

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND
EMPOWERMENT (2022-2023)****(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)****Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
(Department of Empowerment of Persons with
Disabilities)**

Action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment).

FIFTIETH REPORT**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI****July, 2023/ Sravana, 1945 (Saka)**

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Action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment).

Presented to Lok Sabha on 27.7.2023

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 27.7.2023



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

July, 2023/ Sravana, 1945 (Saka)

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**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL
JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (2022-23)**

SMT. RAMA DEVI - CHAIRPERSON

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Deepak (Dev) Adhikari
3. Smt. Sangeeta Azad
4. Shri Bholanath (B.P. Saroj)
5. Smt. Pramila Bisoyi
6. Shri Thomas Chazhikadan
7. Shri Chhatar Singh Darbar
8. Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi
9. Shri Hans Raj Hans
10. Shri Abdul Khaleque
11. Smt. Ranjeeta Koli
12. Smt. Geeta Kora
13. Shri Vijay Kumar
14. Shri Akshaibar Lal
15. Sardar Simranjit Singh Mann
16. Shri V. Sreenivasa Prasad
17. Smt. Supriya Sadanand Sule
18. Shri K. Shanmuga Sundaram
19. Smt. Rekha Arun Verma
20. Shri Devendrappa Y.
21. Shri Tokheho Yepthomi

Rajya Sabha

22. Smt. Sumitra Balmik
23. Smt. Ramilaben Becharbhai Bara
24. Shri Abir Ranjan Biswas
25. Smt. Geeta *alias* Chandraprabha
26. Shri N.Chandrasegharan
27. Shri Naryana Koragappa
28. Smt. Mamata Mohanta
29. Shri Ramji
30. Shri Anthiyur P. Selvarasu
31. Shri Mukul Balkrishna Wasnik

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

1. Smt.Anita Bhatt Panda - Additional Secretary
2. Shri Ved Prakash Nauriyal - Joint Secretary
3. Smt. Mamta Kemwal - Director
4. Shri Krishendra Kumar - Deputy Secretary
5. Smt. Banani Sarker Joshi - Under Secretary

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2022-23) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, do present this Fiftieth Report on the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment).

2. The Forty-Fifth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 23.3.2023. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities) have furnished their replies indicating action taken on the recommendations contained in that Report on 16.6.2023. The Report was considered and adopted by the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment at their sitting held on 26.7.2023.

3. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Forty-Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix.

4. For facility of reference Observations/ Recommendations/ Comments of the Committee have been printed in bold in the body of the Report.

NEW DELHI;

26th July, 2023

4 Sravana, 1945 (Saka)

RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and
Empowerment

CHAPTER - I

REPORT

The Report deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment).

2. The Forty-Fifth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 23.03.2023. It contained 17 observations/recommendations. Action Taken Replies of Government in respect of all the observations/recommendations have been examined and are categorized as under: -

- (i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government: - **(Total: 09, Chapter: II)**
Rec. Para No. 1.16, 2.8, 3.15, 5.26, 5.28, 6.7, 6.8, 7.9 and 10.6.
- (ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's reply: - **(Total: 02, Chapter: III)**
Rec. Para No. 4.25 & 5.29.
- (iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration: - **(Total: 03, Chapter: IV)**
Rec. Para No. 1.17, 1.18 and 5.27.
- (iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are interim in nature: - **(Total: 03, Chapter: V)**
Rec. Para No. 4.24, 8.9 & 9.8.

3. The Committee desire that action taken notes on the recommendations contained in Chapter-I and final action taken notes in respect of the recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this Report

may be furnished to them at the earliest and in any case not later than three months of the presentation of this Report.

4. The Committee will now deal with the replies received from the Government which need reiteration or merit comments.

Recommendation (Para No.1.17)

5. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-

“The Committee note that since the work of Census 2021 was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department are dependent on data generated by Census 2011. According to Census 2011 data there are 2.68 persons with disabilities which accounts for more than 2.21 % of the total population. As the next Census (2021) is yet to be completed and results reported, the actual figures of persons suffering from the disabilities added after the Act of 2016 will be available in an year or two. In this connection, the Committee would like the Department to utilize all available data to arrive at the best estimation so that such persons are identified and brought into the ambit of the welfare schemes for Divyangjan. While the National Sample Survey (76th Round) has issued some sampled estimates of disabled persons, the focus is on counting only the people with bench mark disabilities and as per experts captures only a part of the population. The Committee therefore urge the Department to find an alternate way to include all the disabled persons, as much as possible in their welfare schemes till the Census figures come, particularly since most of these Divyangjan suffer from either mental or intellectual disability. The Committee also urge the Department to emphasize upon the disability surveyors conducting the NSS of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation to consult disability experts while any survey is being designed, extensively train and sensitize surveyors on types of disabilities to include all the categories of disability that are covered in the Act of 2016 which is the ultimate aim of the legislation”.

6. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“In India, the major sources of statistics on disability are the decennial Population Censuses conducted by the Registrar General of India (RGI) and the sample surveys on disability conducted by National Sample Survey (NSS) of National Statistical Office. As indicated in observation of Standing Committee, the Census 2011 puts the total number of PwDs at 2.68 crore. The main objective of 76th round of NSS during July-December, 2018 was to estimate indicators of incidence and prevalence of disability such as cause of disability, age at onset of disability, facilities available to the persons with disability, difficulties faced by persons with disability in accessing/using public building and public transport, arrangement of regular care giver, representation of PwDs in labour market, education system etc. This data is used during policy formulation for empowerment of PwDs. However, in this survey, there is no account of total number of PwDs presently in India.

With a view to tackle this situation and to bring all PwDs under the ambit of welfare schemes meant for them, the Department has mandated UDID card for its various schemes as well as schemes of its associated organizations. In case a person with disability does not have UDID card, he/she may apply for benefits with the help of UDID enrolment number along with certificate of disability.

In respect of sensitization of disability surveyors, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has been requested on 05.06.2023 (copy enclosed)”.

7. The Committee, while observing in their earlier recommendation that census data related to persons with disabilities in India was more than a decade old, had suggested that till the time the latest census figures were available, the Department should utilize such resources/surveys which would assist them in gauging the number of PwDs in India. The Committee had hoped that doing so would ensure that a larger number of PwDs could be brought within the ambit of social welfare schemes meant for them. However, the concern expressed by the Committee was not effectively addressed as the Department have simply stated that they had made the use of Unique Disability ID (UDID) cards

mandatory for beneficiaries to access the benefits of schemes meant for PwDs. The contention of the Department that UDID scheme was a suitable parameter for estimating the PwD population in the country may not work, as, by the Department's own admission, they have issued 94.09 lakh UDID cards so far whereas the PwD population even 10 years ago was more than double that number. The Committee fail to understand the rationale of the Department for doing so. Besides they, during their study visits, have been made aware, that surveys are being conducted in certain States to ascertain the updated population of divyangjan, particularly since there is a better coverage of disabilities in the Act. The Department can explore results of such surveys for gaining a fair understanding of their target population by adopting an out of the box approach, because the next Census results may take a considerable time to come. The Committee feel that there is an urgent requirement to explore innovative solutions to this issue. They therefore reiterate their earlier recommendation that the Department must explore other avenues and collaborate with the State Governments and other Departments/Organizations, who are engaged in implementation of the schemes for welfare of PwDs, in order to arrive at a realistic assessment of the PwD population in the country.

