. In some instances, the policies and programmes themselves contain mixed messages on child and family involvement. For instance, Samagra Shiksha states that formal and functional assessments should be conducted by a professional team of doctors and specialists to determine the educational provision suited for a child.<sup>41</sup>

### **CSOs, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and other development partners drive family and community participation.**

Several national and international development organizations partner with local communities and families of children with disabilities in disability-inclusive programming and related services. The partnership between the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) and National Council for Teacher Education led to the development of a special education curriculum that is integrated into teacher preparation programmes.<sup>42</sup>

UNICEF partnered with the Asian Federation of Children with Intellectual Disabilities and provided support to the Asian Conference on Intellectual Disabilities. UNICEF also worked with the Government of Assam and provided technical support on inclusive education for Samagra Shiksha.<sup>43</sup>

Information gathered in the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey noted that the OPD Samarthyam has been collaborating with 15 OPDs and 450 members with disabilities across five states to assess and monitor disability-inclusive education services. Samarthyam brings together children with disabilities, their families and the larger community in a participatory and collaborative partnership to encourage ownership and accountability of programmes. The organization advocates education for all and the application of universal design principles in policy advocacy, research and services.<sup>44</sup>

## **4.2 AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES**

**Certain legislation and national policies emphasize building awareness and collecting evidence on existing attitudes towards disability.**

The RTE Act and the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities mandate appropriate government agencies to generate awareness on the rights of children with disabilities. The RTE Act emphasizes promoting inclusive values and respect for diversity, as well as capacity building (orientation and sensitization workshops) of students, school community and other education stakeholders at all levels to increase knowledge of disability and inclusion.

<sup>40</sup> UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, *Inclusion and Education: All means all*, 3rd ed., United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 2020, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf00000373718>.

<sup>41</sup> Singal, Challenges and Opportunities'.

<sup>42</sup> Sanjeev and Kumar, 'Inclusive Education in India'.

<sup>43</sup> UNICEF India, *UNICEF Annual Report 2013 – India*, New Delhi, 2013, [www.unicef.org/about/annualreport](http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport).

<sup>44</sup> Samarthyam, 'Welcome to Samarthyam', 2020, [www.samarthyam.com](http://www.samarthyam.com).

Considering that some disabilities are preventable, the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities utilizes awareness building as a strategy to prevent disabilities. The policy states that awareness programmes on health, nutrition and intervention services shall be conducted for children and administrators in schools and built within teacher training. This will help increase the capacity of teachers in identifying children at risk or with a disability and referring them to appropriate intervention services. To build data on the sociocultural aspect of disability, the policy recommends further study on the attitude and behavioural patterns towards persons with disabilities.

**UNICEF initiatives on knowledge sharing lead to new partnerships and strengthening of existing ones.**

UNICEF continues to advocate the inclusion of children with disabilities in education and social services. UNICEF India's strategy for ending violence against children focuses on three key areas:<sup>45</sup>

1. Creating an enabling environment for multisectoral response.
2. Systems-strengthening across justice/law enforcement, social service, education and health sectors.
3. Social behavioural change communication and adolescent and youth empowerment.

The strategy involves developing inclusive and child-friendly school environments and creating referral systems for social and protective services, particularly for children with disabilities and those from scheduled castes.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, UNICEF has undertaken initiatives to gather and share knowledge on disability issues.<sup>47</sup> Forums that were conducted to discuss issues related to the education of children with disabilities led to opportunities for new partnerships.

UNICEF also worked with UNESCO to support the Global Action Week on children with disabilities in 2014. To advocate equitable provisions of inclusive education for children with disabilities, a series of seminars and consultations was organized in various states in the country.<sup>48</sup>

In 2017, a study on the status of inclusive education for children with disabilities in Maharashtra was conducted, which helped identify areas needing support from the government.<sup>49</sup>

**Studies provide pertinent information on how disability and inclusive education are perceived by parents and teachers.**

Studies about parents' views on the education of their children with disabilities found that most of them value education and associate it with a better quality of life for their child, which means to be accepted in society and be able to contribute to it.<sup>50</sup>

However, evidence also suggests that parents and children with disabilities lack agency in deciding education provisions<sup>51</sup> due to a largely medicalized approach to disability, in which education provisions appropriate for a child with a disability is determined by a team of professionals comprising doctors, specialists, resource teachers and general teachers.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>45</sup> UNICEF India, *Strategy for Ending Violence against Children*, New Delhi, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> UNICEF India, *UNICEF Annual Report 2014 – India*, UNICEF, New Delhi, 2014, [www.unicef.org/about/annualreport](http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> UNICEF India, *UNICEF Annual Report 2017, India*, New Delhi, 2017, [www.unicef.org/about/annualreport](http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport).

<sup>50</sup> Singal, *Challenges and Opportunities*.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

This medical view of disability emphasizes curing and caring, without focus on removing the barriers that hinder a child from accessing quality education.

Research on teachers' perception towards teaching children with disabilities found that their negative attitude stems from their lack of capacity to provide an appropriate learning environment to respond to the children's diverse needs.<sup>53</sup>

A study involving 160 regular teachers found that 55 per cent of the respondents were in favour of including children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.<sup>54</sup> These teachers saw that the presence of children with disabilities in their class did not add to the existing challenges they faced. However, 6 per cent of the teachers who participated in the study noted that the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms depended on the degree and nature of their disability; children with cognitive disabilities would be difficult to teach together with children without disabilities.<sup>55</sup>

The reasons cited by 39 per cent of teachers who were not in favour of inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms included the belief that children with disabilities were at a "different level of cognition"<sup>56</sup> from students without disabilities and would require a special pedagogy and curriculum based on their need and a special teacher to implement them.<sup>57</sup> This perception was based on an 'individual pupil view', where learning difficulties were attributed to the learner's characteristics such as their disability.<sup>58</sup>

The assumption that children with disabilities have special needs that require special teaching techniques encourages 'regular' teachers to believe that they are not capable of teaching children with disabilities and all kinds of learners in inclusive classrooms.<sup>59</sup>

A change in perspective on teaching children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms will require a different take on teacher development approaches. Teachers who are supported through relevant and effective training and are made partners in providing inclusive education are empowered teachers who will get the job of teaching diverse learners done.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Singal, Challenges and Opportunities'.

