

Skilling and Livelihood Strategy for Persons with Disabilities

Focusing on Employment, Self-Employment, and Ecosystem Strengthening 2026-2030

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF), established in 1996, continues to pursue its mission of enabling disadvantaged communities to access quality education, employability skills, and sustainable livelihoods that help them realize their true potential. Over the past 29 years, DRF has impacted more than 5.6 lakh youth, including over 47,000 Persons with Disability (PwDs) through its flagship skilling programs in partnership with government, corporates, and civil society. Building on the achievements from LABS, LABS-PwD, and GROW-PwD, and the outcomes achieved under the 2020–25 PwD Skilling & Employment Strategy, DRF now sets forth its 2026–30 Strategy to accelerate inclusion, scale innovations, and create a barrier-free future for Persons with Disability in India.”

In 1999, when Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF) launched its first livelihood program – popularly known as the Livelihood Advancement Business School (LABS) – the vision was simple yet ambitious: to provide disadvantaged youth across India with the skills and confidence to secure dignified employment. As this program grew, we realised that while many young people found pathways to employment, a large section of Persons with Disability (PwDs) continued to remain excluded, often overlooked by mainstream skilling and livelihood systems.

In 2010, DRF responded by designing an exclusive program – LABS-PwD – to create equal access for youth with physical and speech & hearing disabilities. The early years taught us that with the right environment and tailored skilling, Persons with Disability could perform at par, often surpassing expectations. The program's success inspired

expansion across multiple geographies and disability categories.

By 2016, with inputs from alumni, employers, and community members, DRF evolved the model into GROW-PwD, shifting the focus towards Core Employability Skills. This brought significant outcomes, diverse placement opportunities and improved wages.

The 2020–25 strategy further built on this, scaling the program to 50+ locations, diversifying into 14 disability categories, introducing blended learning, and creating deeper employer engagement. Despite challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, DRF successfully adapted to digital skilling, strengthened partnerships, and continued to place thousands of Persons with Disability in mainstream jobs.

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As we look ahead to 2026–30, the context has clearly changed. With the increasing prominence of AI and digital technologies, it is essential to embed technology across all facets of skilling and livelihood initiatives. By integrating Artificial Intelligence and digital solutions throughout the skilling process—ranging from enhancing training delivery and accessibility, to providing guidance on career

pathways, fostering entrepreneurship, and tracking outcomes. DRF can ensure comprehensive and impactful inclusion of Persons with Disability within India's workforce.

Our continued focus will be on reaching rural People with Disability especially women with disabilities, ensuring they are not left behind.

This new strategy is both a continuation and a leap forward. Our primary objective is to design programmes and models that empower persons with disabilities to access emerging job opportunities. DRF strives to ensure that our initiatives remain relevant, effective, and scalable, enabling a greater number of individuals to benefit.

S.N o.	Type of disability	FY-2011 to 2020	FY-2021 to 2026	Total beneficiaries
1	Locomotor Disability	10303	19171	29474
2	Hearing impairment	5953	11559	17512
3	Hard of Hearing	42	2277	2319
4	Low Vision		1256	1256
5	Visually Impaired	141	380	521
6	CP(Cerebral Palsy)	45	371	416
7	Intellectual Disability		338	338
8	Dwarfism		200	200
9	Speech and Language Disability		76	76
10	Thalassemia		78	78
11	Multiple Disability		60	60
12	Specific Learning Disability		25	25
13	Autism Spectrum Disorder		14	14
14	Acid Attack Victims/(Survivors)		9	9
15	Others	109	236	345
	Grand Total	16593	36050	52643

CHALLENGES:

India's skilling and livelihood system for persons with disabilities (PwDs) faces major hurdles at every step—from education to job access and workplace inclusion to employer attitudes. These challenges are especially acute in rural areas, where most of the Persons with Disability live but support and awareness remain limited. As a result, they struggle to access relevant skills and meaningful jobs, often being left out of growth opportunities.

Socio-economic vulnerabilities

Disability is a significant development issue, as growing evidence demonstrates that persons with disabilities (PwDs) face a range of socio-economic disadvantages not experienced by those without disabilities. Living with a disability often leads to reduced social and economic well-being, including higher healthcare costs and increased emotional and psychological challenges. Despite progress in some areas, disability is still frequently viewed as incapacity, and People with Disability are often subjected to negative stereotypes, stigmatizing language, and societal stigma. This negative perception contributes to discriminatory treatment in educational settings and workplaces. Such attitudes are also prevalent within families, where they may be seen as lifelong burdens both financially and physically, and as sources of social embarrassment or stigma. Addressing these deep-rooted perceptions is crucial for promoting greater inclusion and improving the quality of life for People with Disability.

Limitations of census data in disability mapping

The data from Census 2011 has become outdated, particularly as types of disability is also revised after RPWD ACT 2016, migration, education, and labour market participation have evolved substantially in recent years, most notably after the Covid-19 pandemic. This shift highlights the inadequacy of relying solely on older census figures to understand the current realities faced by persons with disabilities (PwDs).

Analysis of existing data suggests that current official disability estimates fall below global standards, indicating potential systemic underestimation and insufficient disability mapping.(refer to reference 19) This gap hinders effective policy development and the implementation of targeted interventions for persons with disabilities nationwide.

