

Status of Education of Differently Abled Children in Haryana

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Abstract

Access to inclusive education for differently abled children (DAC) in rural India remains profoundly constrained by infrastructural deficits, social attitudes, and policy implementation gaps. This study investigates the educational status of differently abled children across six selected villages of Haryana—Naya Bass, Ismaila, Hasangarh, Bhainsru Khurd, Naya Gaon, and Chhara. Key-informant interviews, and observational checklists, the study finds that approximately 70% of respondents are unaware of inclusive education provisions under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act). Village panchayats lack dedicated provisions for DAC, and 68% of parents report dissatisfaction with school services. Special educators are not available in six sampled village schools. These findings illuminate structural failures at the intersection of disability, rurality, and educational governance and offer evidence-based recommendations for policy reform.

Keywords: *inclusive education, differently abled children, Haryana, rural education, special educators, RPWD Act 2016, panchayat governance, disability policy*

1. Introduction

Education is universally recognised as a fundamental right and a powerful instrument of social transformation. For children with disabilities, however, this right remains aspirational in large parts of rural India. Despite a robust legislative framework—including the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPWD Act), the Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE), and the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan—the translation of policy intent into classroom reality has been inconsistent and, in many rural constituencies, negligible (Singal, 2016; Miles & Singal, 2010).

Haryana, a northern Indian state with a per-capita income above the national average, presents a paradox: relatively stronger fiscal capacity yet persistent gaps in disability-inclusive education in rural areas. According to the 2011 Census of India, approximately 2.21% of Haryana's population lives with some form of disability, amounting to roughly 548,000 individuals. However, administrative data from the District Information System for Education Plus (DISE+) 2022–23 suggest that enrolment and retention rates for DAC in schools remain far below targets (Ministry of Education, 2023).

Against this backdrop, this study was undertaken to empirically document the ground-level educational status of differently abled children in six rural villages of Haryana. The study addresses four interrelated research questions:

- (i) **Status of Awareness among Gram Panchayat Members, Principals/Head Masters, Teachers and Parents regarding Inclusive Education for Differently Abled Children.**
- (ii) **Awareness of Government Policies, Schemes and Programmes Related to Education of Differently Abled Children**
- (iii) **Financial Support and Resource Mobilisation by Gram Panchayats and Principals/Head Masters for Inclusive Education.**
- (iv) **How many schools in the study area employ trained special educators?**

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Global and National Policy Frameworks

Inclusive education gained its foremost international endorsement through the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994). Subsequently, the UNCRPD (2006), ratified by India in 2007, obligated signatory states to

ensure access to an inclusive, quality, and free education in the communities in which persons with disabilities live (Article 24). Within the Indian legislative context, the RPWD Act, 2016 mandates that every child with a specified disability between the ages of 6 and 18 years has the right to free education in an appropriate environment, and that government schools include trained special educators and accessible infrastructure (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2016). The Samagra Shiksha scheme, launched in 2018, provides dedicated funding streams for inclusive education, including grants for resource rooms, assistive devices, and specialist teacher training (Ministry of Education, 2018).

2.2 Implementation Challenges in Rural India

Despite these provisions, implementation challenges persist. Singal (2016) argues that Indian inclusive education policy suffers from a dual paradox: ambitious legislative commitments coexist with limited institutional capacity and inadequate resource allocation. Sharma and Deppeler (2005) document how teacher training programmes have failed to equip general educators with competencies to support diverse learners, a shortfall particularly acute in rural government schools. Panda (2011) highlights the critical role of local governance bodies in ensuring that DAC are identified, enrolled, and supported, yet finds that most panchayats lack the awareness, capacity, and budgetary provisions needed to fulfil this function. Kalyanpur (2008) further notes that cultural beliefs about disability in rural communities frequently construct it as a karmic retribution, reducing parental aspirations and dampening demand-side pressure for service improvement.

2.3 Parental Attitudes and Community Awareness

Research consistently shows that parental awareness of legal entitlements is a significant predictor of whether DAC are enrolled and retained in school. Alur and Timmons (2009) found that parents who were informed about the RPWD 2016 Act were markedly more likely to seek educational placements and advocate for reasonable accommodations. Jha (2002) documented chronic shortages of trained special educators in rural government schools, subsequently corroborated by national survey data. Without specialist support, general teachers often lack the pedagogical tools to meaningfully include children with sensory, intellectual, or physical impairments, resulting in nominal enrolment but de facto exclusion.