<sup>54</sup> Kaushik, B., 'Presence of children with disabilities in mainstream class adds to the existing workload of regular teachers – myth or real', *Parichay: Maharaja Surajmal Institute Journal of Applied Research*, vol. 3, no. 1, January–July 2020, pp. 1–6, [www.academia.edu/44475449/Presence\\_of\\_Children\\_with\\_Disabilities\\_in\\_Mainstream\\_Classroom\\_add\\_to\\_the\\_Existing\\_Workload\\_of\\_Regular\\_Teachers\\_Myth\\_or\\_Real](http://www.academia.edu/44475449/Presence_of_Children_with_Disabilities_in_Mainstream_Classroom_add_to_the_Existing_Workload_of_Regular_Teachers_Myth_or_Real).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ainscow, M., *Special Needs in the Classroom: A teacher education guide*, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2004.

<sup>59</sup> UNICEF, *Teachers, Inclusive, Child-Centred Teaching and Pedagogy*, Webinar 12 – Companion Technical Booklet, United Nations Children's Fund, New York, 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Singal, Challenges and Opportunities'.



Teacher training is crucial in building the competencies of teachers for disability-inclusive education.



# 5

# SERVICE DELIVERY

This domain deals with the availability of and access to various services for children with disabilities and initiatives to strengthen different aspects of the education system.

## 5.1 APPROACHES TO EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

### Policies and programmes promise education for all.

A continuum of educational provisions, learning materials and devices, transportation assistance and social support services are provided to learners with disabilities under Samagra Shiksha. Available education provisions include an open learning system and open schools, alternative schooling, distance education, special schools, home based education, itinerant teacher model, remedial teaching, part-time classes, community-based rehabilitation (CBR) and vocational education,<sup>61</sup> with the main objective of preparing children with disabilities for school or a better quality of living through the development of life skills.

NEP 2020 reaffirms the government's commitment to bridging equity and participation gaps in education, especially for socio-economically disadvantaged groups.

Education programmes that facilitate access to education for children with disabilities include:

1. **Integrated Education for Disabled Children** – Implemented through state governments, autonomous bodies and voluntary organizations. Capacity building of special teachers and general teachers, learning materials and accessibility tools, transportation and infrastructural improvements were fully funded and supported by these agencies.<sup>62</sup> Education of children with disabilities aged 15–18 years was fully subsidized.<sup>63</sup>
2. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**, subsumed under Samagra Shiksha, is the primary programme for the universalization of primary

<sup>61</sup> National Policy for Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.



**Table 6. Approaches to educating children with disabilities**

| Approach to educating children with disabilities | Description and examples  |
|--|---|
| <b>Neighbourhood or regular schools</b>          | The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 endorses free education for children with benchmark disability in a neighbourhood school or a special school of their choice.  |
| <b>Special education</b>                         | Children with specific disabilities, such as low vision, hearing impairment, locomotory disability, intellectual impairment, mental health condition, autism, cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities, can opt to enrol in special schools. These schools are usually residential and are mostly supported by national and international non-governmental organizations. |
| <b>Home based education</b>                      | According to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, home based education is recommended for children with multiple or severe disabilities. Home based education is linked to mainstream/integrated schools and is a programme to prepare children with disabilities for entry to formal schooling.  |
| <b>Inclusive education</b>                       | Inclusive education is explicitly mandated by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016.   |

**Source:** India, Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016); Sanjeev, K., and K. Kumar, 'Inclusive Education in India', *Electronic Journal for Inclusive Education*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2007; Nanjundaiah, M., 'Adapting Teaching for Children with Intellectual Impairments', *Confluence*, vol. 18, 2016, pp. 41–46; India, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009).

education. Inclusive education is one of the core thrusts of the programme.<sup>64</sup> Inclusion in education involves bridging social gaps in elementary education of disadvantaged groups, such as children from scheduled castes and tribes and children with disabilities.<sup>65</sup>

3. **Inclusive Education of the Disabled at Secondary Stage** replaced the Integrated Education for Disabled Children and was launched in 2009 to mainstream children with

disabilities in the secondary level into regular schools.<sup>66</sup>

4. **School Readiness Programme Centres (SRPCs) in Karnataka** – The centres are located within regular government school premises. There is a bridging programme to bring children with disabilities in the home based education programme to SRPCs and prepare them for formal schooling. SRPCs are under SSA and run by home based education volunteers and special teachers.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>64</sup> 'About Samagra Shiksha'.

<sup>65</sup> Government of India, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, *Education for All 2015 National Review Report: India*, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi, 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Report to the People on Education 2010–11*, New Delhi, 2012.

<sup>67</sup> Nanjundaiah, M., 'Adapting Teaching for Children with Intellectual Impairments', *Confluence*, vol. 18, 2016, pp. 41–46, [www.education.gov.in/en/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/upload\\_document/Confluence.pdf](http://www.education.gov.in/en/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/Confluence.pdf).

### **Ambiguities in legislation and policies lead to varied interpretations and implementation of education for children with disabilities.**

NEP 2020 states that children with disabilities have the option to choose between neighbourhood schools, special schools or homeschooling.<sup>68</sup> The RTE Act and RPWD Act, however, do not explicitly articulate that children with disabilities learn under the same curriculum in the same classroom as children without disabilities. In practice, children with mild disabilities are catered to by special schools and those with severe disabilities are homeschooled.