Systemic and policy-level gaps

The implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 and its associated schemes remains inconsistent across the country, with insufficient enforcement, limited employer awareness, and a shortage of resources dedicated to accessibility and reasonable accommodations. Furthermore, the process of obtaining disability certification and accessing entitlements is often delayed and predominantly focused on urban areas; rural regions frequently lack qualified medical professionals and adequate infrastructure, resulting in delays or denials of certificates that are essential for availing various schemes and job opportunities. These systemic gaps directly hinder the participation of Persons with Disabilities in skilling programmes and secure meaningful employment, as many are unable to access the necessary support and documentation to enrol in courses or qualify for jobs. (refer to reference 8)

Education Barriers

Low foundational education creates a critical bottleneck for PwDs accessing skilling opportunities, as most vocational and advanced training programs require minimum secondary completion which only 20% of PwDs achieve (NSS 76th Round-Refer to reference 10) compared to 80% nationally. High school dropout, driven by inaccessible infrastructure, untrained teachers, and stigma leave 80% of PwDs unqualified for mainstream schemes like PMKVY or sector-specific courses, trapping them in low-skill informal work or unemployment. Without bridging this education gap, skilling investments yield low uptake and completion, perpetuating exclusion from market-relevant jobs.

Migration challenges

Around 69 percent of persons with disabilities in India live in rural areas (refer to reference 10) and for many of them, migrating to cities is constrained by disability-related mobility barriers, lack of accessible transport and housing, and the need for continuous family support and care. Low educational attainment among People with Disability further limits access to higher-value formal jobs, which keeps wages low and restricts career progression in urban labour markets. When People with Disability marry or take on family responsibilities, these low and stagnant earnings often make independent urban living financially unviable, leading to job exits and return migration to villages, reinforcing a cycle of disempowerment and exclusion from sustained formal employment.

Accessibility and infrastructure barriers

Physical inaccessibility in public infrastructure remains a major barrier for persons with disabilities (PwDs), hindering their participation in skilling, employment, and daily life. Public transport systems, and workplaces lack essential accessibility features such as ramps, lifts, and accessible toilets. Despite efforts like the Accessible India Campaign, gaps in infrastructure persist, especially outside metropolitan areas, limiting the impact of skilling and livelihood initiatives for millions of PwDs nationwide.

Digital tools used across the workplace for recruitment, on boarding, for daily tasks, organisation wide communication, and performance management often do not meet accessibility standards like screen reader compatibility or captions. This lack of accessible design prevents employees with visual, hearing, or cognitive disabilities from fully engaging in routine work, internal communications, and career development, thereby limiting their ability to upskill, participate fairly, or advance within the organisation.

Labour market and employer-side challenges

Many employers do not realise the full potential of persons with disabilities (PwDs). They often believe that they cannot work as well or safely as others, and are not aware that simple, affordable changes can help PwDs do their jobs. Employers are also often unaware

of their legal duties to include Persons with Disability. Because of these misunderstandings, very few are hired, and those who are usually get only a limited number of basic jobs. Very few organizations have written disability inclusive HR policies, accessible recruitment processes, or structured collaborations with NGOs/OPDs.

Quality of jobs and future of work

A high proportion of employed People with Disability are in low paid or informal jobs with limited career progression, benefits, or social protection, reinforcing economic vulnerability.

Within formal sector companies, persons with disabilities (PwDs) often remain concentrated in entry-level or low-skill roles, such as administrative support, data entry, or basic service functions. Many organisations lack structured career pathways, mentorship programmes, or policies to support the upskilling and promotion of employees with disabilities. As a result, they may find themselves stagnating in the same roles for years, with little chance to move up the corporate ladder.

People with Disability are largely confined to low-wage, low-growth jobs, undermining their long-term economic security and professional fulfilment.

AI Barriers in PwD Skilling and Livelihood

At present, the use of AI in skill development and hiring in India is growing quickly, but it often leaves out people with disabilities (PwDs). Most AI tools are not accessible, and their algorithms can be biased, which means People with Disability are excluded from many job platforms even though the RPwD Act promotes equal opportunities.

In the next five years, AI-based hiring methods such as automated resume screening and video interviews may include hidden biases that filter out candidates with disabilities, especially those who use assistive technology or have profiles that differ from the norm. Many AI-powered learning and work platforms are not designed for people who use screen readers, have unique ways of speaking, or face cognitive challenges.

As more routine jobs become automated, youth with Disability may lose work opportunities if upskilling options are not accessible. To address this, it is important to focus on regular checks for bias, designing tools to be inclusive, and involving People with Disability in developing and testing AI systems.

OPPORTUNITIES:

Persons with disabilities (PwDs) in India face barriers, but the current policy push, technology trends and employer incentives create a strong set of opportunities for skilling and livelihood over the next five years.

Policy and skilling ecosystem

The National Action Plan for Skill Development of People with Disability and the Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD) form a robust framework for creating disability-specific job roles, training, and certification tailored to industry needs. These initiatives, supported by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), and increasingly by State governments, expand accessible training centres often in partnership with NGOs and CSR programme making skilling more locally available for People with Disability. Importantly, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 promotes these efforts by mandating equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and reservation in employment, thereby increasing access to training and job placements for persons with disabilities across India.

