



PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
(Research Unit)
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India



World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD)
Focusing on 'Inclusive Quality Education for all'
(Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment)

April 02, 2022

Introduction



Since 2007, after the declaration in the UN General assembly, April 2 is recognized internationally and celebrated as **World Autism Awareness Day (WAAD)** and the month of April as autism awareness month every year.¹

WAAD highlights the need to help and improve the quality of life of those with '[Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)' (ASD) so that they can lead full and meaningful lives as an integral part of society.

World Autism Awareness Day (2022)

This year's World Autism Awareness Day observance will focus on – **Inclusive Quality Education for all**². The theme is intrinsically linked with the focus of last year's WAAD observance, "Inclusion in the Workplace".

Over the past decade, major progress has been made towards increasing access to education generally, as well as for persons with autism specifically. However, in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, a majority of countries announced the temporary closure of schools, impacting more than 90 per cent of students worldwide. The disruption in learning caused by the pandemic has reversed years of progress and has exacerbated inequalities in education.

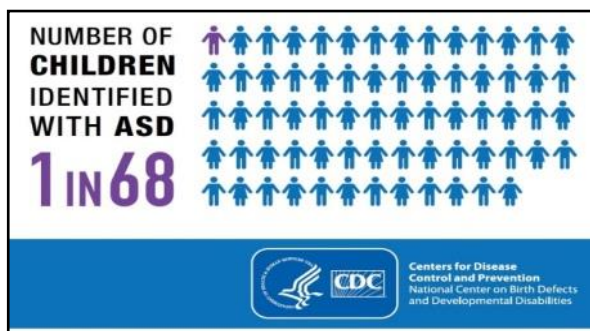
¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1715199>

² <https://www.un.org/en/observances/autism-day>

The [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) adopted by world leaders at the United Nations in 2015 provide a blueprint for addressing the major challenges facing the world. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, as the foundation for improving people's lives and reducing inequalities. In this respect, this year's theme, inclusive education is the key to the transformative promise of the Sustainable Development Goals.

What is Autism or Autism Spectrum Disorder?³

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) refers to [a group of neurodevelopment disorders that affect how people communicate, learn, behave, and socially interact](#). People may have repetitive and characteristic patterns of behavior or narrow interests. Not everyone who has ASD may have these symptoms, which are usually present from early childhood and affect daily functioning. Both children and adults can have ASD.



The term “spectrum” refers to the wide range of symptoms, skills, and levels of disability in functioning that can occur in people with ASD. Some children and adults with ASD are fully able to perform all activities of daily living while others require substantial support to perform basic activities. Learning and thinking can range from extremely gifted to needing severe help.

The Government of India has been playing a pivotal role to bring persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) into the mainstream by implementing various schemes/initiatives.

Government Departments/Trusts working for the Welfare of people with ASD

- **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities**

The [Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities](#) in the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment facilitates empowerment of the persons with disabilities, who as per Census 2011 are 2.68 crore and are 2.21 percent of the total population of the Country. These include persons with Visual, Hearing, Speech & Locomotive disability, Mental Retardation, Mental Illness, Multiple Disability and any other disabilities.

- **The National Trust**

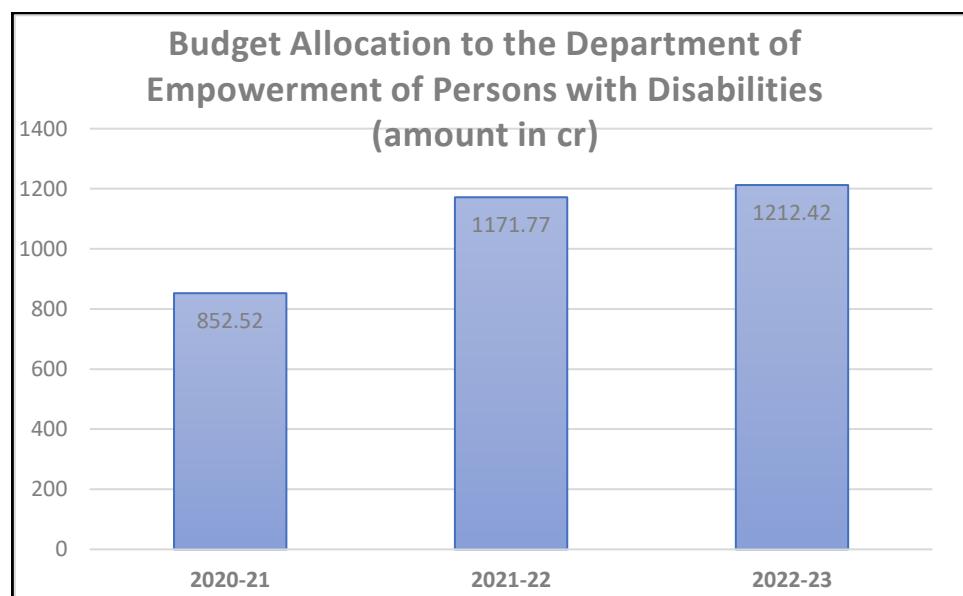
[The National Trust](#) is a statutory body set up under the “[National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities](#)” Act (Act 44 of 1999).