While progress has been made in bringing more children with disabilities to school, many of them remain in specialized settings. The action plan outlining implementation strategies of NEP should provide clear and coherent operationalization of inclusion in education founded on CRPD and other international commitments.

## **5.2 EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER TRAINING**

### **Policies continuously strive to improve pre-service teacher education**

The 12th Five-Year Plan 2012–2017 for the social sector emphasized the training of health and rehabilitation professionals on a rights-based understanding of disability. It provided the directive that the training health and rehabilitation professionals receive must incorporate a discussion on disability rights. Aside from this, the plan provided guidelines for health-related training institutes to offer disability-inclusive programmes and build the capacity of faculty and staff to provide an inclusive learning environment for persons with disabilities who may enrol in their programmes.<sup>69</sup>

NEP 2020 puts the teacher “at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system”. The policy provides the directive for all teacher education programmes to integrate teaching children with disabilities into their content.

By 2030, the following changes to pre-service education that can improve disability-inclusive education are expected to be implemented:

- Teacher education moved into multidisciplinary colleges and universities.
- The minimum requirement for teachers to be able to teach is a four-year Bachelor’s degree.
- All Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) programmes will build teacher competencies on learner-centred approaches, teaching children with disabilities and responding to the needs of diverse learners.

### **Pre-service teacher training is crucial in building the competencies of teachers for disability-inclusive education.**

NEP 2020 provides the directive for certificate courses to be developed for in-service and pre-service generalist or subject teachers on special education to build workforce capacity to support children with disabilities in schools.

RCI is responsible for the development and regulation of the special education (SE) curriculum. SE training for pre-service teachers is offered in several teacher education institutions across the country including:

- pre-service SE training for secondary level available in 159 institutions;
- pre-service SE training for elementary/primary level available in 11 institutions; and
- B. Ed. (SE) and Post Graduate Professional Diploma in Special Education Course for general B.Ed. students offered at the Madhya Pradesh Bhoj (Open) University.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Sarkar, T., ‘Examining disability inclusion in India’s new national education policy’, UKFIET, The Education and Development Forum, 19 August 2020, [www.ukfiet.org/2020/examining-disability-inclusion-in-indias-new-national-education-policy](http://www.ukfiet.org/2020/examining-disability-inclusion-in-indias-new-national-education-policy).

<sup>69</sup> India Planning Commission, Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012/2017, New Delhi, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Sanjeev and Kumar, ‘Inclusive Education in India’.

A study in 2016 reviewed 20 degree programmes in general education and 10 programmes in special education from the lens of inclusive education, including looking at the course curriculum, duration of teaching practice, assignments and lesson planning, among other parameters.<sup>71</sup>

The study concluded that existing pre-service programmes were not inclusive as they fell short of preparing teacher trainees to identify special educational learning needs of students, modify teaching and learning strategies and implement them in inclusive settings, work in collaboration with fellow teachers, and plan and conduct ability-based assessments.

It proposed, among many recommendations, embedding inclusive pedagogy as an integral component of the entire pre-service curriculum, transforming the role of special educators from being the sole teachers responsible for teaching children with disabilities into teachers supporting regular teachers in inclusive classrooms, and adopting a holistic approach to viewing and accommodating the learning needs of the child.<sup>72</sup>

### **Strengthening teacher capacity for inclusive education is a key priority of the government.**

RCI regulates, monitors and grants funding for in-service training programmes carried out by RCI-approved training institutions, universities and national institutes. Training providers implement regular continuing rehabilitation education programmes for registered professionals at the local, zonal and national levels of the government, including SE teachers. Between 2018 and 2019 alone, 21,870 service providers benefited from continuing rehabilitation education programmes

and another 20,470 attended various workshops and seminars related to rehabilitation and education for children with disabilities.<sup>73</sup>

At present, all in-service training for regular and SE teachers have been integrated into the Samagra Shiksha programme. Under Samagra Shiksha, all teachers will undertake a regular inclusive teacher education programme that aims to strengthen their capacity to successfully meet the learning needs of children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Training will be delivered at the block/cluster levels and integrated with ongoing in-service teacher training programmes of district teacher training institutes and other institutions.<sup>74</sup>

In 2019, more than 27,700 SE teachers and resource teachers in the country were registered with RCI. Special educators may be assigned at the block or cluster level and can serve as visiting or itinerant teachers providing support in schools.

### **Development partners and non-governmental organizations have also provided in-service training for teachers on inclusive education:**

UNICEF provided support for disability-inclusive education training for master trainers from five states. The approach taken was participative and experiential with practical exercises. Participants received feedback from resource persons and speakers on their workshop outputs. Children with disabilities and OPD representatives were involved in the training.

Sense International India implemented a series of training for mainstream schoolteachers on adapting curriculum and instruction for children with disabilities.

<sup>71</sup> Kaushik, B., 'Are the pre-service teacher training degree courses preparing teachers for addressing the needs of inclusive classrooms?' *Educational Quest: An International Journal of Education and Applied Social Sciences*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2016, pp. 261-274, [https://www.academia.edu/39748746/Are\\_the\\_pre\\_service\\_teacher\\_training\\_degree\\_courses\\_preparing\\_teachers\\_for\\_addressing\\_the\\_needs\\_of\\_inclusive\\_classrooms](https://www.academia.edu/39748746/Are_the_pre_service_teacher_training_degree_courses_preparing_teachers_for_addressing_the_needs_of_inclusive_classrooms).

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Rehabilitation Council of India, *32nd Annual Report 2018-19*, New Delhi, 2019, [www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/English\\_RCI\\_AR\\_2018-19.pdf](http://www.rehabcouncil.nic.in/writereaddata/English_RCI_AR_2018-19.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education and Literacy, Samagra Shiksha, An Integrated Scheme for School Education, Framework for Implementation, New Delhi, n.d., [https://samagra.education.gov.in/docs/Framework\\_IISE%20\\_F.pdf](https://samagra.education.gov.in/docs/Framework_IISE%20_F.pdf).