Employment incentives and affirmative frameworks

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act mandates non-discrimination and reservation in government jobs, which creates a baseline of public sector opportunities for qualified People with Disability. The incentive scheme for private employers reimburses EPF/ESI contributions and parts of gratuity for employees with Disability, reducing hiring risk and making this group inclusive recruitment and financially attractive, including for apprenticeships. A growing number of large companies and industry bodies see

disability inclusion as part of ESG and diversity strategies, leading to explicit hiring drives, inclusive internship programmes for People with Disability-led enterprises.

Assistive technology for daily and professional independence

Assistive technologies like automated wheelchairs, screen readers, adaptive keyboards, magnifiers, advanced hearing aids, and software, speech-to-text, and text-to-speech empower People with Disability to handle activities of daily living, education, and work efficiently (refer to reference 12). These tools reduce physical and sensory barriers, allowing this group to operate computers, mobiles, and digital platforms seamlessly.

Such innovations help People with Disability to work in diverse roles by boosting performance and output, aligning with growing demands in IT, e-commerce, BPO jobs.



Inclusive infrastructure and accessibility push

National initiatives such as the Sugamya Bharat App signal increasing institutional commitment to

accessible and inclusive infrastructure. These platforms create opportunities to strengthen community engagement, feedback loops, and evidence-based advocacy, enabling organisations to complement public systems and accelerate last mile accessibility for persons with disabilities

Growing Emphasis on Skilling and Livelihood of Persons with Disabilities

Over the past decade, the skilling and livelihood ecosystem for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) in India has evolved from limited, role specific inclusion to a more structured and inclusive approach. Advancements in technology, growing awareness of workplace accommodations, and a stronger focus on diversity and inclusion have encouraged private sector employers to engage persons with a wider range of disabilities across multiple job roles.

This shift is supported by an enabling policy and institutional environment, led by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, with dedicated mechanisms such as the Skill Council for Persons with Disability (SCPwD) strengthening industry aligned skilling pathways. Combined with increasing employer interest driven by ESG commitments and talent needs, these developments present a significant opportunity to scale inclusive, outcome oriented skilling and livelihood initiatives for People with Disability through strong implementation and employer partnerships.

Opportunities for entrepreneurship and self-employment

Credit, subsidy and entrepreneurship support schemes routed through agencies like NHFDC, along with state-level livelihood missions, create opportunities for PwDs to start microenterprises, especially when combined with vocational and digital skills.

Over the next five years, growing e-commerce and platform-based services can enable entrepreneurs with disability to reach wider markets from rural or

small-town locations if supported with digital literacy, market linkages and credit linkages.

Gig Economy as an Emerging Livelihood Pathway

The gig economy in India is expanding rapidly, offering new pathways for flexible, technology-enabled work. According to Government of India and NITI Aayog projections, the number of gig workers in the country is expected to grow from about 7.7 million in 2020–21 to 23.5 million by 2029–30, forming around 4.1 % of total livelihoods and 6.7 % of non-agricultural employment by then. (refer to reference 14) This growth reflects broader shifts in work patterns driven by digitalisation, and evolving employer demands for task-based and remote work. In recognition of this trend, the Code on Social Security, 2020 legally defines gig work and mandates protections such as disability cover, accident insurance, and health and maternity benefits, underscoring the government’s intent to integrate gig work into national labour policy. (refer to reference 15)

The gig economy offers a vital new avenue for expanding livelihoods for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), moving beyond traditional jobs. Flexible and remote work options help overcome mobility and accessibility barriers, while inclusive platforms and worker protections can boost PwD participation in the workforce.

DRF’S SKILLING AND Livelihood STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

In response to the evolving challenges and emerging opportunities in the ecosystem, Dr. Reddy’s Foundation (DRF) has articulated a dedicated skilling and livelihoods strategy focused exclusively on Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The strategy recognises the inherent diversity within the PwD population and takes into account multiple intersecting factors, including the type of disability, age, educational attainment, socio-economic background, and the range of wage and self-employment. At its core, the strategy is anchored in the principle of enabling economic participation by equipping People with Disability with

skills that enhance their access to decent and sustainable livelihoods.

The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen DRF’s contribution to national priorities on disability inclusive skilling and livelihoods , while providing a clear framework to: (a) guide DRF’s future work across different disability groups; (b) sharpen and strengthen existing programmes and implementation approaches; (c) respond proactively to emerging opportunities in the employment and livelihood landscape; and (d) align more closely with the priorities of current and prospective partners, employers, and the broader skilling ecosystem.

Through this strategy, DRF seeks to advance inclusive economic growth and contribute meaningfully to Sustainable Development Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, by promoting the economic inclusion of Persons with Disabilities and ensuring that they are active participants in India’s development journey.

The strategy is anchored in three core pillars 1. Guiding Principles 2. Strategic Priorities, and 3. Key Strategy Components which together define the approach to skilling and livelihood for Persons with Disabilities.

