



**Challenges faced by
children with mobility
impairment**

Inadequate access to school facilities



Challenges faced by children
with physical disabilities



As per a UN report of 2015,
**34% of children with
disabilities** in India are out
of school.



Challenges faced by children
with physical disabilities



Because of the lack of a physical barrier-free and disabled friendly environment, **children on wheelchairs are often excluded** from mainstream schooling.

Private schools v/s Government schools

Even **private and inclusive schools** are reluctant to admit children with severe physical disabilities.

Government schools provide students with physical disabilities admission, however, they do not have the adequate infrastructure or resources (such as special educators) in order to accommodate them .





Impact

Lack of inclusion in school results in children dropping out of school.

It has been observed that girls with disability drop out of school after 6th standard due to inaccessible toilets

When a child with disability is denied being in an inclusive education system, it highly undermines the child's confidence.

Since true learning does not happen only in classrooms, but also in social interactions with other children, children with physical disabilities are denied of forming relationships with other children and their learning is hampered.



In order to experience as other students, a child should be able to access all the school facilities such as :

- School transport (Bus, vans)
- Classrooms
- Toilets
- Computer Labs
- Science Labs
- Libraries
- Sports facilities and Playground
- Extra-curricular Facilities (Theatre, Stage, etc.)



Challenges faced by children
with physical disabilities

“In my school, library had lifts. Whenever there was a power cut I had to stay back in the class as there were no ramps. I fared much better than those school children who have never gone to library due to lack of accessibility”

Ummul Khair, wheelchair user

“His classroom is on the third floor, but toilets are on the ground. So I carry him up and down the stairs four times a day - once in the morning and evening, and during lunch time to take him to the toilet,”

Farhana, Mother of a 10 year old CP child



Challenges faced by children
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School transport is not accessible.

Children with physical disability face a lot of problem coming to school. Parents often end up taking private transport. **This is an additional cost** as private transport cost much more than the public ones. Disabled people experience additional costs in most areas of everyday life, from devices essential for independence to transportation.”

Smitha Sadasivan, Disability Rights Alliance India



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This is Vineesh's story...

Vineesh was a playful child until 4. He was enrolled in a government school close to the house with all the other children in the slum. Vineesh's father is an auto-rickshaw driver. At age 5, Vineesh started experiencing unbearable pain in his legs after any physical activity. He preferred lying in his bed and even avoided going out. His condition deteriorated quickly and soon before the parents could realise, he was not able to stand up independently.



“I picked and dropped him to school, took him for physiotherapy in the evening and spent all the spare time playing in the house with him. It was very difficult for me to keep going back to school after every few hours for him.”

For 4-5 year, Vineesh’s father used to make him sit in the class and come during lunch time to feed him and assist him with his daily chores.

He tried requesting the school to engage someone to assist with the same but the school refused as they were short staffed.

“His height and weight was also increasing and it was a challenge to physically lift him and carry him through the narrow isles of the slum to get to the place where the auto was parked. Since by now , even his arms had become weak, he could not wheel the wheelchair independently”

By age 9 , Vineesh was unable to walk at all and his spinal chord had curved a bit, which impacted his ability to sit.

The school was completely inaccessible and while sensitive to his needs, there was little they could do. The school had made it very clear that as long as the parents took care of all the additional responsibilities which came with Vineesh’s condition , he could continue

“I was spending all the time in the school tending to his needs. I sat by his side and even took down notes as he was unable to write. He needed frequent breaks and back massage as it was painful to sit for so long. He was good in studies and we did not want to take away this one thing from him which he liked”

The principal agreed to shift all Vineesh’s classes to the ground floor which was a help **but he could not participate in any of the co-curricular activities due to inaccessible premise.**

Though the washroom in the school was more spacious than the one in his slum , **Vineesh found it embarrassing to be lifted physically and preferred to not go at all.**



Sadly, by age 12 , the whole rigour of going to school and sitting through classes **took a toll on his health and Vineesh decided to discontinue school.**

He now spends all the time in his tiny room in the slum. His parents take him out during weekends but it is also difficult to for them to do that.

“My son would not have discontinued school if the following was available”

1. **Accessible vehicle to pick and drop** my son from home
2. **Accessible school premise** including washrooms, playground , sports facility for children with special needs
3. **Support staff who can assist him** as per his need – assistance in taking down notes , other classroom activities, etc.
4. **Provision for physiotherapy during school hours.** Even half an hour session would have helped him in sitting through the class longer.
5. **Accessible Medical Room** where my son could rest if needed.
6. **Flexible schedule enabling** him to study from home and come to school basis his condition

Some possible solution ideas:

1. **An affordable mechanism** that would allow a student who are wheelchair users to overcome the challenge of lack of ramps. (E.g. Wheelchairs that can climb stairs, a mobile ramp that could be fixed on to the wheelchair, etc.)
2. **A contraption that can be laid on top of the steps** of vehicle/staircase which could extend as a ramp. E.g. A step which can be elongated into a ramp with a press of a button,
3. Not only considering the physical environment but **also the cost of having caretakers** and providing interventions such as a special attendant in each school or introducing a buddy system where other students can act as caretakers for the child.

Helpful Readings

- Children with disabilities remain excluded in mainstream schools
<https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/children-disabilities-remain-excluded-mainstream-schools-here-s-why-83950>
- Schools not so disabled friendly
<https://www.dnaindia.com/academy/report-schools-not-disabled-friendly-survey-2285265>