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Area & Sample

This study was conducted in six villages of Haryana: Naya Bass, Ismaila, Hasangarh, Bhainsru Khurd, Naya Gaon, and Chhara. The villages were purposively selected to ensure variation in population size, distance from district headquarters, and availability of educational infrastructure. Purposive random sampling is used by researcher to answer the research questions

3.2 Data Collection

Data were gathered through three complementary instruments. First, a structured household questionnaire covered demographic information, awareness of disability rights legislation, enrolment and attendance patterns, and parental satisfaction with school services. Second, semi-structured key-informant interviews were conducted with gram panchayat members, school Principals/Head Masters, Teachers. Third, school infrastructure observation checklists adapted from the Inclusive Education Resource Centre framework were administered in all six village schools.

3.3 Data Analysis

The tools that the researcher has used for data collection in this study were open-ended questionnaires, Inventory and semi structured interviews The study received ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board, and all participants provided informed written consent.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics. The majority of respondents (74.3%) were from Other Backward Classes or Scheduled Castes, reflecting the social composition of rural Haryana. The mean household income was Rs. 8,200 per month, and 41% of household heads had not completed primary education.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Surveyed Households

Village	HH Surveyed	DAC Identified	% SC/OBC HH	Mean Monthly Income (Rs.)
Naya Bass	48	17	76.0%	7,800
Ismaila	52	21	71.2%	8,500
Hasangarh	44	15	68.2%	9,100
Bhainsru Khurd	50	20	79.0%	7,600
Naya Gaon	46	19	73.9%	8,100
Chhara	40	14	77.5%	7,900
Total	280	106	74.3%	8,200

Source: Primary Survey, 2024. HH = Household; DAC = Differently Aabled Children; SC = Scheduled Caste; OBC = Other Backward Classes.

4.2 Awareness of Inclusive Education

One of the most striking findings of this study is the near-universal unawareness of inclusive education policies among community members. Overall, 70% of respondents had no knowledge of the RPWD Act, 2016 or of the RTE Act's provisions for children with special needs (Figure 1). Unawareness was highest in Chhara (78%) and Bhainsru Khurd (75%) and comparatively lower in Hasangarh (65%). Qualitative interviews confirmed that no structured information, education, and communication (IEC) activities had been conducted in any study village in the preceding three years, aligning with Panda's (2011) observation that decentralised governance structures rarely prioritise disability-related outreach.