1. PRINCIPLES

The four guiding principles outlined below inform programme design, partnerships, and implementation:

- 1. Promotion of Decent and Inclusive Employment:** Prioritising access to formal jobs in inclusive and mainstream work environments, supported by reasonable accommodation and workplace adjustments that enable persons with disabilities to perform effectively and with dignity.
- 2. Employer Engagement and Partnerships:** Engage with private sector employers to co-design, pilot, and scale inclusive skilling, employment, and workplace inclusion models that improve job access, retention, and career progression for persons with disabilities.
- 3. Facilitating financial Access:** Collaborate with banks, microfinance institutions, non-

banking financial companies, and other financial entities to facilitate access to credit and financial services for persons with disabilities, prioritizing collateral-free options through strategic linkages.

4. **Government Engagement and System Strengthening:** Engaging with government institutions to improve outreach, align with national skilling and disability priorities, and contribute to shared learning platforms that enable scale and systemic impact.
5. **Employer sensitization: Workplace sensitisation** involves creating awareness among employees about disability, encouraging peer-led support and establishing “buddy systems” in training and workplaces. This approach helps Persons with Disabilities by reducing stigma, fostering a more inclusive environment, and providing practical on-the-job support, making it easier for them to thrive and contribute effectively.

2. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. Corporate Outreach:

In recent years, there is a 30-40% increase in employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (refer to reference 18) due to the combined and sustained efforts of multiple stakeholders. Government policies and incentives, growing private sector engagement, and the active role of civil society organizations have together contributed to improved awareness, better preparedness of candidates, and increased willingness among employers to hire persons with disabilities.

This presents an opportunity to broaden the spectrum of disabilities represented in the workforce and existing employers can be supported to hire candidates with different or higher support disabilities through targeted workplace assessments, reasonable accommodations, and on the job trainings. In addition, structured employer sensitization workshops can be continued to address misconceptions, build confidence, and demonstrate the business case for disability inclusion, thereby motivating new employers to initiate inclusive hiring practices.

2. Focus on Rural Population

A significant share (69%) of India’s persons with disabilities live in rural areas (refer to reference 17), where barriers to mobility, education, training access, and formal employment are far more pronounced than in urban regions. Limited transport, low awareness, and minimal employer presence often result in rural People with Disability remaining excluded from mainstream livelihood pathways.

To address this gap, DRF will adopt a community based approach that brings training and enterprise support closer to communities through strengthened village level mobilization and convergence with Panchayats and government schemes.

The focus will be on creating local livelihood opportunities, building rural enterprise ecosystems, and ensuring that rural People with Disability have meaningful pathways to income generation within or near their own communities. Through this approach, DRF aims to make rural inclusion a core pillar of the GROW PwD programme and significantly expand the participation and success of rural learners in the years ahead.

3. Digital training model:

One of the biggest shift in training design or model under the DRF Grow PWD program during the last 5 years has been the introduction and extensive usage of digital training. Though this was introduced under extreme circumstances (during COVID), this model gained considerable attention and popularity among the training aspirants. Though it was largely preferred by the rural aspirants, it was also realized that the digital mode of training could not ensure the desired training outcome in most cases. While the program continues to offer digital learning options for youth, a self-learning app Skillfy developed by DRF offers more than 277 courses in 13 languages by 2025. Therefore, the major focus in the next 5 years would be to further strengthen this app in to a widely publicized app at all level with courses in almost all recognized Indian languages enabling self-learning and self-development of People even in the remotest of areas.

Substantial utilization of AI will also be ensured under digital training model in terms of content development, job mapping, career guidance,

establishing robust tracking and monitoring mechanisms.

4. Community outreach:

Community outreach is essential for transforming social attitudes, increasing participation in skills programs, and expanding employment opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (PwD). While government and civil society have made efforts, significant awareness gaps remain across both urban and rural areas. Recent studies suggest a higher prevalence of People with Disability than reported in the 2011 Census, indicating considerable unmet needs. To address these gaps, a targeted approach will be used: disaggregated data (by disability, age, gender, location) will identify priority areas, and practical, locally delivered sessions for families and caregivers will highlight employment pathways, reasonable accommodations, and available support schemes. Together, these approaches aim to strengthen mobilisation, inclusion, and sustained engagement of People with Disability in skilling and livelihood initiatives.

5. Deepening Reach Across Diverse Disability Groups

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act recognises 21 types of disabilities (Refer Annexure A) in India. Over the past five years, DRF has consciously worked with 14 disability groups, achieving measurable progress across several of them. However, participation and outcomes remain limited for certain underrepresented groups, including persons with intellectual and multiple disabilities, autism, cerebral palsy, dwarfism, and acid attack survivors, where skilling and livelihood pathways are more complex and less developed.

As a strategic priority, DRF will expand the scope and depth of its interventions for these under represented disability groups by adapting training models, strengthening support mechanisms, and identifying suitable livelihood pathways. The use of **AI-enabled tools** will support for better assessment, job mapping, and customisation of training and support needs.

6. Strengthening Workforce Participation among Working Age People with Disability

Prioritising the **18–40 age group** aligns strongly with workforce entry, career development, and long-term economic independence for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Evidence from the 2011 Census and subsequent surveys indicates a high concentration of People with Disability within the working-age population, particularly in the **20–39 years** range (Refer to reference 16). Focusing resources on this cohort enables stronger employment outcomes and improved return on investment for skilling initiatives.