Launched in 2020, the National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement is an integrated teacher training aimed at building the capacity of primary school teachers and school principals. Among other topics, training courses are geared towards enhancing competencies on learner-centred pedagogy, creating inclusive classroom environments, addressing diverse educational needs and using information and communication technology in learning and assessment. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, training was organized and delivered online through a management information system.<sup>75</sup>

### **National professional standards for teachers will be implemented in 2022.**

According to NEP 2020, teacher professional standards are being developed and will be implemented in 2022. They will provide guidelines on the competencies expected of teachers across career stages. The standards can be adopted at the state level and linked to the performance management system, compensation structure and professional development programmes of each state.

A review process has been built into the development of the standards and it is set to be reviewed in 2030 and every 10 years after that.<sup>76</sup> The development of the new standards is an opportunity to embed teacher competencies that support learner-centred approaches, learner diversity, collaboration and reflective practice.<sup>77</sup>

### **The Teacher Self-Assessment Rubric and Performance Indicators for Elementary School Teachers (PINDICS) have been developed to guide teacher professional development.**

Teacher assessment is usually based on supervision by the school supervisor or principal

in inspections. In response to the need for a more self-directed and reflective process for professional development, PINDICS was developed in 2013. Through PINDICS, primary school teachers can engage in self-assessment against seven performance standards and 54 performance indicators. This has been used by teachers in 20 states.<sup>78</sup>

The Teacher Self-Assessment Rubric was developed to support the self-assessment of all teachers and not just primary school teachers. The self-assessment tool aims to help teachers reflect and evaluate their practice and role as a teacher and how they can improve. It can also serve as a tool for instructional leaders to identify the professional development needs of teachers and how they can be addressed.<sup>79</sup>

The self-assessment tool encourages teachers' inclusive practice as it allows them to reflect on the teaching and learning process and how to readjust their teaching strategies to help all learners learn, including children with disabilities. Six performance standards are included in the tool. Teachers are expected to be able to perform certain tasks that can improve the inclusion of children with disabilities such as:<sup>80</sup>

- designing learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners;
- developing a student-centred environment;
- using resources and various strategies for teaching and learning to address the unique needs of individual learners;
- improving student participation in learning through formative assessment and assessment as learning strategies;
- providing feedback to learners to enhance learning;

<sup>75</sup> Central Institute of Educational Technology, National Council of Educational Research and Training, 'NISHTA Online', 2019, <https://itpd.ncert.gov.in>.

<sup>76</sup> National Education Policy 2020.

<sup>77</sup> European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, *Teacher Education for Inclusion: Profile of inclusive teachers*, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> National Council of Educational Research and Training, *Guidelines and Rubrics: Teacher's self-assessment*, New Delhi, 2019.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

- working with colleagues and the school community to support student learning; and
- participating in school development activities.

### 5.3 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**A government-led campaign was held to improve accessibility in the country for persons with disabilities.**

The nationwide Accessible India Campaign was a flagship campaign of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities to promote a barrier-free and conducive environment for persons with disabilities in the country.<sup>81</sup> It promoted actions to enhance the accessibility of the built environment in schools and physical accessibility to education.

The campaign was launched in 2015 and extended until March 2020 due to slow progress in its implementation. Reports indicate that the lukewarm response from the states slowed down the progress, compelling an extension of the end of the campaign from 2017 to 2020.

The campaign aimed to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. Accessible physical environments were promoted that benefited everyone and not just persons with disabilities, ensuring that measures were undertaken to eliminate obstacles and barriers indoors and to facilities, including schools.<sup>82</sup>

**A guidebook on 'Making Schools Accessible to Children with Disabilities' provides technical solutions to infrastructural barriers in schools.**

UNICEF India developed the guidebook in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and Samarthyam.

The guidebook is specifically focused on infrastructural barriers and providing solutions for the physical environment of a school to make it safe, accessible and friendly for children with disabilities.

Key features in the guidebook include:

- steps or suggestions for parents, school administrators, school management committees and civil work personnel to ensure the accessibility of schools for the child;
- school accessibility checklist for assessing if the facilities (e.g., classrooms, library, toilets, playground,) are safe and free of barriers;
- possible solutions with designs and images that address barriers in the internal environment of schools, ensuring that all facilities are safe and accessible to children, including children with disabilities; and
- measures for emergency preparedness in schools, taking into account the needs and protection of children with disabilities.

**A legal framework for ensuring child protection is in place, but a stronger focus on addressing violence against children with disabilities in education settings is needed.**

There are limited data on school-related gender-based violence experienced by children with disabilities in India. However, studies show that children with disabilities are at high risk of being discriminated against, bullied, physically and sexually assaulted, and subjected to corporal punishment and other forms of violence in schools and other education settings.<sup>83</sup>

In some states, such as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, lack of resources has led to the closure and merging of several schools.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Accessible India Campaign, 'About Accessible India Campaign', n.d., <http://accessibleindia.gov.in/content/innerpage/about-accessible-india-campaign.php>.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, *Violence against Children in Education Settings in South Asia*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2016.

<sup>84</sup> *State of the Education Report for India 2019*.