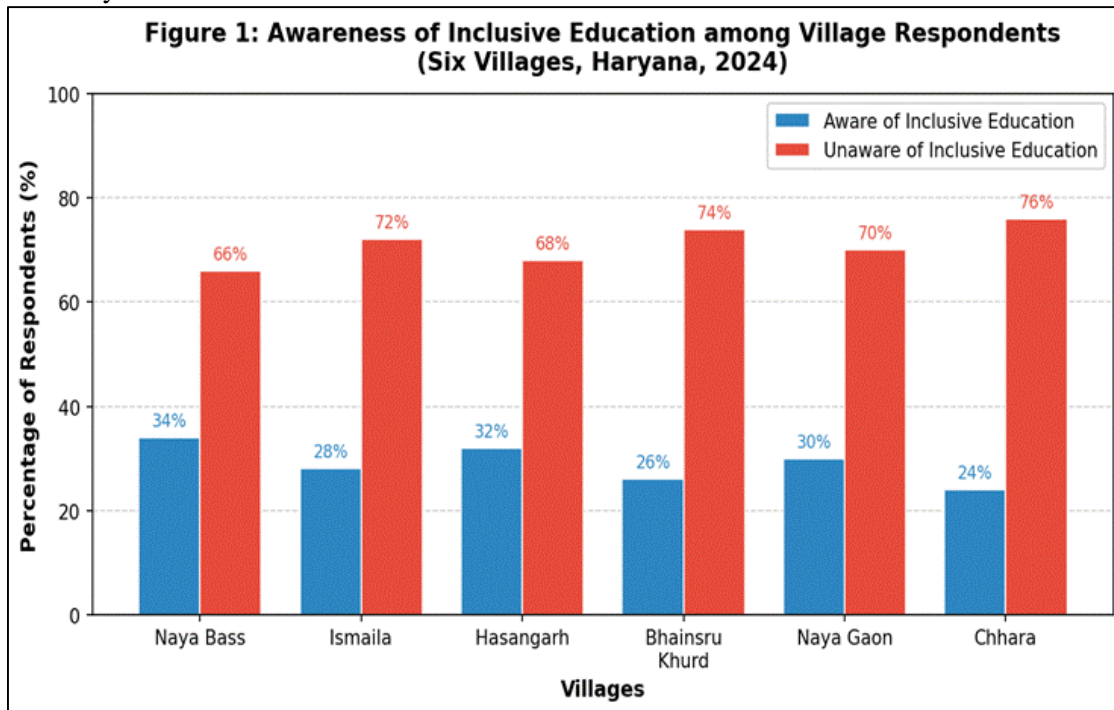


Figure 1. Awareness of Inclusive Education Among Respondents Across Six Study Villages, Haryana (2024). Source: Primary Survey, 2024.

4.3 Panchayat Provisions and Parental Satisfaction

Analysis of panchayat governance reveals a near-total absence of institutional provisions for DAC. Key-informant interviews confirmed that no disability register was maintained, no budget line was allocated for disability-related services, and no panchayat resolution on inclusive education had been passed in any of the six villages. Only one panchayat (Ismaila) had facilitated disability certificate issuance by coordinating with the district Social Welfare Department. As depicted in Figure 2 (panel a), 88% of panchayat representatives acknowledged that their gram sabha had made no specific provision for differently abled children. Panel (b) presents parental satisfaction data, revealing that 68% of parents expressed dissatisfaction or high dissatisfaction with school services. Only 5% reported high satisfaction, typically attributable to proximity to a special school in an adjacent town rather than any local provision. These findings echo Kalyanpur's (2008) observation that parental expectations for DAC are frequently shaped by resignation born of persistent unmet need rather than informed appraisal of available services.

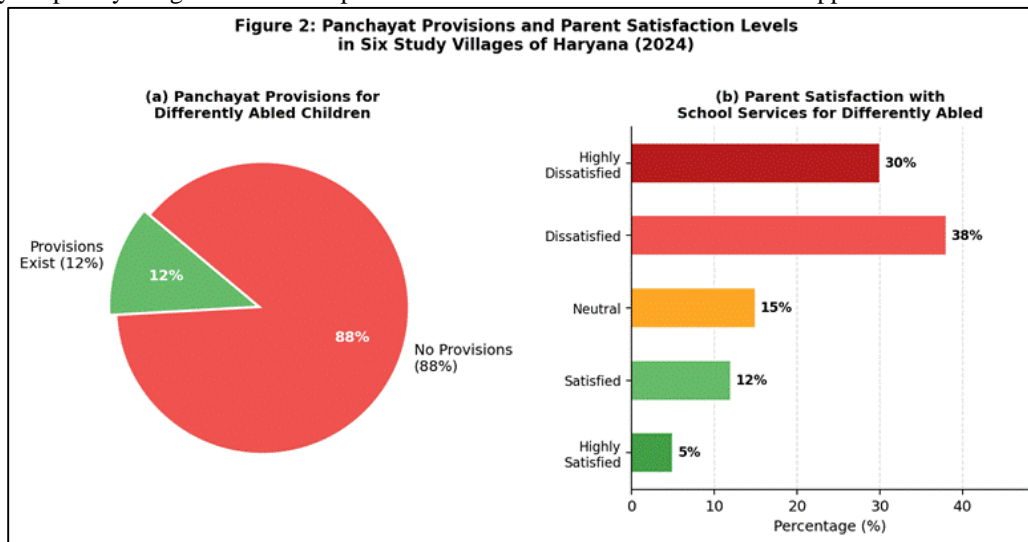


Figure 2. Panchayat Provisions and Parent Satisfaction Levels in Six Study Villages of Haryana (2024). Source: Primary Survey, 2024.

4.4 School Infrastructure and Special Educator Availability

Table 2: School-Level Infrastructure and Human Resource Status for DAC (2024)

Village	DAC Enrolled	Regularly Attending	Special Educator	Accessible Infrastructure
Naya Bass	8	10 (55.6%)	No	Ramp + Audio-Visual aids
Ismaila	5	13 (59.1%)	No	None
Hasangarh	12	8 (53.3%)	No	Ramp + toilet
Bhainsru Khurd	6	11 (55.0%)	No	Ramp + toilet
Naya Gaon	9	9 (52.9%)	No	Basic furniture
Chhara	7	7 (50.0%)	No	Ramp

Source: School Observation Checklist and Principal Interviews, Primary Survey, 2024. Part-time special educator at Ismaila funded through NGO partnership, not state appointment.