Under this strategy, formal employment pathways will primarily target Aspirants with Disability aged 18–30 years, with flexibility to extend participation up to 35 years to include deserving and motivated aspirants. Self-employment and enterprise support, which has emerged as a key programme component, will cater People with Disability to up to 40 years the age, recognising diverse livelihood needs and readiness levels. Across both pathways, enhancing the participation of women with disabilities within this age group will be a cross-cutting priority.

AI will act as an enabling layer for designing platforms for market linkages, job mapping and market analysis and supporting livelihood outcomes for Persons with Disabilities.

7. Enabling Career Progression through Reskilling and Upskilling:

Reskilling and upskilling are critical to ensuring sustained employment, career mobility, and income growth for Persons with Disabilities. Evidence from global and regional labour studies shows that many People with Disability remain concentrated in low-skill, entry-level roles with limited progression, leading to wage gaps and higher employment vulnerability. Targeted skill enhancement, combined with reasonable accommodations and post-placement support, has been shown to significantly improve job retention and access to higher-value roles.

In response, the organisation will implement structured reskilling and upskilling pathways through on-the-job training, and post-placement coaching to enable career advancement across sectors.

8. Promoting Self-Employment and Micro-Enterprise:

Self-employment and micro-enterprises offer viable livelihood options for Persons with Disabilities, especially in contexts where formal wage employment is limited. Many of the aspirants are engaged in informal work; structured entrepreneurship support can help transform these efforts into sustainable and dignified livelihoods. Effective self-employment initiatives require a combination of business skills training, access to markets and finance, and ongoing mentoring.

In line with this, DRF initiated its self-employment programme for Persons with Disabilities in 2022 as a pilot in select districts of Telangana. Based on feasibility and need assessments, the programme will be scaled to other operational states. As the initiative expands, AI enabled tools will be explored to support business planning, basic financial management, and market access, enabling entrepreneurs with Disability to strengthen decision-making and improve enterprise sustainability.

Strategic Exclusions and Deliberate Non-Focus Areas

To maximise social return on investment, ensure scalability, and maintain a clear outcomes focus, DRF has identified the following **five priority areas that will remain outside the scope of this strategy period**:

1. **Capital-Intensive and High-Infrastructure Training Models**

DRF will not invest in skilling approaches that require heavy infrastructure or high capital expenditure (e.g., manufacturing units or advanced IT laboratories), where cost-effectiveness and scalability are limited.

2. **Low-Relevance or Obsolete Skill Trades**
Training programs that do not align with current or emerging labour-market demand, or that offer limited employment or income potential, will not be pursued.

3. **Charity-Led, Welfare-Only, or One-Time Interventions**

DRF will not undertake charity-driven activities, one-time cash assistance, or welfare-only support that does not lead to sustainable skills, employment, or livelihood outcomes.

4. **Direct Medical, Therapeutic, or Rehabilitation-Services**

Clinical care, rehabilitation, and therapeutic

services fall outside DRF's core mandate. The strategy will focus on post-rehabilitation skilling, employability, and economic inclusion.

5. **Standalone Advocacy, Awareness, or Research Without Employment Linkages**

DRF will not prioritise advocacy, or research initiatives unless they are directly linked to skilling design, employer engagement, or measurable employment and livelihood outcomes.

These strategic exclusions allow DRF to deploy donor resources efficiently, deepen impact within priority segments, and maintain strong accountability for employment and livelihood outcomes.

Strategic Component 01: Inclusive Skill Development and Employment for Persons with Disabilities

Program Objective

To enable persons with disabilities, across 15 identified disability categories, to acquire relevant, market-aligned skills and transition into sustainable wage employment opportunities. The component focuses on building core employability skills and support needs for successful integration into full-time jobs.

Key Strategic components:

- Engage parents, caregivers, and disability networks to enhance awareness of skill development and employment pathways, and to strengthen support systems that enable participation and retention.
- Collaborate with specialised institutions, expert agencies, and sector partners for supporting in designing methodologies and technical inputs.
- Identify suitable trades and job roles through functionality mapping and job analysis, ensuring alignment between individual abilities and workplace requirements.
- Deploy certified disability professionals and trained facilitators to design and deliver customised training strategies that address varied learning needs across disability types.

- Strengthen self-advocacy, communication, and workplace behaviour of all aspirants trained at DRF to support effective participation in training and employment settings.
- Support the creation of enabling and inclusive work environments that allow persons with disabilities to perform job optimally.
- Promote on-the-job training, apprenticeships, to enhance practical skills, work ethics, and smooth transition into employment.
- Build employer capacity through sensitisation and guidance on inclusive practices, communication strategies, and reasonable accommodations to improve hiring and retention outcomes.
- Ensure training centres accessibility to include with different disabilities.

Preferred Delivery Model:

This component will be implemented through donor-supported dedicated training centres, complemented by online and blended learning modes to expand reach and flexibility. The programme will also explore college-based and community-led delivery models to improve accessibility, enable local partnerships, and support scalable implementation.

Strategic Component 2: Self-Employment and Enterprise Development for Persons with Disabilities

Program Objective

To nurture Persons with disabilities to become self-sufficient with an increased business income and build business development and like skills. The component focuses on enhancing income generation capabilities through market-linked trades and structured handholding support.

Key Strategic Components

- Assess interests, functional abilities, risk appetite, family support, and family income to determine suitability for self-employment and appropriate enterprise pathways.
- Engage families and community stakeholders to support enterprise operations, mobility, customer interaction, and continuity where required.