The National Trust has been set up to discharge two basic duties- legal and welfare. Legal duties are discharged through Local Level Committees and providing Legal Guardianship. Welfare duty is discharged through the **Schemes implemented by the Registered Organisations**. The activities of the National Trust inter-alia include training, awareness and capacity building programmes and shelter, care giving and empowerment. **The National**

³ <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/conditions/autism/index.cfm>

Trust is committed to facilitate equal opportunities, protection of rights and full participation of persons with disabilities (Divyangjan), covered under the Act.

Budget Allocation (2020-21 to 2022-23): Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities⁴



Government Measures in bringing people with ASD in the mainstream⁵

- **Gharaunda (Group Home for Adults)**

The objective of Gharaunda scheme is to provide an assured home and minimum quality of care services throughout the life of the persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities. The scheme also facilitates establishment of requisite infrastructure for the assured care system throughout the country, encourage assisted living with independence and dignity and provide care services on a sustainable basis.

As on 31.03.2021, 50 Gharaunda Centers have been sanctioned benefiting 1275 beneficiaries in the country with an amount of Rs.1445.23 Lakh released.⁶

- **Nirmaya (Health Insurance Scheme)**

The objective of Niramaya scheme is to provide affordable Health Insurance to persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities. All enrolled beneficiaries will get a health insurance cover of up to Rs. 1.0 lakh as defined in the chart OPD treatment including the medicines, pathology, diagnostic tests, etc,⁷ Regular

⁴ <https://enabled.in/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Union-budget-2022-persons-with-disabilities-sbe94.pdf>

⁵ <http://pedneuroaiims.org/pdf2015/autism-booklet.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.thenationaltrust.gov.in/auth/agm.php>

⁷ <https://www.thenationaltrust.gov.in/content/innerpage/our-schemes-at-a-glance.php>

Medical checkup for non-ailing disabled, Dental Preventive Dentistry, Surgery to prevent further aggravation of disability, Non- Surgical/ Hospitalization, Corrective Surgeries for existing Disability including congenital disability, Ongoing Therapies to reduce impact of disability and disability related complications, Alternative Medicine and Transportation costs.

At present, the scheme is being implemented through M/s. Oriental Insurance Co. Ltd.⁸

- **Disha (Early Intervention and School Readiness Scheme for 0-10 years)**

This is an early intervention and school readiness scheme for children in the age group of 0-10 years with the four disabilities covered under the National Trust Act and aims at setting up Disha Centres for early intervention for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) through therapies, trainings and providing support to family members. The project holders provide day-care facilities to PwDs (Divyangjan) for at least 4 hours in a day (between 8 am and 6 pm) along with age specific activities. There is a Special Educator or Early Intervention Therapist, Physiotherapist or Occupational Therapist and Counsellor for PwDs (Divyangjan) along with Caregiver and Ayas in the centre.



As on 31.03.2021, 115 Disha Centers have been sanctioned benefiting 3588 beneficiaries in the country with an amount of Rs. 1199.61 Lakh released.⁹

- **VIKAAS (Day Care Scheme for 10+ years)**

This is a Day care scheme for Divyangjan attaining the age of 10 years and above, primarily to expand the range of opportunities available to a person with disability for enhancing interpersonal and vocational skills as they are on a transition to higher age groups. The centre offers care giving support to Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) during their time in the Vikaas centre. In addition, it also helps in supporting family members of the Persons with disabilities covered under the National Trust Act to get some time during the day to fulfil other responsibilities.

As on 31.03.2021, 124 Vikaas Centers have been sanctioned benefiting 5665 beneficiaries in the country with an amount of Rs.1987.41 lakh released.

- **The Scheme of Assistance to Differently Abled Persons for Purchase/Fitting of Aids/Appliances (ADIP)**

The ADIP Scheme is in operation since 1981 with the main objective to assist the needy disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and

⁸ <https://www.thenationaltrust.gov.in/auth/agm.php>

⁹ <https://www.thenationaltrust.gov.in/auth/agm.php>

psychological rehabilitation by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhance their economic potential.