For children with disabilities, this has meant adjusting to more populated schools, dealing with impersonal learning environments, and a higher likelihood of being bullied and discriminated against.<sup>85</sup>

The government has enacted laws and adopted policies to ensure the protection of children from violence, but the level and quality of implementation vary.<sup>86</sup> The Prevention of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012 states that sexual assault when committed by specific persons, in specific situations, and/or against specific individuals is considered more severe and warrants more rigid punishment. For example, a sexual assault committed by a staff member of an educational institution against a child with a physical or mental disability is considered a more serious crime and warrants harsher punishment.<sup>87</sup>

Under the RTE Act, physical punishment and 'mental harassment' are punishable offences.<sup>88</sup> The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 prohibits corporal punishment and is punishable by imprisonment and hefty fines. If such an offence on a child caused a disability, more severe punishment is to be given to the offender.<sup>89</sup>

While there are overarching laws in place that ensure child protection, policies and strategies should include a focus on creating safe and inclusive learning environments for children with disabilities. This means that education settings have clear strategies for preventing all forms of violence against children, especially the most vulnerable, such as girls and children with disabilities, have confidential and accessible systems of reporting incidents, and have appropriate response protocols.

Moreover, more research on the prevalence, experiences and drivers of violence against children with disabilities in different education settings should be conducted to form evidence-based intervention strategies.

## 5.4 CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

**A new national curriculum framework is expected to facilitate equitable and inclusive education for all.**

The RTE Act mandates the central government to develop a curriculum that would ensure the "all-round development of the child, building on the child's knowledge, potentiality and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of child friendly and child centred learning".<sup>90</sup>

The current curriculum is based on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005. NEP 2020 proposes the revision of the curriculum and pedagogy to ensure the realization of the full potential of each citizen, with a particular emphasis on socio-economically disadvantaged children.

To help achieve this, a new national curriculum framework will be prepared by the National Council for Education Research and Training following fundamental guidelines facilitative of inclusion, including:

- focus on regular formative assessment for learning rather than summative assessment;
- respect for diversity and respect for the local context in all; and
- synergy in curriculum across all levels from early childhood care to higher education.

<sup>85</sup> *State of the Education Report for India 2019.*

<sup>86</sup> *Violence against Children in Education Settings.*

<sup>87</sup> *Strategy for Ending Violence against Children.*

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of School Education & Literacy, 'Right to Education', 11 February 2019, New Delhi, [www.education.gov.in/en/rte](http://www.education.gov.in/en/rte).

The new direction for education in NEP 2020 requires the restructuring of the education system following a 5+3+3+4 design, where:

- 5 years – Foundation stage (Pre-primary 1–3 and Classes I–II)
- 3 years – Preparatory stage (Classes III–V)
- 3 years – Middle school (Classes VI–VIII)
- 4 years – Secondary school (Classes IX–XII)

With the upcoming release of the new NCF, the curriculum will be reduced and focused on essential topics to make space for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based and analysis-based learning.<sup>91</sup> Students will be given flexibility in course choices, hence, integrating essential subjects and skills will be necessary.

## 5.5 LEARNING MATERIALS

**Plans and strategies have been initiated for the development of learning materials to support the new national curriculum.**

As discussed in the previous section, NEP 2020 has initiated the development of a new NCF. This will be supported by new, relevant and quality teaching and learning materials to implement the curriculum. NEP 2020 has indicated that assistive devices, Braille, appropriate technology-based tools, and adequate and language-appropriate teaching-learning materials will be made available for use of all children, including children with disabilities. The National Institute for Open Schooling (NIOS) was commissioned to develop modules to teach Indian Sign Language and other subjects using it.<sup>92</sup>

**The development of bilingual teaching and learning materials will support children in learning using the local language.**

Efforts to empower the use of local language among children and learners in local communities will be achieved through the development of

dictionaries and the translation of high-quality materials. Teachers will be encouraged to use a bilingual approach and will be supported by bilingual teaching and learning materials, such as bilingual textbooks for science and mathematics.<sup>93</sup>

## 5.6 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

**National policy highlights evidence-based interventions.**

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2006 underscores the vital role of research and data collection on disability for responsive policies and interventions. It encourages research on the socio-economic and cultural context of persons with disabilities, root causes of disabilities, ECE strategies, development of accessibility tools and devices, among others. The policy further states that the goal of the research is to improve civil society's capacity to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities and improve their quality of life.

**The government has established a multisectoral mechanism for the coordination of programmes and services.**

India's Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012–2017 supported the effective coordination of support services delivery and named the Department of Disability Affairs under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment as the lead agency in policy, planning and coordination of services and programmes for persons with disabilities.

The Plan called for the creation of a multisectoral National Task Force on Childhood Disability to spearhead programmes on prevention, early detection, intervention, community-based management, rehabilitation and inclusion, and partnerships with civil society and parent networks.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> National Education Policy 2020.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012/2017.

Table 7. Available support services

| Support services  | Examples   |
|---|--|
| <b>Early identification and intervention</b>                              | <p><b>Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram</b><br/>A government identification system for children with disabilities in and out of school, aimed at early identification and intervention for children from birth to 18 years.</p> <p><b>Samarpan in Madhya Pradesh</b><br/>A community-based initiative that utilizes a holistic approach to disability services by engaging officials in relevant agencies, such as local officials on public health, family welfare, child development, social justice and women's issues. Intervention clinics include services for early identification and intervention for children (under 5 years) with developmental delays or physical disabilities.</p> <p><b>Early identification in Tamil Nadu</b><br/>A framework for the early identification of disabilities is being developed in Tamil Nadu.</p> |
| <b>Early childhood development and early childhood care and education</b> | <p><b>Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Ministry of Women and Child Development</b><br/>ICDS provides a continuum of support services from pre-conception to birth and until 6 years of age. This includes medical and nutritional support, as well as non-formal preschool education for children aged 3–6 years. There are around 1.38 million rural childcare centres (Anganwadi centres) in operation.</p> <p>ICDS developed inclusive preschool education materials for its centres in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. In 2017, it produced disability-inclusive early childhood education in Tamil Nadu and Telangana.</p> <p>UNICEF supported primary school teacher orientation to assist workers in 18,000 Anganwadi centres located within regular elementary schools in Rajasthan.</p>           |
| <b>Therapy interventions and family support</b>                           | <p>The <b>National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2006</b> classifies rehabilitation measures into 3 groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Physical rehabilitation, including early detection and intervention, counselling and medical interventions, provision of aids and appliances, training and capacity building of rehabilitation professionals.</li> <li>2. Educational rehabilitation, including vocational education.</li> <li>3. Economic rehabilitation for a dignified life in society.</li> </ol>   |