- Support beneficiaries to acquire enterprise-oriented skills aligned with local market demand and support for their business scale up.
- Build core competencies such as self-advocacy, communication, financial literacy, customer engagement, and basic enterprise management to support independent livelihoods.
- Facilitate access to essential tools, equipment, raw materials, and service providers required to operationalise self-employment activities.
- Enable linkages to local buyers, aggregators, platforms, fairs, and digital marketplaces to improve product visibility and income stability.
- Provide end-to-end handholding during scale up phase and support further with credit linkage to expand the business

Preferred Delivery Model:

The self-employment component will be implemented using a district/ cluster and saturation approach, focusing on intensive coverage within selected districts to build strong local ecosystems for PwD entrepreneurship. The programme will be delivered in partnership with local government institutions and grassroots NGOs, leveraging existing schemes, market linkages, and community networks to ensure, efficiency, and long-term sustainability.

Strategic Component 3: System Engagement and Ecosystem Strengthening for Inclusive Employment

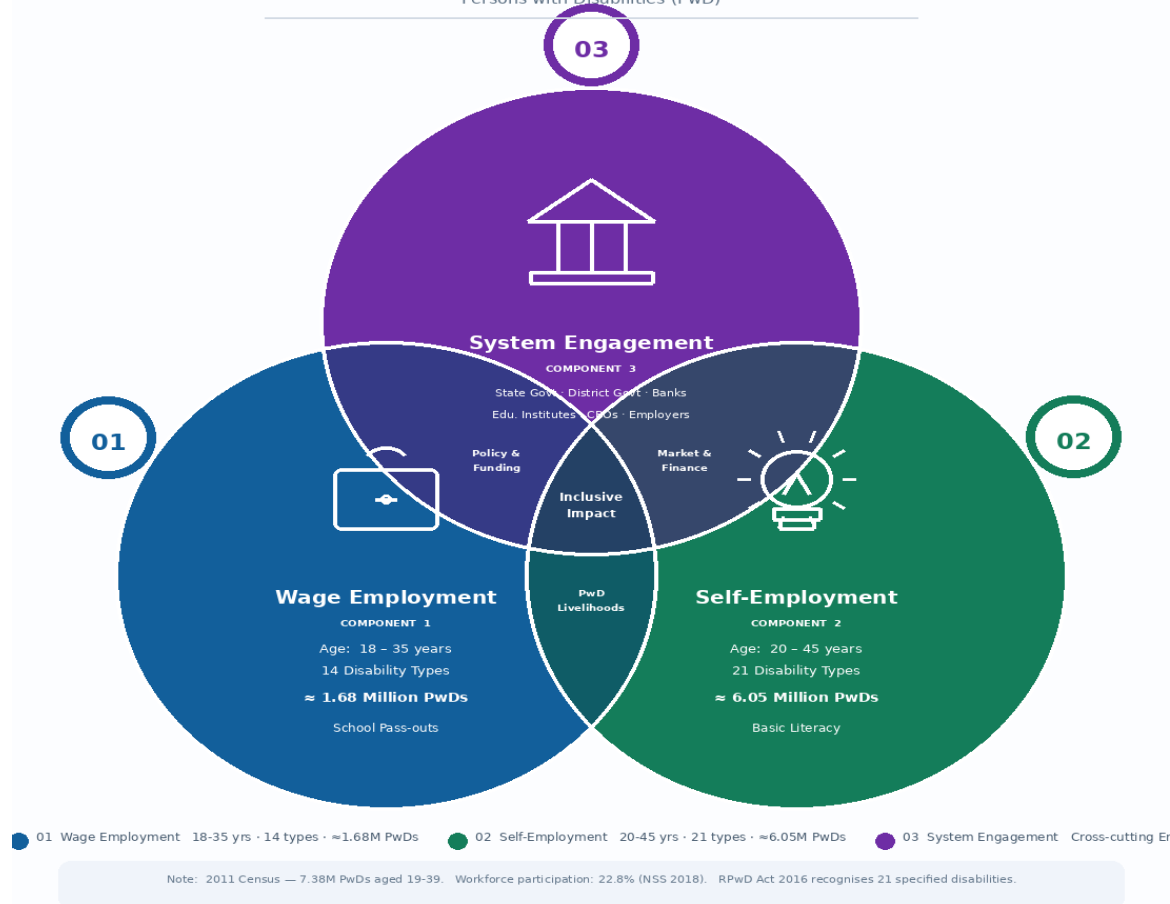
Program Objective: To strengthen the enabling ecosystem for persons with disabilities by influencing systems, practices, and stakeholders to become more inclusive, responsive, and employment ready. This component focuses on building capacities across institutions, employers, and sensitisation, and knowledge exchange to support sustainable and scalable inclusion of persons with disabilities in livelihoods.

Key Strategic Components

- Conduct structured sensitisation workshops for employers and service providers to improve understanding of disability inclusion,

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communication practices, and workplace inclusion.

