



DISABILITY INCLUSION - GS III MAINS

Q. ‘To address the multifaceted nature of disability effectively, there is a need for inclusive policies and systemic changes to ensure equity and social justice in the discourse surrounding disabilities’ Discuss (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *A call for disability inclusion that must be heeded*

What's in the news?

- It has been almost a month since the International Day for Persons with Disabilities (December 3) passed.
- By calling for “transformative solutions that will lead to inclusive development, leaving no one behind”, the United Nations has shifted the focus back on innovations that reduce disability. In the important medical field of “neuropsychiatry” that straddles the brain-mind interface, there have been several treatment innovations with the potential to enhance outcomes.

Disability:

- Disability as an identity and entity exists at the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities — social, economic and gender.
- Each of these facets requires careful consideration when conceptualising action for equity.
- Globally, 1.3 billion people (which is equivalent to nearly the entire population of India) live with some form of disability.
- Of them, 80% live in developing countries; further, 70% of them live in rural areas.

Challenges of Disability in India:

1. Cost of Exclusion:

- Current systems are designed for persons without disabilities and end up being exclusionary to people with disabilities.
- It results in them experiencing higher instances of poverty, lack of access to education and opportunities, informality and other forms of social and economic discrimination.
 - The inclusion of persons with disabilities into the economy can help boost global GDP between 3% to 7%, as per the study by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

2. Limited Employment:

- The current employment scenario is limited, providing fewer jobs for persons with disabilities and perpetuating stereotypes that create further barriers for people with disabilities to access the labour market.



- This goes against the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasises the need to change attitudes and perceptions towards disability inclusion.

3. Political Exclusion:

- India does not have any policy commitment that is aimed at enhancing the political participation of disabled people.
- The lack of live aggregate data on the exact number of disabled people in every constituency only furthers their marginalisation.
- Disabled people are not represented enough at all three levels of governance.

4. Low awareness:

- Disability awareness is especially important in rural areas, where persons with disabilities tend to face greater challenges when compared to their urban counterparts, with even more limited access to education and employment.

5. Specific challenges for Rural India:

- Lack of access to adequate treatments and resources.
- Lack of infrastructure - Rural hospitals don't have as many rehabilitation centres as we have in India's urban hospitals.
- Availability of assistive and adaptive technology and devices.
- Lack of funding.

6. Lack of Participation in decision-making:

- They are viewed as objects of charity and not as persons with agency with an ability to participate in decision-making processes.

Measures needs to be taken for Disability Inclusion:

1. Formulation of Comprehensive Inclusive Policies:

- There is a necessity of rethinking and redesigning systems and policies to be more inclusive and considerate of the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities requires a holistic approach that encompasses social, economic, and gender dimensions.

2. Crucial Distinction in Disability Inclusion: 'For' and 'By':

- The distinction between "for" and "by" becomes crucial in the context of disability inclusion.
- "For" implies actions or initiatives done on behalf of persons with disabilities, while "by" signifies involvement and participation of persons with disabilities in the process.
- When the approach is "by" persons with disabilities, it emphasises their active involvement and contribution to the process.
- This approach recognises persons with disabilities as agents capable of actively participating in decision-making, planning, and implementation.
- The inclusion "by" persons with disabilities implies an acknowledgment of their agency and the importance of their perspectives in shaping initiatives.

3. Collaborative Process with Persons with Disabilities:



- The true disability inclusion involves a collaborative process where persons with disabilities are not passive recipients but active contributors.

4. Implementation of Bottom-Up Approach:

- A bottom-up approach is crucial for disability inclusion in rural areas, ensuring that persons with disabilities are recognised as active contributors to society and the economy.
- The private sector is identified as a key player in promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

5. Attitudinal Shift and Social Justice:

- The SPARK project has contributed to an attitudinal shift towards persons with disabilities at both societal and administrative levels.
- Achieving social justice requires the prioritisation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development, starting with rural areas.

6. Link Poverty and Sustainable Development Goals:

- There is research that suggests a bi-directional link between disability inclusion and poverty, nutrition, and hunger.
- To address the historic marginalisation of persons with disabilities and ensure progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, a fundamental shift in commitment, solidarity, financing, and action is deemed critical.

7. Global Prioritisation of Disability Inclusion:

- There is an urgent need to prioritise the voices and needs of persons with disabilities at the centre of the global development agenda.
- This calls for a comprehensive commitment to inclusivity, recognising that true development requires the active participation of all, including persons with disabilities.

The multifaceted nature of disability transpires the intersectionality of vulnerabilities related to social, economic, and gender factors. To address this effectively there is a need for inclusive policies and systemic changes to ensure equity and social justice in the discourse surrounding disabilities.