- **Online Service Delivery Rehabilitation Programmes**

[The National Institute for the Empowerment of the Persons with Multiple Disabilities \(NIEPMD\)](#) has initiated online service delivery rehabilitation programmes including both therapeutic, curricular and co-curricular activities for persons with [autism keeping in view the pandemic situation](#).

- **[Samarth \(Respite Care Residential Scheme\)](#)**

The objective of Samarth scheme is to provide respite care home for orphans or abandoned, families in crisis and also for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) from Below Poverty Level (BPL) & Low Income Groups (LIG) families including destitute with at least one of the four disabilities covered under the National Trust Act. The scheme provides for creating opportunities for family members to get respite time in order to fulfil other responsibilities. Under the Scheme Samarth Centres are set up for providing group home facility for all age groups with adequate and quality care service with acceptable living standards including provision of basic medical care from professional doctors.



As on 31.03.2021, 45 Samarth Centers have been sanctioned benefiting 1621 beneficiaries in the country with an amount of Rs. 920.42 Lakh released.¹⁰

- **[Sahyogi \(Care Associate Training scheme\)](#)**

This scheme aims at setting up Care Associate (Caregiver) Cells (CACs) to provide training and create a skilled workforce of Care Associates to provide adequate and nurturing care for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) and their families who require it. It also seeks to provide parents an opportunity to get trained in care giving, if they so desire.

¹⁰ <https://www.thenationaltrust.gov.in/auth/agm.php>

Be a Trained Care Associate

by **The National Trust**

for the welfare of persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation & Multiple Disabilities
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India

* 'Care Giver' renamed as 'Care Associate'

Sahyogi
Care Associate (Care Giver) Training

All the registered organizations of the National Trust are invited to apply for Sahyogi Scheme. Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) has approved Care Giver* Training for Primary Training & Advance Training

Primary Training: 3 Months **Advanced Training: 6 Months**

- Individuals interested for Care Associate Training, may contact the National Trust / its registered organizations.
- Parents of Divyangjan are also eligible for training of Care Associate
Contact : Tel: 011-43187878, Email: contactus@thenationaltrust.in

OTHER SCHEMES :

- ▶▶ Disha (Early Intervention and School Readiness Scheme)
- ▶▶ Vikaas (Day Care Scheme for persons with disabilities having age more than 10 years)
- ▶▶ Samarth (Respite Care Residential Scheme) ▶▶ Gharanda (Group Home for Adults)
- ▶▶ Niramaya (Health Insurance Scheme)

The National Trust
Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan)
Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India
web: www.thenationaltrust.gov.in

As on 31.03.2021, there are 56 Care givers training Centers set up under the scheme from which 1762 Care givers have been. Under the scheme, an amount of Rs. 179.81 lakh has been released.¹¹

At present the scheme is open for the North-Eastern States only.

- **Prerna (Marketing Assistance)**

Prerna is the marketing assistance scheme of the National Trust with an objective to create viable and widespread channels for sale of products and services produced by Persons with disabilities (Divyangjan) covered under the National Trust Act. This scheme aims at providing funds to participate in events such as exhibitions, melas, fairs, etc. to sell the products made by PwDs (Divyangjan).

- **Divyangjan Swavalamban Yojana**

National Handicapped Finance and Development (NHFDC) provides financial assistance in terms of loan to Persons with Disabilities for starting any activity contributing directly or indirectly in the income generation or helping PwD in their overall process of empowerment through implementing agencies throughout the country including West Bengal. NHFDC provides maximum loan upto 50.0 lakh to Persons with disabilities for self-employment activity at the rate of interest 5-9% p.a. (A rebate of 1% in interest will be allowed to women with disabilities/persons with disabilities other than OH in self-employment loans of upto Rs. 50,000/-).

Scientific Advancements in treating Autism Spectrum Disorder¹²

A group of Indian researchers have developed a compound called “6BIO” that can provide a better method to treat Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). They have determined the potency of the compound in a pre-clinical mice model. This is the first compound that has been proved in pre-clinical evaluation to have the potential for improving daily activities like learning and recollecting new tasks in patients with ASD/ Intellectual disability (ID).

¹¹ <https://www.thenationaltrust.gov.in/auth/agm.php>

¹² <https://dst.gov.in/indian-researchers-develop-better-therapeutics-treat-autism-spectrum-disorder>

Patients with ASD still struggle to perform everyday activities without assistance from others as they are unable to learn and recollect new tasks. 6BIO can help children with ASD learn and recall, be social, and alleviate other symptoms such as seizures or sleep issues. Thus, the compound, 6BIO, can be a better therapeutics option to treat ASD.

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Video Link

- Mann ki Baat
https://pib.gov.in/ViewVideo.aspx?V_ID=14841&MinID=3&VPRID=13879&Day=26&Month=3&Year=2017

Further Reading

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