As shown in Table 2 and Figure 3, a trained special educator is not available in all 0schools. The sole exception (Ismaila) was funded through an NGO rather than the state government, underscoring dependence on civil society. Mean attendance rates among enrolled DAC range from 50.0% (Chhara) to 59.1% (Ismaila),

suggesting that even enrolled children are not consistently accessing education. Physical accessibility is rudimentary: four schools lack any adapted infrastructure, and none has assistive technology or resource rooms as envisaged under Samagra Shiksha. These findings are consistent with Sharma and Deppeler's (2005) documentation of urban concentration of specialist human resources and with Jha's (2002) account of chronic rural infrastructure shortfalls.

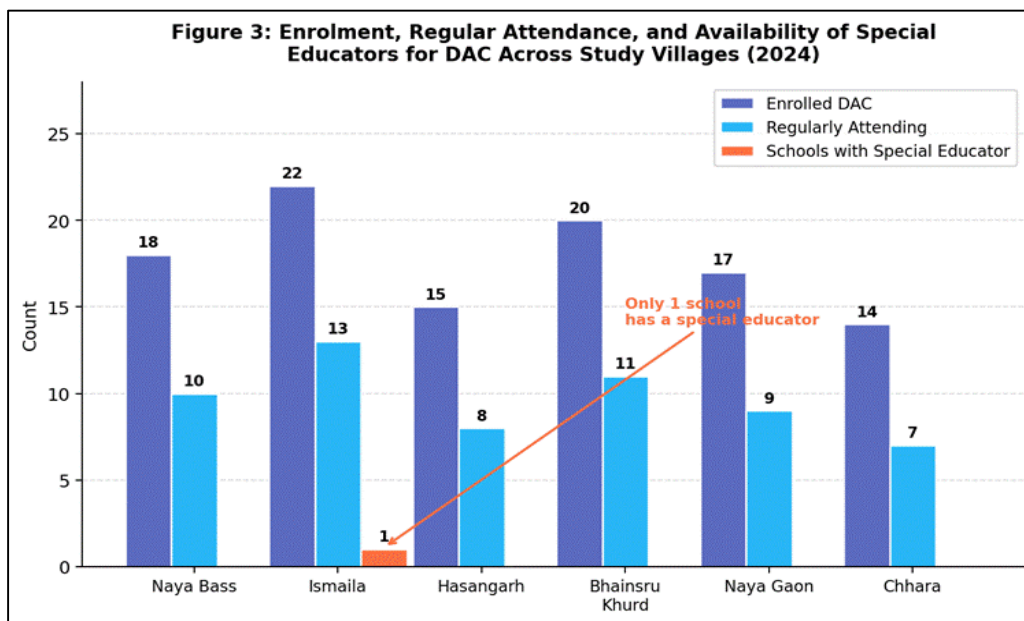


Figure 3. Enrolment, Regular Attendance, and Availability of Special Educators for Differently Abled Children (DAC) Across Study Villages (2024). Source: Primary Survey, 2024.

4.5 Barriers to Inclusive Education: Thematic Summary

Table 3: Key Barriers to Inclusive Education Identified Through Thematic Analysis

Theme	Sub-Themes	Representative Informant Quote (Translated)
Policy Unawareness	No IEC activities; no awareness camps; limited scheme reach	"We have never heard of any government programme for disabled children in our village." (Parent, Chhara)
Panchayat Inaction	No disability register; no budget; no gram sabha resolution	"It has never come up in our panchayat meeting. There are bigger problems." (Sarpanch, Bhainsru Khurd)
Special Educator Deficit	Absent in 5 of 6 schools; general teachers feel unprepared	"I want to help these children but I do not know how. Nobody trained me for this." (Teacher, Naya Bass)
Parental Resignation	Low expectations; stigma; economic priority over education	"My child cannot learn like others. What will school give her?" (Parent, Hasangarh)
Infrastructure Gap	No ramps (4 schools); no adapted toilets; no assistive devices	"My son in a wheelchair cannot even enter the school building." (Parent, Naya Gaon)

Source: Key-Informant Interviews, Primary Survey, 2024.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study converge on a central argument: the gap between India's disability-inclusive education policy architecture and its rural implementation is vast, persistent, and multi-causal. The 70% unawareness of inclusive education provisions mirrors findings from comparable rural studies (Alur & Timmons, 2009) and reflects a systemic failure to translate legal mandates into community-level knowledge.