- Undertake disability-focused skill gap studies, job mapping exercises, and labour market assessments to inform programme design, employer engagement, and policy dialogue.
- Support job mapping and role analysis across sectors to identify suitable employment and enterprise opportunities for different disability types and functional abilities.
- Conduct accessibility audits of training centres, workplaces, and public-facing systems to identify gaps and recommend practical, cost-effective improvements.
- Facilitate basic sign language and inclusive communication sessions for employers, trainers, frontline staff, and service providers to improve workplace integration and retention.
- Share learning and best practices through publishing, workshops, conferences, sector

platforms, and policy forums to influence broader disability inclusion efforts.

- Engage with government bodies, industry associations, skilling councils, academic institutions, organizations and experts working with different types and disability networks to mainstream inclusive employment practices.
- Mainstreaming assistive tools such as advanced screen readers, voice to text systems and mobility solutions to enable performance parity across individuals.

Preferred delivery model:

This component will be implemented through strategic partnerships with government departments, industry bodies, academic institutions, and disability organisations, using workshops, studies and audits as key delivery mechanisms. Activities will be undertaken at district, state, and national levels, leveraging existing platforms and forums to maximise reach, influence, and cost-effectiveness.

PARTNERSHIPS:

We recognise that the successful implementation of this strategy is dependent on strong and sustained partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. This strategy will enable us to deepen collaboration with existing partners and build new strategic partnerships to expand reach and impact.

Through this approach, we aim to strengthen engagement with government at both state and national levels, contributing to the design and implementation of inclusive policies, plans, and schemes for persons with disabilities. We will also collaborate with private organisations to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream employment and livelihoods.

In addition, we will partner with expert organisations with proven experience in implementing solutions for specific disabilities, to support the adoption of appropriate assistive technology solutions and to conduct accessibility audits, thereby enabling accessible, inclusive, and barrier-free training and workplace environments

for persons with diverse disabilities. Furthermore, we will collaborate with banks P2P platforms and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) to facilitate credit linkage facilities for persons with disabilities.

CONCLUSION:

This strategy articulates our long-term commitment to strengthening inclusive skilling and livelihood ecosystems for Persons with Disabilities, with a clear focus on employability, self-employment, and systemic change. Over the next five years, this strategy will empower 50000 People with Disabilities and guide our efforts to contribute to system strengthening across disability categories through evidence-based advocacy, programmatic learning, and sustained

engagement with government, employers, and civil society.

An annual review will be undertaken to assess progress against intended outcomes, respond to shifts in the skilling and livelihood ecosystem, and incorporate learnings from program implementation. This review will also help us evaluate the effectiveness of emerging approaches, partnerships, and delivery models, ensuring that the strategy remains relevant, responsive, and impactful.

We look forward to working closely with government at national and state levels, corporate CSR partners, foundations, employers, community-based organizations, and NGOs to collectively advance skilling, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Through these partnerships, we aspire to contribute meaningfully to inclusive economic growth and enable Persons with Disabilities to participate fully and productively in the workforce.

Annexure A:

S. No.	Type of Disability (as per RPwD Act, 2016)	Functional Nature / Key Considerations (with Limitations)	Training & Employability Implications	Sectors & Example Companies	Assistive Technologies / Workplace Adaptations
1	Blindness	Total loss of vision; limitation in visual perception and navigation.	Requires screen-reader compatible content, tactile learning aids; suitable for tele-calling, digital services, teaching, and counselling roles.	IT/ITeS (TCS, Wipro, Infosys), BFSI (HDFC Bank, SBI), E-commerce (Amazon, Flipkart), NGOs (Enable India).	Screen readers (JAWS, NVDA), Braille displays, tactile floor guides, audio feedback tools, accessible digital training materials.
2	Low Vision	Partial visual impairment; limitation in reading printed text and distance viewing.	Use of magnifiers and adaptive devices; well-suited for IT, admin, and service roles with accessible digital tools.	IT (Tech Mahindra, Cognizant), Admin (TCS), BFSI (HDFC Life), Government offices (CSC centres).	Magnifiers, high-contrast monitors, large-print materials, screen zoom software (ZoomText).
3	Leprosy Cured	Residual physical limitation; may affect hand movement or grip.	Minor restrictions; adaptable to manufacturing, tailoring, retail, and service roles.	Retail (Reliance Retail), Tailoring Units (local SHGs), MSMEs, Handicraft cooperatives.	Ergonomic work tools, adaptive stitching machines, soft-handled tools.
4	Hearing Impairment (Deaf and Hard of Hearing)	Hearing loss impacting verbal communication; limitation in sound-based learning.	Needs sign language trainers, visual content; strong employability in retail, hospitality, logistics, and technical trades.	Hospitality (Lemon Tree Hotels), Retail (Reliance Smart), Logistics (Delhivery), Manufacturing (Tata Motors).	Sign language interpreters, captioned training videos, visual alarms, chat-based communication tools.
5	Speech and Language Disability	Impaired speech ability; limitation in verbal communication.	Focus on non-verbal communication roles, back-office, IT, and assembly-line work.	Back-office (Infosys BPM), E-commerce (Amazon warehouses), IT maintenance (HCL).	Chat-based systems, voice-to-text converters, messaging-based workflows.
6	Locomotor Disability	Restricted limb movement; limitation in mobility or physical tasks.	Requires accessible premises; suitable for desk-based roles, telecalling,	IT (IBM India, TCS), BFSI (ICICI Bank), Retail (BigBasket), Government jobs.	Wheelchair-accessible infrastructure, adjustable desks, remote work