Recommendation (Para No.1.18)

8. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-

“The Committee have come to know that aids and appliances used by PwDs attract 5 percent charge under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The Committee believe that aids and appliances are critical for persons with disabilities to pursue independence, literacy and employment with dignity. While taking cognizance of the fact that the Department was taking up this issue with the GST Council at the highest level, the Committee wish to emphasise that being a social welfare department attending to the most marginalized section of the society, the Department, should endeavour to have these items declared tax free. They therefore desire the Department to

pursue this matter for reaching a favourable conclusion that would make aids and appliances more affordable to the persons with disabilities in India”.

9. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“It is to apprise the Committee that the Department is making a continuous endeavor in this regard. A letter dated 17.04.2023 was sent to GST Council to draw their attention in this regard requesting to exempt aids and assistive devices from GST (copy enclosed)”.

10. The Committee had recommended for a proactive approach for exemption of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on aids and appliances for PwDs due to the fact that such an action would make aids and appliances more affordable. The Committee take note of the action taken by the Department in this regard, but are of the opinion that mere correspondence would not yield the requisite outcome. There is a requirement of greater degree of involvement to address this pressing need. The Committee are of the opinion that aids and appliances are essential items for persons with disabilities for their daily mobility to gain access to the opportunities of education, employment or enjoyment of other rights or the discharge of duties as responsible citizens. Hence, the Committee would like to reiterate their earlier recommendation and urge the Department to continue with sustained efforts to prioritise the removal of GST on aids and appliances, as without them many PwDs would be forced into living a restricted and confined life or in a state of seclusion.

Recommendation (Para No.5.26)

11. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-

“The Committee note that the constraints with respect to performance of the Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA) inter-alia include the adverse effect of Covid19, non-submission of viable proposals by the Implementing Agencies, pendency of utilisation

certificates, proposals not duly recommended etc. The Department are making all the efforts for achieving the targets for the year 2023-24. The Committee emphasise that SIPDA is the most comprehensive scheme for PwDs in India today and therefore call upon the Department to fortify their monitoring and coordination mechanism. As a CPMU has been set up and a Sugamya Bharat App has been launched, the Committee hope that targets set for various schemes under SIPDA would be achieved optimally. The Committee trust that the Department would continue to take appropriate steps to boost their performance during FY 2023-24 with regard to utilisation of allocated budget by taking recourse to robust measures which would entitle them to obtain requisite Revised Estimates/funds through supplementary grants for effectively carrying out the planned activities.”

12. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“The Department is taking initiatives to enhance the existing ecosystem for the easy accessibility for Persons with Disabilities. Some recent initiatives that include are:-

a. **Memorandum of Understanding with Council of Architecture:**

Department envision to encourage formal educating bodies to focus and mandate courses in the Bachelor of Architecture in the existing curriculum pertaining to universal accessibility and mandatory study of standards/guidelines formulated for this purpose. DEPwD and COA have joined hands to mandate the Inclusion of mandatory credits/modules etc. related to universal accessibility, accessibility features for PwDs in the B.Arch course and other related matters pertaining to outreach etc.

b. **Training of State officers for universal accessibility:** In view of the growing demand for an inclusive, safe, and comfortable experience for Persons with Disabilities, ensuring incorporation of accessible features in the built environment is the need of the hour and for the same, accessibility at core is essential to be imparted in the minds of implementing agencies to ensure the universal accessibility. In view of the

above context, this Department envision to propose a 2-3 day training courses for all State PWD engineers regarding the sensitization towards the importance of accessibility for all, key accessible features in buildings as per Harmonised Guidelines 2021 of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), statutory provisions in the Right of Persons with Disability Act 2016 (RPwD Act 2016) and Right of Persons with Disability Rules 2017 (RPwD 2017). This course may help in sensitizing the State PWD engineers towards the latest guidelines for achieving universal accessibility in built environment, create understanding for making new buildings accessible by incorporating key accessible features and retrofit the existing buildings as per the latest guidelines of MoHUA. For this purpose, it is requested from CPWD training academy to curate a 2–3-day training course for all State PWD engineers and share the information regarding a tentative timeline and procedure for launching this course. In view of this context, department letter vide dated 07.02.2023 was shared with CPWD training academy.

- c. In addition to the above, CPWD is conducting two trainings both offline and online in the current FY 2023-24 for CPWD officers. In this regard, this department have requested CPWD training academy to provide slots for the training of State PWD officers in the upcoming training programmes. To which CPWD training academy have responded to accommodate 20 State/UT PWD officers. For this purpose, States/UTs have been requested to nominate PWD officers who shall be attending the upcoming training in month of August. As on date, nominations from Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have been received. The response from other States/UT is awaited.”

13. The Committee take note of the measures initiated by the Department for boosting the performance under their flagship Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act (SIPDA) Scheme. They appreciate that the Department has approached it at the micro level where accessibility studies are mandated and built into the curriculum of architectural studies. They also find that the Department are planning to impart training to CPWD/PWD officials at all levels regarding key

accessible features in buildings and for sensitization towards importance of accessibility for all. Since both these agencies are primarily in charge of executing public works, the Committee are of the opinion that such trainings would result in a better understanding of the obstacles faced by PwDs in accessing public spaces and would therefore would go a long way in creating an environment that is inclusive for people with disabilities. The Committee desire that States/UTs may also be urged to impart such training to their urban planners, architects and relevant execution agencies and be provided with sample training modules on line by the Department of the Central Ministry, as part of their handholding support to States/UTs.

Recommendation (Para No.5.27)

14. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-

“The Committee find that the Accessible India Campaign under the umbrella scheme of the SIPDA is the flagship scheme of the Department. It seeks to achieve universal accessibility for persons with disabilities in Built Environment (Buildings), Transport System and Information & Communication Technology ecosystem across the country. The importance accorded to this scheme can be gauged from the fact that the Campaign is being monitored by Prime Minister Office through PRAGATI, Central Advisory Board headed by the Minister, SJE and Cabinet Secretariat through a Committee of Secretaries. Under the Central Government all 1100 identified buildings have been completed which shows lack of enthusiasm of States towards this Campaign. Under the targets for accessible transportation, the Committee find that that while all 35 International Airports have been made accessible, 55 out of 69 Domestic Airports have been made accessible In respect of Railways, 709 Type A1, A & B Railway Stations had been made fully accessible. In terms of the road transport sector the Committee found that 5.96% buses are fully accessible and 29.05% of buses are currently partially accessible. The Committee wish to stress that the AIC presents a gateway to better mobility and reach to ensure equality in opportunities and the promise of a better life for PwDs. The Committee are also of the opinion that

accessibility does not, merely mean access to the point of entrance of a building, public transport system etc. Rather it implies that a person with disability has access, equal to all others, to all sections and not restricted by his or her disabilities. The Committee feel that the challenges before PwDs are immense and therefore prudent strategies need to be chalked out to remove the impediments to fully achieve the intended objectives of the scheme within the intended timelines. The Committee desire to be informed about the progress made in this direction”.

15. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“In addition to the initiatives mentioned in the reply of the observation 5.26, the Department is taking up the matter of Formulation of Sector Specific Standards of Accessibility with the 20 Ministries/Departments to enhance the accessibility.