Table 7 (continued)

| Support services                                 | Examples   |
|--|--|
| <b>Community-based rehabilitation programmes</b> | <p><b>Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND)</b></p> <p>Based on the Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012–2017, VHND is the first-contact primary health care organized monthly in every village in the North Tripura District. Partner organizations and the community work together to provide health care and education services, such as literacy programmes, rehabilitation services, provision of disability certificates and mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, and provision of clean water and medicines.</p> <p>Regional and district rehabilitation centres provide various kinds of rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Some national institutions under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that provide rehabilitation services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences, Bangalore</li> <li>• All India Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Mumbai</li> <li>• All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysore</li> <li>• Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi</li> </ul> <p>There are also several state government and private institutions that provide rehabilitation services and training for rehabilitation professionals.</p> |
| <b>Referral systems</b>                          | There are referral systems through community-based projects and programmes by civil society organizations.   |
| <b>Multidisciplinary monitoring and review</b>   | The Department of Disability Affairs under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is the key agency for overall policy, planning and coordination of programmes for persons with disabilities.   |
| <b>Financial support</b>                         | Disability pension for persons aged 18–59 years living below the poverty line and have severe or multiple disabilities (according to the Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme).  |

**Source:** Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK): Child health screening and early intervention services under NRHM, Operational guidelines, New Delhi, 2013; UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, *Inclusion and Education: All means all*, 3rd ed., United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 2020; UNICEF India, *UNICEF Annual Report 2017, India*, New Delhi, 2017; UNICEF India, *UNICEF Annual Report 2016, India*, New Delhi, 2016; Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, New Delhi, 2006; India Planning Commission, Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012/2017, New Delhi, 2013; UNESCAP, *Disability at a Glance 2012: Strengthening the evidence base in Asia and the Pacific*, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 2012.

### Development partners and the government provide therapy interventions, family support and CBR programmes and other specialized services.

The National Policy for Person with Disabilities 2006 ensures that intervention services and support programmes are made available to children with disabilities and their families. The policy classifies three groups of rehabilitation measures:

1. Physical rehabilitation (early identification, intervention, counselling and medical interventions, provision of accessibility aids and devices, training and development of rehabilitation specialists).
2. Educational rehabilitation, including vocational education.
3. Economic rehabilitation.

In 2006, several rehabilitation centres were set up to increase access to services. It was reported that there were five composite rehabilitation centres, four regional rehabilitation centres and 120 district disability rehabilitation centres. District disability rehabilitation centres have been approved by 310 districts, of which 262 have been set up.<sup>95</sup>

Aside from this, national institutions under the Ministry of Health also provide rehabilitation services.<sup>96</sup> Some of these institutions are located in key cities, such as the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences in Bangalore, All India Institute of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in Mumbai, All India Institute of Speech and Hearing in Mysore and Central Institute of Psychiatry in Ranchi. The policy, however, does not mention a mechanism linking children with disabilities in schools to rehabilitation services and initiatives.

Over the years, national institutes have been established to provide services related to disability including the development of human resources, provision of academic courses on disability-related fields, delivery of various rehabilitation services, and advancement of research and development in the sector. To date, there are nine institutes:<sup>97</sup>

1. National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities
2. Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities
3. National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities
4. National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities
5. Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities
6. Swami Vivekanand National Institute of the Rehabilitation Training and Research
7. National Institute for Locomotor Disabilities
8. Indian Sign Language Research & Training Centre
9. National Institute of Mental Health and Rehabilitation

Activities that bring together providers of disability-related services to communities were also mentioned in the Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012–2017. The monthly Village Health and Nutrition Day (VHND)<sup>98</sup> in all villages in the North Tripura District is an example. The project in North Tripura included components on education, adult literacy, disability certificates and provision of wheelchairs.

VHND was a result of intersectoral coordination, community participation and partnership with

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, 'Setting up of District Disability Rehabilitation Centres in the Identified Districts', 2021, <https://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/upload/uploadfiles/files/DDRC%20Scheme%20after%20SFC.pdf>.

<sup>96</sup> National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2006.

<sup>97</sup> Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan), 'National Institutes', New Delhi, 2021, <https://disabilityaffairs.gov.in/content/page/national-institutes.php>.

<sup>98</sup> Twelfth Five-Year Plan 2012/2017.



Anganwadi centres. Community-based initiatives, such as VHND, provide first contact primary health care that is crucial in identifying disabilities and providing immediate intervention and referral to specialized services, particularly more important for children with disabilities and their families living in hard-to-reach areas.

**Efforts on early identification and intervention are being made in several parts of the country.**

In Tamil Nadu, a framework for early identification of disabilities in young children is being developed<sup>99</sup> and a State Resource Center for Inclusive Education<sup>100</sup> is being established.

Samarpan is a community-based early intervention programme for children with disabilities aged under 5 years in Madhya Pradesh.<sup>101</sup> Services include early identification and screening, intervention and rehabilitation of children. The programme also incorporates family welfare, women and child development, as well as community empowerment in its services.

Special schools in north-eastern India were developed into resource centres to serve as knowledge hubs and develop the capacity of teachers in providing early intervention and identification, develop inclusive teaching and learning resources, and distribute assistive devices and learning materials in accessible formats.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> UNICEF India, *UNICEF Annual Report 2016, India*, New Delhi, 2016, [www.unicef.org/about/annualreport](http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport).