The absence of panchayat provisions for DAC is particularly troubling given that the RPWD Act explicitly assigns responsibilities to local governance institutions. Under the Act, gram panchayats are required to maintain disability registers, facilitate access to welfare schemes, and coordinate school enrolment and retention. None of these mandates was being implemented in the study villages, consistent with Panda's (2011) analysis of local governance capacity deficits.

Parental dissatisfaction (68% combined) provides a demand-side lens on the same structural failure. Critically, interviews revealed that parental dissatisfaction was not primarily attitudinal—most parents expressed a desire for their children to receive education—but was driven by the tangible absence of enabling conditions: no specialist teachers, no adapted materials, and no peer acceptance facilitation. This distinction is crucial for policy design: the problem is one of supply-side inadequacy, not demand suppression per se.

The special educator deficit is the most immediately actionable finding. The RPWD Act mandates trained special educators in every government school catering to students with disabilities. A chronic mismatch between RCI-certified graduates and rural postings has produced urban concentration of specialist human resources (Sharma & Deppeler, 2005). Incentive structures—including rural posting allowances, career progression pathways, and pre-service exposure to rural contexts—require urgent redesign.

6. Recommendations

For Policy Makers

- More rights, functions and corresponding financial resources should be devolved to Gram Panchayats for increasing their role in inclusive education of differently abled children in villages. The constitutional mandate under the 73rd Amendment and the RPWD Act 2016 should be operationalised through clear rules and adequate resource transfers.
- There should be regular and mandatory training programmes for sarpanches and panches on inclusive education, disability rights, and the legal framework governing education for differently abled children. These programmes should be institutionalised as part of the induction process for newly elected panchayat representatives.
- A dedicated fund under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan or the RPWD Act should be created specifically for Gram Panchayat activities related to inclusive education — including awareness campaigns, infrastructure adaptation, transportation support, and scholarship provision for differently abled students.

For Gram Panchayats

- Gram Panchayats must ensure systematic coordination with both the block samiti (Panchayat Samiti) and zila parishad to cascade information about government schemes for differently abled children downward and to escalate identified needs upward effectively.
- The Gram Panchayat should constitute a dedicated Inclusive Education Sub-Committee within the existing School Management Committee structure, with specific responsibility for identifying, enrolling, and monitoring the educational progress of differently abled children in the village.
- Regular door-to-door surveys should be conducted at least twice a year specifically to identify all differently abled children in the village, determine their school enrolment and attendance status, understand barriers to education, and connect families with available government schemes and support services.
- The Gram Panchayat should institutionalise a scholarship or financial assistance scheme for differently abled students from panchayat funds, however modest, to signal community commitment to their educational inclusion and to reduce economic barriers to schooling.

For Schools

- School principals and teachers should proactively engage with Gram Panchayat members to build their understanding of what inclusive education means in practice, what the specific needs of differently abled students in the school are, and how the panchayat can constructively support the school's inclusive education efforts.
- Schools should develop Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for each differently abled child, and share relevant portions of these plans with Gram Panchayat representatives to enable informed and targeted support at the community level.
- Teachers should actively participate in Gram Sabha meetings when educational matters, including inclusive education, are on the agenda, ensuring that professional expertise informs community decision-making and that the ground-level reality of differently abled children's education is accurately communicated.

For Parents and Community

- Villagers should actively participate in Gram Sabha meetings where educational matters are discussed and should hold their elected Gram Panchayat representatives accountable for progress on inclusive education for differently abled children in the village.
- Community members should work to actively challenge and transform social stigma and negative attitudes toward differently abled individuals, creating an environment in which differently abled children feel welcomed, valued, and supported in pursuing their education.

7. Conclusion

This study presents empirical evidence from six rural villages of Haryana that collectively paint a sobering picture of the educational status of differently abled children. Seventy percent of community members remain unaware of inclusive education entitlements, panchayats have effectively abdicated their statutory responsibilities, parental satisfaction is critically low, and trained special educators are almost entirely absent from the schools serving these children. These are not isolated deficiencies but constitute a systemic failure of inclusive education governance in rural India.

The findings contribute to the growing body of evidence that legislative progress on disability rights in India has not been matched by implementation, particularly in rural areas. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track changes following policy interventions and extend analysis to secondary schooling and vocational education outcomes for DAC. Ultimately, the realisation of inclusive education for differently abled children in Haryana demands not merely better implementation of existing mandates but a fundamental reorientation of political will, resource allocation, and institutional accountability.

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