Following the provisions of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 (Section 40) and RPwD Rules 2017 (Rule 15) and as per CoS recommendations, the task of formulation of Sector Specific Standards of Accessibility has been entrusted with 20 Ministries/Departments which had to be sent to DEPwD for notification under the RPwD Rules, 2017. This work has been initiated and is being followed up by DEPwD through regular letters, video conferences and Ministry/Department specific discussions. So far, out of 20 Ministries/Departments Accessibility for the ICT products and services have been notified in RPwD Rules (Amendment) 2023 by BIS and adopted by MEITY. In addition to the above, it is to highlight that Department of Law and Justice, Department of Consumer Affairs and Department of telecommunication are following the guidelines of MEITY and MoHUA respective to their domain. Other than this, 5 Ministries namely MoHUA, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Department of Sports have notified their guidelines in official gazette and are currently underway of draft and final notification in RPwD Rules. Remaining 11 ministries are at various stages of finalisation of their respective sector specific accessibility guidelines”.

16. The Committee had, in earlier recommendation, appreciated the Accessible India Campaign as an excellent step towards building an inclusive society. However extension of deadlines has delayed the fulfillment of the goals which can potentially dilute the outcomes of the scheme. The Committee find that while progress has been made in terms of framing of AIC specific guidelines, trainings etc , yet the objectives of the scheme are far from being realized . For instance, so far out of the 20 Ministries / Departments entrusted with the task of formulation of Sector Specific Standards of Accessibility, only 9 Ministries have done it so far and 11 are yet to finalise their guidelines. The Committee would like to stress on the fact that AIC seeks to build a truly inclusive and barrier free environment for PwDs and hence such a lackadaisical attitude of some of the Government agencies is very disheartening. They, therefore, impress upon the Department to accord utmost priority to removing any impediments in successful implementation of the scheme and continuously remind the remaining Departments to finalise their guidelines expeditiously, in coordination with the Ministries/States/UTs so as to enable the PwDs avail the intended benefits seamlessly.

Recommendation (Para No.6.7)

17. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-

“The Committee note that National Action Plan (NAP) for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) was launched in March, 2015 to provide skill training to PwDs for enabling them to become self reliant and productive and to integrate them with the mainstream of the society. The skilling of PwDs assumes considerable significance in helping them seek gainful employment resulting in their financial empowerment. The Committee are of the considered opinion that the purpose of imparting training and certifying the candidates and to enhance employment skills for the section of society perceived as most unemployable, should not suffer for want of necessary procedural formalities of validation of training centres and setting up of a CNA for the Scheme for PFMS monitoring. Hence, the Department are urged to focus on faster decisions at all levels so as to leverage the placement/self-

employment of the trained/certified candidates to a sizeable extent as well as to maximize utilisation of the earmarked funds apart from appointing a CNA for monitoring purposes. In view of the fact that Skill training under NAP is a critical component and focal point for effective implementation of SIPDA, the Committee urge the Department to follow up the measures initiated so as to ensure maximum involvement of the district machinery as well as efficient centralized monitoring. The Committee further find that the Department is taking initiatives like collaborating with e-commerce giants like Amazon and Flipkart and tying up with NGOs and other organizations to not only impart training but also for placement of the trained candidates. The Department was also mooting approaching industry organizations like CII, FII, ASSOCHAM etc to extend mentorship for such training programmes. While this is very welcome step, the Committee would like to be kept informed of any actions taken in this regard”.

18. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“This is a Central Sector scheme which is implemented through empanelled training partners. Earlier, State Government recommendation was required for submitting project specific proposals. However, delay and no response from the State Governments lead to procedural delay. Hence, keeping in view that this is a Central Sector Scheme, recommendation of State Govt. is now not mandatory. The Department has set up a Central Project Monitoring Unit(CPMU) to oversee the implementations of various scheme/Programme of the Department including National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities(PwDs).

The skill training is conducted for Persons with Disabilities who have certain infrastructural & accessibility requirements to attend the training courses, hence center validation is important to check accessibility of the centers. CNA accounts have already been opened and operational. So, there would not be any more procedural delay due to CNA. The Centre validation process has been made easy to avoid any delay in the process. As soon as

request received from empanelled training partner(ETPs), immediate action is taken by SCPwD to validate centre through on-line mode/physical mode as the case may be.

The Department is in the process of developing PM-DAKSH Portal for online, effective, transparent and faster process of implementation of the scheme. Candidates can register for the skill training courses of their choice. Details of the candidates will be fetched through UDID. Candidates will have their profiles to access study material, question papers, details of training, assessment and certification. Desirous training partners can also apply for the scheme through this portal and their applications (EOI & PSP), center validation, issuance of offer and commencement letters etc. will be processed through the portal. Administration (DEPwD), SCPwD and NHFDC will also have their own login credentials to view and update on their work. On the PM-DAKSHA Portal provision has also been made for placement of trained PwDs in various Job aggregators and tracking of placed candidates.

The guidelines for the National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities is being revised. Many additions and changes have been made in order to make the process of applications, target allocation and installments more easier and less time consuming and to promote ease of doing business and employment of PwDs. Certain reasonable accommodations specific to persons with disabilities have also been added.

The Department has connected with different job aggregators and corporate working in the field of hiring persons with disabilities. MOUs will be signed with the organizations and a portal for providing job opportunities and employment to PwDs will be collaboratively developed. Data regarding job vacancies will be fetched and made available on a Job vacancies map to registered persons with disabilities”.

19. While appreciating the various efforts made by the Department to optimally achieve the targets set during 2023-24 under National Action Plan (NAP), the Committee urge the Department to expedite finalisation of the Guidelines for NAP as well as MoUs with job aggregators and corporates working in the field of hiring PwDs. The Committee also

appreciate the proposal of developing a job portal exclusively for PwDs and call upon the Department to bring more vigour to the measures already initiated so that larger number of PwDs, enrolled and trained under NAP, are suitably employed. It would greatly contribute in the empowerment of PwDs, which is the sole objective under the Department.

CHAPTER-II

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation Para No.1.16)

The Committee note that the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities have an enormous social responsibility on their shoulders, and a national obligation as well, to mainstream disability, remove stigma and negative stereotyping and laying the foundation of a truly inclusive society through their schemes and initiatives, and contribute directly and indirectly to the nation's welfare. The Committee further note that as a signatory to The United Nations Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities (CRPD), India has enacted the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 which seeks to empower persons with disabilities to live independently and with dignity. While the Government of India aims to create an inclusive society for persons with disabilities yet there are numerous hurdles faced in this regard such as lack of economic opportunities, lower educational achievements, poorer health, and higher rates of poverty. The Committee are however of the opinion that the biggest stumbling block would be the high prevalence of social stigma attached to disability. They are of the opinion that persons with impairments become 'disabled' only when the society denies them an enabling environment that gives them a chance to lead a dignified life. The Committee understand that there are many historical and other factors responsible for their predicament, nonetheless, they are convinced that with earmarking of adequate funds alongwith perspective planning, proactive leadership and prudent and judicious management of the allocations, a truly inclusive society can be evolved.

Reply of the Government:

Social stigma attached to disability is one of the many problems faced by the Persons with Disabilities historically and empowerment of these persons will uplift not only their economic conditions but also pave way for replacement of social stigma with positive and self-reliant identity. Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD) by the Government is a major step in this direction. The Act has safeguards to prevent abuse and discrimination on the basis of disability and on other hand, the Act also provides for tangible benefits to persons with disabilities for their overall empowerment. Further, the Central Government is also implementing

various schemes under which financial aid is provided to these persons and provisions related to assistive devices and corrective surgeries are also available. These endeavors have already started to show results across the country and will further improve the condition in few years to come.

(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.