			and design-related jobs.		setups, accessible transport.
7	Dwarfism	Short stature and limited reach; may face accessibility challenges in workspace design.	Customised workstations; suitable for retail, back-office, and self-employment.	Retail (Reliance Fresh), Admin roles (State departments), Entrepreneurship (MSME schemes).	Custom furniture, adjustable counters, reachable shelves, ergonomic chairs.
8	Intellectual Disability	Below-average intellectual functioning; limitation in complex reasoning and problem-solving.	Needs simplified instructions and job coaching; employable in structured, repetitive tasks.	Hospitality (Lemon Tree Hotels), Retail (Café Arpan, Vindhya E-Infomedia), Packaging units.	Visual job aids, structured task lists, job coach supervision, pictorial instructions.
9	Mental Illness	Affects mood, thinking, or behavior; may cause limitation in stress handling or concentration.	Supportive environments, flexible hours; suitable for creative and analytical roles with counselling support.	IT (TCS, Infosys), NGOs (The Banyan), BFSI (Axis Bank).	Employee Assistance Programs (EAP), flexible scheduling, stress management apps, peer support.
10	Autism Spectrum Disorder	Social and communication challenges; difficulty adapting to change or sensory overload.	Best in predictable, structured work environments; roles in data entry, design, or testing.	IT (SAP Labs India, Amazon India), Design (Adobe India), Data entry firms.	Noise-cancelling headphones, task automation tools, structured workflow apps, sensory-friendly spaces.
11	Cerebral Palsy	Motor coordination challenges; limitation in hand movement or posture.	Requires assistive devices; adaptable to digital, creative, or desk-based roles.	IT (Infosys, Wipro), Graphic Design (Freelance platforms), NGOs (APD India).	Adaptive keyboards, joystick mouse, speech recognition software, adjustable seating.
12	Muscular Dystrophy	Progressive muscle weakness; limitation in stamina and physical strength.	Remote or flexible roles; digital, administrative, and entrepreneurial work suited.	Remote IT (TCS iON, Tech Mahindra), Customer Service (WNS), Content creation roles.	Power wheelchairs, speech-to-text tools, ergonomic workstations, remote working tools.

13	Chronic Neurological Conditions (e.g., Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's)	Gradual loss of motor control; limitation in movement and endurance.	Requires ergonomic support, flexible schedules; roles in content, analysis, or mentoring.	Education (NIIT), IT (Cognizant), Consulting (KPMG India).	Ergonomic keyboards, fatigue management apps, flexible hours, adaptive seating.
14	Specific Learning Disabilities	Difficulty in reading, writing, comprehension; limitation in academic performance.	Needs adapted training material; roles in hands-on and visual-based sectors.	Retail (BigBazaar), Manufacturing (Hero MotoCorp), Hospitality (IHCL).	Text-to-speech software, visual learning modules, audio-based training materials.
15	Multiple Disabilities including Deaf-Blindness	Combined sensory and/or physical challenges; limitations in communication and mobility.	Needs assistive technology, interpreter support; suitable for crafts, data entry, and guided production work.	NGOs (Enable India, Sense India), Data entry (Vindhya E-Infomedia).	Braille-based devices, screen readers with haptic feedback, mobility canes, interpreters.
16	Acid Attack Victims	Physical disfigurement and trauma; limitation in self-confidence and social participation.	Needs psychosocial support and confidence-building; employable in customer service, digital, or creative sectors.	Retail (Nykaa, Reliance Trends), BPOs (Concentrix), NGOs (Sheroes Café).	Flexible grooming policies, counselling support, adaptive workspaces.
17	Parkinson's Disease	Affects movement and coordination; limitation in fine motor control.	Requires flexible work timing; employable in consulting, teaching, and digital content roles.	Education (IGNOU), Consulting (PwC India), IT (HCL).	Voice-assisted software, motion-control devices, adjustable mouse and keyboards.
18	Haemophilia	Blood clotting disorder; limitation in performing physically risky tasks.	Needs low-physical-strain environments; suitable for desk-based or hybrid work.	IT (TCS), BFSI (ICICI Prudential), BPO (Genpact).	Health monitoring apps, ergonomic office setups, medical leave flexibility.
19	Thalassemia	Blood disorder causing fatigue; limitation in endurance for long working hours.	Suited for part-time or knowledge roles; needs periodic medical flexibility.	IT (Wipro), Education (Online training firms), Government jobs (clerical).	Health monitoring tools, rest spaces, medical flexibility provisions.

20	Sickle Cell Disease	Blood disorder with pain episodes; limitation in physical activity and stamina.	Requires rest flexibility; roles in IT, finance, and creative sectors feasible.	Finance (HDFC Bank), IT (TCS), NGOs (NTR Trust).	Ergonomic seating, flexible work hours, access to medical rooms.
21	Multiple Sclerosis	Chronic neurological condition; limitation in balance, stamina, and fine motor control.	Hybrid/remote work ideal; employable in IT-enabled and analytical roles.	IT (Infosys, Deloitte India), Analytics (Fractal Analytics), HR roles.	Voice control tools, fatigue tracking apps, hybrid work models, adaptive devices.

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