<sup>100</sup> *Inclusion and Education: All means all*.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.



Information on progress on increasing access, equity, inclusion and quality is collected and consolidated at the national level.



# 6

## MEASURING AND MONITORING QUALITY

This domain includes measures to ensure the quality of education and support services for children with disabilities.

### 6.1 STANDARDS AND INDICATORS FOR INCLUSION

**Guidelines for school accessibility were developed as part of the Accessible India Campaign of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**

The 'Making Schools Accessible to Children with Disabilities' guidebook was developed as part of the Accessible India Campaign to improve the accessibility of schools for children with disabilities. The guidebook can be used by school leaders, school management committees and the

school community to identify barriers to physical access children with disabilities may experience and address them through the standards provided.<sup>103</sup>

**The State School Standards Authority will set standards of governance for schools.**

NEP 2020 gives the directive for a State School Standards Authority to be established, whose role is to set governance standards for all schools in the state. A School Quality Assessment and Accreditation Framework will be developed by the State Council of Educational Research and Training, which will provide standards on academic and curriculum concerns.

<sup>103</sup> *Making Schools Accessible to Children with Disabilities.*

## 6.2 MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

### UDISE+ provides data on the enrolment of children with disabilities.

Data on the enrolment of children with disabilities are increasingly being monitored by the government. UDISE+ provides information on:<sup>104</sup>

- disaggregated data for gender and disability;
- enrolment of children with disabilities according to their disability; and
- transition rates of children with disabilities in between grade levels.

(See also section 3.3 Data on children with disabilities)

### Selected information on school education is collected across states, which track educational progress.

Information on progress on increasing access, equity, inclusion and quality is collected and consolidated at the national level. Data on programmes introduced in the state to increase access of children with disabilities to education include:<sup>105</sup>

- provision of allowance and scholarships for children with disabilities; and
- provision of transportation or school bus services for students with disabilities.

<sup>104</sup> Singal, 'Challenges and Opportunities'.

<sup>105</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Selected Information on School Education* (Reference year: 2015–2016), New Delhi, 2017.





Initiatives to ensure that girls stay in school and complete their education must be strengthened, especially for children with disabilities.

## 7

# CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

## 7.1 GENDER

**Remarkable progress has been made in improving girls' access to education in India.**

Enrolment growth has increased with the approval of the SSA 'no rejection policy', which essentially provides fully subsidized universal education for elementary school-aged children, i.e., 6–14 years.<sup>106</sup>

SSA has a strong focus on girls' education, including girls with disabilities,<sup>107</sup> to reduce gender disparity in education. Initiatives for promoting girls' education include mainstreaming gender issues in all educational programmes, ensuring the availability of pre-primary and primary schools in most communities,<sup>108</sup> and building infrastructure, such as the construction of girls' toilets<sup>109</sup> that brought not only more female students but also more female teachers.<sup>110</sup>

Moreover, scholarship schemes of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities for girls with disabilities accessing

different levels of education have encouraged more parents to enrol their daughters.<sup>111</sup>

The government's soon to be established Gender Inclusion Fund<sup>112</sup> will bring further capacity to provide equitable quality education for girls and transgender students. The funding will be decentralized and decentralized budgeting will be handled by the states to implement programmes under the priorities of the central government.

A key priority is increasing the access to education of girls and other vulnerable groups. Programmes include provision of sanitation facilities, conditional cash transfers, boarding facilities, provision of transportation to and from school such as bicycles, and other projects that support community-based interventions addressing context-specific barriers.

UNICEF has provided technical assistance in national and regional consultations to create a 'Vision and Roadmap for Girls' Education' and has facilitated the integration of life skills, vocational awareness, self-defence and health into the curriculum for improved girls' education.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>106</sup> *Making Schools Accessible to Children with Disabilities.*

<sup>107</sup> *Education for All 2015 National Review Report.*

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Singal, 'Challenges and Opportunities'.

<sup>110</sup> *Inclusion and Education: All means all.*

<sup>111</sup> Singal, 'Challenges and Opportunities'.

<sup>112</sup> National Education Policy 2020.

<sup>113</sup> Brinkmann, S., *Improving Education Quality in South Asia: A review of UNICEF's efforts*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2018.



Despite these efforts and high enrolment statistics, much still needs to be done to address gender disparity in education. Initiatives to ensure that girls stay in school and complete their education must be strengthened as the transition rate remains low, especially for children with disabilities.<sup>114</sup> The quality of education also needs to be improved through strengthening the system that begins with building the capacity of teacher education institutions alongside a curricular reform.

## 7.2 HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

**Disability-inclusive education response to COVID-19 considers accessibility for children with disabilities.**

Similar to other countries affected by the pandemic, the education sector was heavily impacted in India. The familiar and conventional way of face-to-face classes was disrupted and the government was pushed to identify alternative strategies and policies to mitigate learning discontinuity. With lockdowns and social distancing measures placed to curb the spread of the coronavirus, mechanisms in delivering educational services were reconsidered to provide learning opportunities to children in remote areas and children with disabilities.