No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)

(Recommendation Para No.2.8)

The Committee note that the BE amount proposed by the Department for the year 2023 -24 was ₹1,239.65 crore, which was reduced to ₹1,225.15 crore as BE by the Ministry of Finance. Reportedly, the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) had in 2021, locked both the allocations and physical targets towards the Central Sector Schemes namely ADIP, SIPDA, DDRS and Scholarship for 5 years *ie.* till 2025-26. The Committee therefore urge the Department to review the underutilization of funds and take appropriate remedial measures with focused attention on regular monitoring and strict evaluation to ensure optimal utilization of the remaining amount in the coming 3 years till 2025-26 as per the EFC decision, locking targets of four schemes of the Department.

Reply of the Government:

The Department is taking appropriate remedial measures to utilize the allocated funds under the Central Sector Schemes of the Department. However, the suggestion of the Committee is noted for compliance and more effective budgetary utilization.

(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.

No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)

(Recommendation Para No.3.15)

The Committee find that non receipt of Utilization Certificates and non-receipt of adequate proposals under SC, ST and NER Categories, deficient documents from NGOs/IAs affected the overall financial performance of the Department. In this context, the Committee find that non-receipt/late receipt of 'Utilization Certificates' and viable adequate proposals under SC, ST and NER Categories from various States/ implementing partners has become a perennial problem causing under-utilization of funds consistently over the years. Taking into cognizance the various measures taken by the Department which include inter-alia monitoring of flow of

funds through PFMS, physical visits, video conferencing with Implementing Agencies/State Governments, Review Meetings by Secretary, DEPwD, monitoring of expenditure under various schemes through periodic senior level officers meetings etc. for maximum utilization of allocated funds, the Committee feel that these efforts should result in better financial performance and receipt of good proposals from States well in time, hence desire that focused attention needs to be paid towards removing all impediments and concrete measures taken accordingly. The Committee note that the introduction of the Central Nodal Agency (CNA) model with effect from 1.4.2022 has brought in a revised process of fund flow under Central Sector Schemes on the PFMS Portal, which was finalised in August, 2022. Recognising that changes in existing processes and procedures take time to regularise, the Committee urge the Department to expedite all necessary procedural formalities for implementation of the CNA model in their Central Sector Schemes.

Reply of the Government:

Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) and National Institutes functioning under the administrative control of the Department are the major implementing agencies in respect of 'Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fittings of Aids/Appliances (ADIP)' Scheme. They have been instructed by this Department to increase their activities in NE Region for the distribution of aids & assistive devices to Divyangjan under the Scheme. Further, Ali Yavar Jung National Institute for Speech and Hearing Disabilities (AYJNISH), Mumbai, the Nodal Agency for implementation of the Cochlear Implant program has also been directed to create awareness about the need, importance and provisions of the said program in order to maximize the benefit of the Programme for the beneficiaries in NE Region. .

Further, the process of the implementation of the CNA module has been successfully completed and the funds are released and utilized by the Implementing Agencies through CNA Module under the Central Sector Schemes of the Department.

(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.

No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)

(Recommendation Para No.5.26)

The Committee note that the constraints with respect to performance of the Scheme for Implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (SIPDA) inter-alia include the adverse effect of Covid19, non-submission of viable proposals by the Implementing Agencies, pendency of utilisation certificates, proposals not duly recommended etc. The Department are making all the efforts for achieving the targets for the year 2023-24. The Committee emphasise that SIPDA is the most comprehensive scheme for PwDs in India today and therefore call upon the Department to fortify their monitoring and coordination mechanism. As a CPMU has been set up and a Sugamya Bharat App has been launched, the Committee hope that targets set for various schemes under SIPDA would be achieved optimally. The Committee trust that the Department would continue to take appropriate steps to boost their performance during FY 2023-24 with regard to utilisation of allocated budget by taking recourse to robust measures which would entitle them to obtain requisite Revised Estimates/funds through supplementary grants for effectively carrying out the planned activities.

Reply of the Government:

The Department is taking initiatives to enhance the existing ecosystem for the easy accessibility for Persons with Disabilities. Some recent initiatives that include are:

- a. **Memorandum of Understanding with Council of Architecture:** Department envision to encourage formal educating bodies to focus and mandate courses in the Bachelor of Architecture in the existing curriculum pertaining to universal accessibility and mandatory study of standards/guidelines formulated for this purpose. DEPwD and COA have joined hands to mandate the Inclusion of mandatory credits/modules etc. related to universal accessibility, accessibility features for PwDs in the B.Arch course and other related matters pertaining to outreach etc.
- b. **Training of State officers for universal accessibility:** In view of the growing demand for an inclusive, safe, and comfortable experience for Persons with Disabilities, ensuring incorporation of accessible features in the built environment is the need of the hour and for the same, accessibility at core is essential to be imparted in the minds of implementing agencies to ensure the universal accessibility. In view of the above context, this Department envision to propose a 2-3 day training

courses for all State PWD engineers regarding the sensitization towards the importance of accessibility for all, key accessible features in buildings as per Harmonised Guidelines 2021 of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), statutory provisions in the Right of Persons with Disability Act 2016 (RPwD Act 2016) and Right of Persons with Disability Rules 2017 (RPwD 2017). This course may help in sensitizing the State PWD engineers towards the latest guidelines for achieving universal accessibility in built environment, create understanding for making new buildings accessible by incorporating key accessible features and retrofit the existing buildings as per the latest guidelines of MoHUA. For this purpose, it is requested from CPWD training academy to curate a 2–3-day training course for all State PWD engineers and share the information regarding a tentative timeline and procedure for launching this course. In view of this context, department letter vide dated 07.02.2023 was shared with CPWD training academy.

- c. In addition to the above, CPWD is conducting two trainings both offline and online in the current FY 2023-24 for CPWD officers. In this regard, this department have requested CPWD training academy to provide slots for the training of State PWD officers in the upcoming training programmes. To which CPWD training academy have responded to accommodate 20 State/UT PWD officers. For this purpose, States/UTs have been requested to nominate PWD officers who shall be attending the upcoming training in month of August. As on date, nominations from Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have been received. The response from other States/UT is awaited.

**(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)**

(Recommendation Para No.5.28)

The Committee appreciate the efforts made by the Government in issuing 89.29 lakh Unique Disability Identity (UDID) Cards so far in the country. The Committee note that the Unique Identification Card is a single document of identification and verification of the disabled for availing various benefits in the future. The entire process of application is only available in online mode and that the persons in remote and rural areas of low connectivity may be denied the benefits of the scheme, the Committee were happy to find that efforts are being made by the Department to personally reach these people at their location through their network to get them enrolled under the scheme and that even the persons have less than 40% disability are also being considered for issuing the cards. Another laudable initiative has been the despatch of physical UDID cards by SpeedPost which ensures better accountability. The Committee also appreciate that UDID card is available under the DigiLocker App saving PwDs the trouble of carrying the physical card. The Committee feel that all these steps are in the right direction and encourage the Department to explore other innovative methods of increasing the coverage under UDID. The Committee also suggest that appropriate publicity be given to this scheme to increase the coverage especially in rural areas where a large majority of the disabled reside.

Reply of the Government:

As on 25.05.2023, 94.09 Lakh Unique Disability Identity (UDID) Cards has been generated in the country.

The Department has noted the suggestions of the Committee.

In order to bring transparency and to reduce the burden of paperwork on the PwDs, the UDID has been mandated for various schemes of the Department and its associated organizations. In case of UDID number is not available, UDID enrollment number (generated through UDID Portal) along with certificate of disability is mandated. The Department has conducted two meetings in the month of April, 2023 and May, 2023 with 54 lowest performing districts in the country to reduce pending applications for UDID. The Chief Medical Officers (CMOs) and District Social Welfare Officers were requested to speed up the UDID Project along side creating awareness in rural areas. The Department through its National Institute for

Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), Dehradun has released an awareness generation program to promote UDID Project through its community based radio channel and youtube channel '91.2 NIVH Hello Doon' . It promotes awareness of the process and benefits of the UDID. State Coordinators are designated in each States/UTs with a monthly remuneration upto Rs. 50,000/- per month for facilitating the PwDs and monitoring the progress of UDID. The Scheme also has provision to release Rs. 1.50 lakh to 2.50 lakh to State social welfare in each district based on the population of the district for awareness generation and publicity of UDID.

***(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)***

(Recommendation Para No.6.7)

The Committee note that National Action Plan (NAP) for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) was launched in March, 2015 to provide skill training to PwDs for enabling them to become self reliant and productive and to integrate them with the mainstream of the society. The skilling of PwDs assumes considerable significance in helping them seek gainful employment resulting in their financial empowerment. The Committee are of the considered opinion that the purpose of imparting training and certifying the candidates and to enhance employment skills for the section of society perceived as most unemployable, should not suffer for want of necessary procedural formalities of validation of training centres and setting up of a CNA for the Scheme for PFMS monitoring. Hence, the Department are urged to focus on faster decisions at all levels so as to leverage the placement/self-employment of the trained/certified candidates to a sizeable extent as well as to maximize utilisation of the earmarked funds apart from appointing a CNA for monitoring purposes. In view of the fact that Skill training under NAP is a critical component and focal point for effective implementation of SIPDA, the Committee urge the Department to follow up the measures initiated so as to ensure maximum involvement of the district machinery as well as efficient centralized monitoring. The Committee further find that the Department is taking initiatives like collaborating with e-commerce giants like Amazon and Flipkart and tying up with NGOs and other organizations to not only impart training but also for placement of the trained candidates. The Department was also mooting approaching industry organizations like CII, FII, ASSOCHAM etc to extend mentorship for such training programmes.

While this is very welcome step, the Committee would like to be kept informed of any actions taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government:

This is a Central Sector scheme which is implemented through empanelled training partners. Earlier, State Government recommendation was required for submitting project specific proposals. However, delay and no response from the State Governments lead to procedural delay. Hence, keeping in view that this is a Central Sector Scheme, recommendation of State Govt. is now not mandatory. The Department has set up a Central Project Monitoring Unit(CPMU) to oversee the implementations of various scheme/Programme of the Department including National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities(PwDs). The skill training is conducted for Persons with Disabilities who have certain infrastructural & accessibility requirements to attend the training courses, hence center validation is important to check accessibility of the centers. CNA accounts have already been opened and operational. So, there would not be any more procedural delay due to CNA. The Centre validation process has been made easy to avoid any delay in the process. As soon as request received from empanelled training partner(ETPs), immediate action is taken by SCPwD to validate centre through on-line mode/physical mode as the case may be. The Department is in the process of developing PM-DAKSH Portal for online, effective, transparent and faster process of implementation of the scheme. Candidates can register for the skill training courses of their choice. Details of the candidates will be fetched through UDID. Candidates will have their profiles to access study material, question papers, details of training, assessment and certification. Desirous training partners can also apply for the scheme through this portal and their applications (EOI & PSP), center validation, issuance of offer and commencement letters etc. will be processed through the portal. Administration (DEPwD), SCPwD and NHFDC will also have their own login credentials to view and update on their work. On the PM-DAKSHA Portal provision has also been made for placement of trained PwDs in various Job aggregators and tracking of placed candidates.

The guidelines for the National Action Plan for Skill Development of Persons with Disabilities is being revised. Many additions and changes have been made in order to make the process of applications, target allocation and installments more easier and less time consuming and to promote ease of doing business and employment of

PwDs. Certain reasonable accommodations specific to persons with disabilities have also been added. The Department has connected with different job aggregators and corporate working in the field of hiring persons with disabilities. MOUs will be signed with the organizations and a portal for providing job opportunities and employment to PwDs will be collaboratively developed. Data regarding job vacancies will be fetched and made available on a Job vacancies map to registered persons with disabilities.

***(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)***

(Recommendation Para No.6.8)

The Committee desire the Department to organize effective awareness campaigns in tandem with the State/UT Governments and other stakeholders, to educate the target group about the long term benefits of the scheme so as to persuade and mobilize them to get themselves enrolled under the immensely gainful scheme. The Committee would also like the Department to create a mechanism to track candidates placed across all the schemes, for at least one year, post completion of training/certification/orientation to gauge their placement/self employment proportion and the effectiveness of the training imparted. Based on the findings and feedback from beneficiaries, the Department can take remedial measures as required.

Reply of the Government:

The Department is implementing Awareness Generation and Publicity Scheme separately under which awareness about various scheme/programme of the Department is being spread about various scheme Programme of the Department in across the country.

The skilling scheme of the department is being on-boarded on PM DAKSH under the Skilling portal wherein the Empanelled Training Partners will share all the details of PwDs placed after training. Accordingly, the Department shall track and verify the details of PwDs placed on PM DAKSH. The PwDs shall also have the opportunity to rate and provide feedback on the ETPs and Employers with whom they are placed. The Department then shall take necessary measures to improve the skill training and employment of PwDs.

A National Level Stakeholder Consultation meeting was organized by the Department on 4th May, 2023 to create awareness about the scheme in which more than 100 experts and resource persons in the skilling and placement ecosystem participated including industry leaders, academicians, NGO founders, job aggregators and persons with disabilities experienced in skill training. Suggestions were taken from the participants on the scheme guidelines and through working groups, various models for skilling and employment were developed.

Moreover, based on the 4th May National Level Stakeholder Consultation, various companies and Job aggregators like Lemon Tree Hotels, Youth4Jobs, Amazon, Atypical Advantage, Infosys, Nukkad Cafe among others have shown their interest to collaborate with the Department to provide job opportunities to PwDs. Accordingly, in parallel to the Skilling portal, the Department has designed an Employment portal on PM DAKSH that shall be a one-stop-destination for PwDs to apply for jobs across the country. Under the Employment portal of PM DAKSH, the companies and Job Aggregators shall share the job vacancies available for PwDs, that will be Geo-tagged by the Department and accordingly the PwDs would be able to apply as per their interest. Further once the PwDs apply to the job they are interested in via PM DAKSH, all the details of PwDs would be tracked on PM DAKSH including their post-application placement processes as well as post-placement details. Eventually, review and feedback mechanism shall also be developed on PM DAKSH wherein the PwDs can rate as well as share their experiences with an employer and thus remedial measures shall be taken by the Department in consultation with the Employers.

**(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)**

(Recommendation Para No.7.9)

The Committee find that under DDRS, funds are released to NGOs for projects of Special Schools, rehabilitation centres, preparatory schools, cross disability pre-schools, early interventions centres, etc. relating to rehabilitation of persons with disabilities aimed at enabling them to reach and maintain their optimal, physical, sensory, intellectual, psychiatric or socio-functional levels. The Committee have been assured by the Department of full utilization in the current financial. They therefore urge the Department to intensify their efforts in removing the recurring impediments which have been hampering the implementation of the DDRS and ensure maximum achievement of financial and physical targets.

Reply of the Government:

During the financial year 2022-23, grants-in-aid for an amount of Rs.114.69 Crore against RE for Rs. 105.0 crore has been released to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for running the projects under Deendayal Divyangjan Rehabilitation Scheme against RE 105.00 Crore.