To ensure equal access, MoE initiated the following:

1. Quality online courses through the Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM). SWAYAM is an indigenously developed MOOCs [Massive Open Online Course] platform that provides 34 educational TV channels, covering educational contents for schools and higher educational institutions. Curriculum-based content is telecast every day as per a pre-defined schedule, which can be accessed by students at their convenience with the provision of one class, one channel for school education.
2. PM eVIDYA: One Nation, One Digital Platform.<sup>115</sup> The government has taken measures to prevent the exclusion of vulnerable groups from remote learning with an initiative that unifies all efforts related to digital/online/on-air education to enable multimodal access to education:
  - The top 100 higher educational institutions can offer online programmes with or without the approval of the University Grants Commission.
  - Online content has been increased by up to 40 per cent in regular degree programmes.
  - Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing or DIKSHA is the nation's digital infrastructure for providing quality e-content for school education in states/union territories and 'energized' textbooks with QR [quick response] codes for all grades (one nation, one digital platform).
  - Experimental study materials are featured in 12 educational TV channels for Classes 1 to 12.
  - Extensive use of radio, community radio and the Central Board of Secondary Education podcast app, Shiksha Vani.
  - Special e-content for visually and hearing impaired developed on the Digitally Accessible Information System, or DAISY, and in sign language on the NIOS website/ YouTube.
3. The Central Institute of Education Technology and National Council of Educational Research and Training developed curriculum-based audio programmes for Classes 1–8, under a series called 'Dhwanisala'. Another series, called 'Umang', provides enrichment, 'infotainment' and 'edutainment' programmes to fill the gaps in the curriculum during remote learning. Themes vary from content knowledge, such as mathematics and language, to topics of global concern, such as environmental awareness, energy conservation and inclusive education.

<sup>114</sup> Singal, 'Challenges and Opportunities'.

<sup>115</sup> Ministry of Human Resource Development, 'Steps taken by the Government to ensure quality education for vulnerable groups', Press Information Bureau, New Delhi, 14 September 2020, [www.mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/LU87.pdf](http://www.mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/LU87.pdf).



Ensure that knowledge, skills and attitudes for inclusive education are embedded in the national professional standards for teachers.



# 8

# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

## 8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

### 1. **Prioritize the adoption of standard criteria in data collection.**

Prioritize the adoption of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions and the WG/ UNICEF Module on Child Functioning in disability identification and data collection systems.

### 2. **Review legislation to ensure alignment to promote inclusive education.**

Review the RTE Act and RPWD Act to ensure alignment. Amend provisions that promote segregated learning environments.

### 3. **Establish a cross-sectoral committee to implement inclusive education.**

Establish a cross-sectoral committee responsible for the implementation of inclusive education in the country. The committee should have members from agencies, departments and ministries that are responsible for education, health, social welfare and justice at the minimum, both at national and state levels.

### 4. **Ensure that knowledge, skills and attitudes for inclusive education are embedded in the national professional standards for teachers.**

This can guide the content and delivery of pre-service and in-service professional development activities by the government and other stakeholders.

### 5. **Review pre-service and in-service teacher training.**

Review the pre-service teacher education curriculum and in-service teacher training programmes to include competencies key to teaching diverse learners across all subjects in alignment with the social model of disability. Articulate the importance of collaborative working practices and the role of special education teachers as resource persons, supporting regular teachers in mainstream classrooms.

### 6. **Develop a professional development strategic plan.**

Develop a professional development strategic plan that can improve synergy and coordination between organizations and



departments delivering training to teachers and school leaders. Strengthen school-based support for school leaders and teachers on inclusive education.

## **7. Establish clear transition mechanisms in educational levels.**

Establish clear transition mechanisms from one level of education to another to ensure that children with disabilities can continue and finish their education.

## **8. Ensure that data being collected include factors supporting inclusive education.**

Ensure that data being collected reflect and measure not just educational outcome indicators, but also factors that support inclusive education, such as professional development and assistance teachers and school leaders receive to teach diverse learners and support services for children with disabilities and their families. Ensure that identification and classification systems of children with disabilities are aligned to the social model and not the medical model.

## **9. Develop and integrate inclusive education standards into school quality standards.**

The standards must articulate implementation guidelines that will provide the school community with a method to assess infrastructure, curriculum, pedagogy, learning equipment and materials, teacher development and support services, and plan and act to better respond to the needs of all children, including children with disabilities.

## **10. Assess monitoring and evaluation systems in developing disability-inclusive education.**

Assess the monitoring and evaluation systems in place concerning how data are being used to influence the planning of programmes and policy development for disability-inclusive education. Involve OPDs and parents and caregivers of children with disabilities in the monitoring of inclusive education programmes.

# **8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS**

## **1. Support professional development initiatives.**

Support school-based teacher professional development initiatives and the creation of communities of practice.

## **2. Advocate disability-inclusive education and discontinuation of segregated provisions.**

Advocate and plan for the discontinuation of segregated provisions and work towards a more disability-inclusive education system.

## **3. Develop a strong communication strategy.**

Establish a clear and strong communication strategy to build awareness of disability-inclusive education founded on CRPD and other international commitments.

## **4. Support referral mechanisms.**

Support the government in developing referral mechanisms that link children with disabilities and their families in schools to intervention and other support services.

# **8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

## **1. Assess the sustainable implementation of policies supporting inclusive education.**

Assess policies supportive of inclusive education in relation to the structures and systems set up for their sustainable implementation. Examine vertical coordination systems put in place to support inclusive education in schools, determine gaps and develop recommendations for improvement.

## **2. Conduct research on knowledge, attitudes and beliefs on disability and inclusion.**

Conduct comprehensive research on the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs on

disability and inclusion in education, as well as studies on the experiences of children with disabilities and their families to build a strong evidence base for social and behavioural change communication planning, policy development and disability-inclusive programming.

**3. Review professional development programmes for school leaders.**

Review the available professional development programmes for school leaders

against the competencies they must possess to support the development of inclusive learning environments for all learners.

**4. Assess the gaps in skills and competencies in teacher education.**

Assess the gaps in skills and competencies in teacher education institutions with respect to teaching inclusive education across all subjects and develop a strategic plan to address the gaps identified.

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# Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in India



## **For further information**

UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA)  
P.O. Box 5815, Lekhnath Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: +977-1-4417082  
E-mail: [rosa@unicef.org](mailto:rosa@unicef.org)  
Website: [www.unicef.org/rosa/](http://www.unicef.org/rosa/)