Further, GIA has been released to 389 NGOs during 2022-23 as compared to 318 in 2021-22. Total 35349 beneficiaries have been benefitted during the year 2022-23 as compared to 30173 in 2021-22.

(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.

No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)

(Recommendation Para No.10.6)

The Committee note that NHFDC administers two loan schemes viz Divyangjan Swavlamban Yojana for loans upto ₹50.00 lakh and Vishesh Microfinance Yojana for loans upto ₹60,000. The Committee further note that since 2020-21, the organization is no longer receiving funds from the Government. The Committee find that the coverage of loans of the NHFDC is spread across several States. The Committee have been apprised about the steps initiated by the NHFDC as part of their efforts to improve their performance. Taking into account the crucial need to augment creation of gainful employment opportunities for the intended beneficiaries, the Committee desire that the measures so initiated be pursued vigorously so as to achieve the desired end results. The Committee also recommend that the Department should strengthen the monitoring mechanism to assess the requirement and sustainability of loans forwarded so as to ensure increased fund disbursement and utilisation to effectively meet the requirements of the intended beneficiaries. The Committee further recommend that the performance of the Implementing agencies be constantly monitored with an aim to encourage due diligence and proper utilisation of the loan amount disbursed.

Reply of the Government:

A. In the matter of pursuing the measures for empowerment of the target group, the Corporation has been following the principal of advance funding as well as refinancing. Under advance funding mechanism, the Corporation :

- a) At the beginning of each financial year, NHFDC notionally allocate funds to the implementing agencies.
- b) Funds up to 50% of notional allocation is released as advance funds by NHFDC to the implementing agencies after receipt of request for release, for further disbursement to PwDs under their delegated authority for speedy implementation of project.
- c) The balance amount shall be released, on request, on receipt of 80% utilization of 50% of Notional Allocation released earlier.
- d) The minimum notional allocation is Rs 20.00 lakhs to any SCA.

In addition to the above, the Corporation continuously reviewed its schemes and take appropriate action to reach out to maximum number of Persons with Disabilities. following measures have been put in place:

- i) Simplification of Lending Guidelines and Credit based funding -NHFDC has revisited on August, 2019 its schemes and Guidelines to enhance its effectiveness and extend the outreach. NHFDC introduced new Guidelines for Credit Based Funding and amalgamated all existing loan schemes (self-employment & education loan scheme) into a single loan scheme called Divyangjan Swablamban Yojana to enhance its effectiveness and reach to the persons with disabilities.
- ii) NHFDC has enhanced upper loan limit from Rs. 25.0 lakh to Rs. 50.00 lakh.
- iii) NHFDC has enhanced education loan limit from Rs. 10lakh to Rs. 50lakh.
- iv) NHFDC has reduced rate of interest on education loan from 9% to 4% p.a..
- v) Delegation of Authority to SCA : The authority of SCA to sanction loan to the beneficiary is enhanced from Rs. 10.0 lakh to Rs. 50.0 lakh per project. Now SCAs can sanction and release loan upto Rs.50.00 Lakhs from advance funds under delegation of authority.
- vi) UDID No. : In the interest of transparency and identification, an additional condition of Possession of Unique Disability ID (UDID) Number/ UDID Enrollment Number (in case UDID No. is not available) has been stipulated as one of the essential requirement under DSY.

vii) Enhancement of activities area : NHFDC has enhanced activities area. Now PwDs can apply for loan for starting any activity contributing directly or indirectly in the income generation or helping PwD in their overall process of empowerment.

viii) Tie ups with Public Sector Banks/ Regional Rural Banks/Rural Livelihood Mission : NHFDC has tied-up with some Public Sector Banks/ Regional Rural Banks enhance the outreach of the Corporation. Also, NHFDC has initiated dialogues with various Rural Livelihood Mission for financing disabled SHGs for various livelihood supports.

ix) NHFDC Swavalamban Kendra (NSK) : NHFDC has rolled out the concept of NHFDC Swavalamban Kendra (NSK) by converging the credit needs, skilling needs, assured business linkage needs, etc on pilot scale basis and aspires to convert into a grandiose scheme. These NSKs are as mini incubation centers with hands on skilling on the locally relevant and viable businesses to train the PwDs for self-employment opportunities in and around their localities.

x) Marketing/ online marketing support to the PwD Entrepreneurs :

NHFDC is also facilitating PwD entrepreneurs in marketing (online & offline) their goods and services by aggregation of their products and services, using online marketing platform. Some of the products made by PwDs are now available on leading e-marketing platform. During the current financial year 2023-24, NHFDC shall organize 12 Divya Kala Mela (one in the each month) across the country.

xi) Marketing/ online marketing support to the PwD entrepreneurs :

Providing hand holding support to PwD entrepreneurs in marketing their products is an important aspect in the process of effort of their economic empowerment through concessional loaning. As the PwD entrepreneurs with their mobility/communication limitations, may sometimes find it difficult to market their products and services.

(a) Offline marketing support:

NHFDC extends assistance to Persons with Disabilities in marketing their products. PwDs are regularly sponsored to participate in various exhibitions. NHFDC also facilitate online and offline marketing of Products of PwDs to enhance their business reach.

Since last financial year, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities made NHFDC as the nodal organization to organize National Exhibition of products and artifacts made by Divyang artisans under the brand name of Divya Kala Mela. So far four (04) Divya Kala Melas have been held namely at Delhi (2nd to 7th December 2022), Mumbai (16th to 25th February 2023), Bhopal (12th to 21st March 2023) and Guwahati (11 to 17 May 2023). The Divya Kala Melas turned out to be grand success in terms of sheer number of public turn out and sales. The recently held Divya Kala Mela at Guwahati also evoked good response. The Divya Kala Melas are also helpful in sensitizing the society about disability issues. These exclusive exhibitions cum fairs are helpful in the economic empowerment of PwDs by giving them platform for marketing.

Online Marketing of Products of PwD Entrepreneurs:

NHFDC has initiated efforts to directly support the PwD entrepreneurs in marketing their goods and services using existing online marketing platform. Some of the products made by PwDs are now available on leading e- marketing platforms [Amazon, Flipkart, Gem etc] with the efforts of NHFDC. Also, NHFDC Foundation has opened up a window of online marketing of such products through online store (<https://nhfdcfoundation.org/store/>).

B) NHFDC has following mechanism for monitoring of the schemes/performance of implementing agencies and effectively utilization of loan :

i) Utilization of loan:

The funds made available to implementing agencies are to be utilised within a period of 120 days from the date of release of funds. The implementing agencies are required to submit the utilisation of funds.

ii) Field Inspection of NHFDC beneficiaries:

NHFDC periodically conducts field inspection of assisted beneficiaries by the officials of NHFDC and/or outside agencies in various states.

iii) Evaluation by external agencies:-

NHFDC also engages external agencies from time to time to evaluate/inspect the implementation of its schemes in the states.

Recently, an impact assessment was carried out in respect of NHFDC schemes, through third party agency NABARD Consultancy Services (NABCONS). The assessment covered the period from 2014-15 to 2019-20 (i.e. 6 years) in 21 states.

iv) National and Regional conferences/ workshops:

NHFDC regularly organizes National and Regional conferences/workshops of its State Channelising Agencies. The performance of SCA's in respect of implementation of NHFDC schemes is reviewed by CMD, NHFDC. The bottlenecks in implementation of schemes of NHFDC in respective states are also discussed and evaluated.

(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M. No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)

CHAPTER- III

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLY

(Recommendation Para No. 4.25)

The Committee, appreciate the initiative of the Department for launching the 'Arjun ADIP-MIS' Portal for ADIP Scheme from 15th September, 2022. Developed through C-DAC, this portal would not only undertake Real Time Monitoring of beneficiary data but also prevent and check duplication of beneficiaries. Besides, it also includes online registration of beneficiaries for new devices/repair and file grievances and facilitates the implementing agencies in data management and compliance. The Committee are confident that this initiative will bring about a welcome change in maintaining and generating disability statistics for arriving at accurate numbers for equitable allocation as well as setting targets.

Reply of the Government

The Department is making continuous efforts for streamlining and improving various functionalities of the Portal. Also, various types of MIS reports are being incorporated from time to time for generating disability statistics.

***(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)***

(Recommendation Para No. 5.29)

The Committee drew the attention to the difficulties faced by those Divyangjan who are unable to get their Aadhaar card made due to the fact that owing to particular type of disability, they are unable to mark their finger prints for registration purpose. When enquired about any remedy for such cases, it was informed that there is a provision of 'Bio-metric exception' for such Divyangjan desirous of obtaining Aadhaar Cards for themselves. Hence, the Committee desire that during the meetings of the Central Advisory Board with representatives of the States, the issue may be flagged and the implementation authorities are urged to use the Bio-metric exception for facilitating such Divyangjan in obtaining their Aadhaar cards.

Reply of the Government

The Observation of the Committee has been noted for compliance.

(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.

No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)

CHAPTER-IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED AND WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION.

(Recommendation Para No.1.17)

The Committee note that since the work of Census 2021 was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department are dependent on data generated by Census 2011. According to Census 2011 data there are 2.68 persons with disabilities which accounts for more than 2.21 % of the total population. As the next Census (2021) is yet to be completed and results reported, the actual figures of persons suffering from the disabilities added after the Act of 2016 will be available in an year or two. In this connection, the Committee would like the Department to utilize all available data to arrive at the best estimation so that such persons are identified and brought into the ambit of the welfare schemes for Divyangjan. While the National Sample Survey (76th Round) has issued some sampled estimates of disabled persons, the focus is on counting only the people with bench mark disabilities and as per experts captures only a part of the population. The Committee therefore urge the Department to find an alternate way to include all the disabled persons, as much as possible in their welfare schemes till the Census figures come, particularly since most of these Divyangjan suffer from either mental or intellectual disability. The Committee also urge the Department to emphasize upon the disability surveyors conducting the NSS of Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation to consult disability experts while any survey is being designed, extensively train and sensitize surveyors on types of disabilities to include all the categories of disability that are covered in the Act of 2016 which is the ultimate aim of the legislation.

Reply of the Government

In India, the major sources of statistics on disability are the decennial Population Censuses conducted by the Registrar General of India (RGI) and the sample surveys on disability conducted by National Sample Survey (NSS) of National Statistical Office. As indicated in observation of Standing Committee, the Census 2011 puts the total number of PwDs at 2.68 crore. The main objective of 76th round of NSS during July-December, 2018 was to estimate indicators of incidence and prevalence of disability such as cause of disability, age at onset of disability, facilities available to the persons with disability, difficulties faced by persons with disability in

accessing/using public building and public transport, arrangement of regular care giver, representation of PwDs in labour market, education system etc. This data is used during policy formulation for empowerment of PwDs. However, in this survey, there is no account of total number of PwDs presently in India.

With a view to tackle this situation and to bring all PwDs under the ambit of welfare schemes meant for them, the Department has mandated UDID card for its various schemes as well as schemes of its associated organizations. In case a person with disability does not have UDID card, he/she may apply for benefits with the help of UDID enrolment number along with certificate of disability. In respect of sensitization of disability surveyors, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has been requested on 05.06.2023 (copy enclosed).

***(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)***

(Recommendation Para No.1.18)

The Committee have come to know that aids and appliances used by PwDs attract 5 percent charge under the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The Committee believe that aids and appliances are critical for persons with disabilities to pursue independence, literacy and employment with dignity. While taking cognizance of the fact that the Department was taking up this issue with the GST Council at the highest level, the Committee wish to emphasise that being a social welfare department attending to the most marginalized section of the society, the Department, should endeavour to have these items declared tax free. They therefore desire the Department to pursue this matter for reaching a favourable conclusion that would make aids and appliances more affordable to the persons with disabilities in India.

Reply of the Government:

It is to apprise the Committee that the Department is making a continuous endeavor in this regard. A letter dated 17.04.2023 was sent to GST Council to draw their attention in this regard requesting to exempt aids and assistive devices from GST.

***(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)***

(Recommendation Para No.5.27)

The Committee find that the Accessible India Campaign under the umbrella scheme of the SIPDA is the flagship scheme of the Department. It seeks to achieve universal accessibility for persons with disabilities in Built Environment (Buildings), Transport System and Information & Communication Technology ecosystem across the country. The importance accorded to this scheme can be gauged from the fact that the Campaign is being monitored by Prime Minister Office through PRAGATI, Central Advisory Board headed by the Minister, SJE and Cabinet Secretariat through a Committee of Secretaries. Under the Central Government all 1100 identified buildings have been completed which shows lack of enthusiasm of States towards this Campaign. Under the targets for accessible transportation, the Committee find that while all 35 International Airports have been made accessible, 55 out of 69 Domestic Airports have been made accessible. In respect of Railways, 709 Type A1, A & B Railway Stations had been made fully accessible. In terms of the road transport sector the Committee found that 5.96% buses are fully accessible and 29.05% of buses are currently partially accessible. The Committee wish to stress that the AIC presents a gateway to better mobility and reach to ensure equality in opportunities and the promise of a better life for PwDs. The Committee are also of the opinion that accessibility does not, merely mean access to the point of entrance of a building, public transport system etc. Rather it implies that a person with disability has access, equal to all others, to all sections and not restricted by his or her disabilities. The Committee feel that the challenges before PwDs are immense and therefore prudent strategies need to be chalked out to remove the impediments to fully achieve the intended objectives of the scheme within the intended timelines. The Committee desire to be informed about the progress made in this direction.

Reply of the Government:

In addition to the initiatives mentioned in the reply of the observation 5.26, the Department is taking up the matter of Formulation of Sector Specific Standards of Accessibility with the 20 Ministries/Departments to enhance the accessibility.

Following the provisions of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 (Section 40) and RPwD Rules 2017 (Rule 15) and as per CoS recommendations, the task of formulation of Sector Specific Standards of Accessibility has been entrusted with 20 Ministries/Departments which had to be sent to DEPwD for notification under the RPwD Rules, 2017. This work has been initiated and is being followed up by

DEPwD through regular letters, video conferences and Ministry/Department specific discussions. So far, out of 20 Ministries/Departments Accessibility for the ICT products and services have been notified in RPwD Rules (Amendment) 2023 by BIS and adopted by MEITY. In addition to the above, it is to highlight that Department of Law and Justice, Department of Consumer Affairs and Department of telecommunication are following the guidelines of MEITY and MoHUA respective to their domain. Other than this, 5 Ministries namely MoHUA, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Department of Sports have notified their guidelines in official gazette and are currently underway of draft and final notification in RPwD Rules. Remaining 11 ministries are at various stages of finalisation of their respective sector specific accessibility guidelines.

**(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)**

CHAPTER-V

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE INTERIM IN NATURE.

(Recommendation Para No.4.24)

The Committee find that Assistance of Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/Appliances (ADIP) is one of the most important schemes for empowerment of PwDs by providing assistive devices and corrective surgeries. They note that an amount of ₹235.00 crore has been allocated as BE 2022-23 under ADIP, which was revised to ₹230.00 crore at RE stage and actual expenditure so far is ₹146.01 crore. An amount of ₹245.00 crore has been allocated as BE 2023-24. The outbreak of Covid-19 Pandemic and restrictions due to social distancing norms which disrupted the entire manufacturing and distribution mechanism of the Scheme have been cited as the reasons for shortfalls in expenditure. While taking note of the genuine predicament of the Department as large gathering for distribution of aids and appliances as well as for holding of camps were suspended, the Committee impress upon the Department to now resort to a focused approach by taking up special drives regularly for holding of camps, programmes etc during the year 2023-24 to ensure full utilization of the BE allocation of ₹245 crore as earmarked for the fiscal. The Department has also informed the Committee about their future plan on holding camps this year. In this regard, the Committee would like to recommend that in addition to the holding of camps etc, the Department should also place emphasis on extensive publicity of the scheme so that greater number of PwDs are acquainted with the services offered under this scheme and maximum number of PwDs can avail the benefits of the same. The Committee suggest that the Department can earmark certain days like national holidays/festivals/International day of PwDs etc., as is done for the Pulse Polio Immunization campaign, for holding of simultaneous camps all across the country annually so that a public perception around this idea is created and greater turnout at such camps is ensured.

Reply of the Government:

In the year 2022-23, the total expenditure was Rs. 242.25 cr. against the budget allocation of Rs. 235.00 cr. which was revised to Rs. 230.00 cr. at RE stage. Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) and National Institutes functioning under the administrative control of the Department are the major implementing agencies in respect of 'Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/Fittings of Aids/Appliances (ADIP)' Scheme. They have been instructed by this Department to increase their activities on PAN India basis for the distribution of aids & assistive devices to Divyangjan under the Scheme. Hence, the total budget allocation for the year 2023-24 i.e. Rs.245.00 crore is expected to be utilized fully by 31.3.2024. Noted for compliance on the suggestions of the Committee to earmark certain days like national holidays/festivals/International day of PwDs etc.,as is done for the Pulse Polio Immunization campaign, for holding of simultaneous camps all across the country.

***(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)
O.M. No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)***

(Recommendation Para No.8.9)

The Committee appreciate the performance under the scheme for scholarship for Students with disabilities. It is one of the few schemes where performance of the Department has been exceptional. During 2020-21, while the percentage of expenditure was almost 98 percent, the following year i.e 2021-22, there was overachievement where they managed to spend ₹120.32 cr against RE of ₹110.00 cr. For the current financial year, the Committee have been assured of a similar performance. In respect of physical targets, while the Covid 19 impacted and lockdown period of 2020-21 saw a shortfall in the number of beneficiaries, the following year the Department appears to have recouped the losses and the achievement almost matched the targets. In view of the assurances given by the Department that expenditure for the current financial will not only match RE, but also exceed the amount, the Committee are of the opinion that allocations for scholarship should be strengthened and the Department should approach the Ministry of Finance for further augmentation of the outlay. The Committee are of the strong opinion that providing monetary support acts as a safety net for students with Disabilities which also arrests the dropout rate and gives them an impetus to remain within the

educational system .The Committee desire that the momentum created so far be persisted with and periodic assessment of the scheme be carried out so that any corrective actions if required can be initiated at the earliest. As the guidelines for Free Coaching Scholarship Schemes for students with disabilities are under review, they urge the Department to expedite the finalization of the guidelines so that the scheme can be rolled out at the earliest and beneficiaries can increase their employability through coaching/training/guidance. The Committee would like to be kept informed of all decisions taken in this regard.

Reply of the Government:

The process of suitable modification and finalization of the guidelines of Free Coaching Scheme is being expedited and it will be completed soon. An online portal is being developed for better implementation of Free Coaching scheme and as soon as the portal becomes operational, the scheme will be rolled out for beneficiaries.

***(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.
No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)***

(Recommendation Para No.9.8)

The Committee are happy to note that in keeping with the aim for inclusion of PwDs in all walks of life, the Cabinet had granted approval for 2 Centres For Disability Sports at Gwalior and Shillong respectively. The Committee find that the centre at Gwalior is slated for completion by June 2023 and the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the centre at Shillong is statedly under preparation. The Committee would like to highlight that the North Eastern region of India has a rich tradition of sports and the development of a sports centre in the region will go a long way in encouraging the participation of Sportspersons in national and international sports. The Committee therefore recommend that the DPR for the Shillong Centre and other preparations be completed fast so that the exercise of securing the necessary permissions, allocations etc may begin in right earnest.

Reply of the Government:

The Centre for Disability Sports at Gwalior is likely to be completed by July 2023. The DPR for centre for Disability Sports at Shillong has been prepared and DIB note was presented before the Delegated Investment Board, the Board has reviewed the project report and recommended that a field visit to Shillong may be planned to consult with Sports personnel and other stakeholder in the north east region and based on their suggestion DPR may be modified in terms of the cost and facilities proposed.

(Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) O.M.

No.1/4/2023-24/Budget/DEPwD dated 16th June, 2023)

NEW DELHI;

26th July, 2023

4 Sravana, 1945 (Saka)

**RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and
Empowerment**

**MINUTES OF THE THIRTEENTH SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE
ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (2022-23) HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 26TH JULY, 2023.**

The Committee met from 1030 hrs. to 1100 hrs. in Chairperson's Chamber,
Room No. 113, E-PHA, Block 'B', Extension Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

SMT. RAMA DEVI - CHAIRPERSON

MEMBERS

LOK SABHA

2. Smt. Sangeeta Azad
3. Shri Chhatar Singh Darbar
4. Shri Abdul Khaleque
5. Smt. Geeta Kora
6. Smt. Supriya Sadanand Sule
7. Smt. Rekha Arun Verma

RAJYA SABHA

8. Smt. Sumtira Balmik
9. Smt. Ramilaben Becharbhai Bara
10. Smt. Geeta *alias* Chandraprabha
11. Shri Narayan Koragappa
12. Smt Mamata Mohanta
13. Shri Mukul Balkrishna Wasnik

SECRETARIAT

1. Smt. Anita Bhatt Panda - Additional Secretary
2. Smt. Mamta Kemwal - Director
3. Shri Krishendra Kumar - Deputy Secretary

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee convened to consider and adopt the following draft Reports:

(i) XX XX XX XX

(ii) XX XX XX XX

(iii) Fiftieth Report on the Action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Fifth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment).

3. The Chairperson then requested the Members to give their suggestions, if any, on the draft Reports. The Report was adopted by the Committee without any modifications.

4. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the draft Report and to present the same to both the Houses on the ensuing session.

The Committee then adjourned.

XX Does not pertain to this Report.

APPENDIX-II

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE FORTY-FIFTH REPORT ON 'DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (2023-24)' OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EMPOWERMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT).

	Total	Percentage
I. Total number of Recommendations	17	
II. Observations/ Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government- Rec. Para No.1.16, 2.8, 3.15, 5.26, 5.28, 6.7, 6.8, 7.9 and 10.6	09	52.94%
III. Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's reply:- Rec. Para No.4.25 & 5.29	02	11.76%
IV. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:- Rec. Para No.1.17, 1.18 & 5.27	03	17.64%
V. Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are interim in nature:- Rec. Para No. 4.24, 8.9 & 9.8	03	17.64%
		100%