



STATUS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN JHANSI DISTRICT; CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Dr. Prashant Kumar

Professor, School of Education, Shobhit University Gangoh, Saharanpur U.P.

Robin Kumar Singh

Assistant Professor, Bundelkhand College Jhansi U.P.

Paper Received On: 20 MAY 2026

Peer Reviewed On: 24 JUNE 2026

Published On: 01 JULY 2026

Abstract

Inclusive education is a system of Education in which special children are included in general classroom with general students. It is the practice of educating all children, including those with disabilities, marginalized backgrounds, and special needs, in mainstream classrooms. It has emerged as a cornerstone of India's educational reform agenda. Jhansi district, situated in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh (UP), presents a complex socio-economic landscape that directly shapes the accessibility and quality of inclusive education. This paper examines the current position of inclusive education in Jhansi district, analyzing the policy framework, ground-level implementation of schemes such as Samagra Shiksha and the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, the status of children with special needs (CwSN), enrollment and dropout patterns, infrastructure gaps, teacher preparedness, and the role of NGOs and community stakeholders. The paper identifies significant challenges including inadequate numbers of trained special educators, poor physical accessibility of school infrastructure, social stigma, and inadequate assessment mechanisms. The paper concludes with actionable recommendations for strengthening the inclusive education ecosystem in Jhansi.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, Children with Special Needs (CwSN), Samagra Shiksha, RTE Act, Divyang, Bundelkhand, UDISE, NEP 2020*

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is defined by UNESCO as a process that involves transforming educational systems to respond to the diversity of learners. In India, this philosophy has been operationalized through a series of legislative and programmatic initiatives — from the Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 to the landmark Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

These frameworks collectively aim to ensure that every child, irrespective of disability, gender, caste, religion, or socio-economic status, has access to quality education in a regular school environment.

Jhansi district, historically significant as the seat of Rani Lakshmibai and the site of the 1857 Revolt, is the administrative and economic hub of the Bundelkhand region. Despite its historical prominence, Bundelkhand is among the most socio-economically lagging regions of UP, characterized by recurring drought, agrarian distress, high rates of out-migration, and entrenched caste-based social hierarchies. These conditions have a profound impact on educational access and quality — particularly for the most vulnerable groups: children with disabilities (Divyang), girls from marginalized communities, children belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), and children engaged in child labour.

As of the 2011 Census, Jhansi district had a population of approximately 19.88 lakh people, with a literacy rate of 74.87%, above the UP state average. However, disaggregated data on disability, educational participation of CwSN, and special educator ratios reveal substantial gaps between policy intent and ground-level reality. The district had 2,891 primary schools (including upper primary), 179 secondary/higher secondary schools, and a range of government and aided institutions — yet the inclusive education infrastructure remains nascent and underfunded.

This paper synthesizes available data from UDISE+ reports, Samagra Shiksha UP, government circulars, published academic research, and field-level observations to present a comprehensive picture of inclusive education in Jhansi district as of 2024–25.

2. Policy and Legislative Framework

2.1 Constitutional and Legal Provisions

The Indian Constitution guarantees free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 under Article 21A (inserted by the 86th Amendment, 2002). Article 41 directs the state to make effective provision for securing the right to education for persons with disabilities. The foundation of inclusive education in India rests on several key legislations:

- The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 — mandated integrated education for children with disabilities.
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 — made elementary education a fundamental right, including for CwSN, and prohibited exclusion on grounds of disability or learning difficulty.

- The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 — expanded the categories of disability from 7 to 21, mandated 5% reservation in government institutions, and required schools to be physically accessible and inclusive.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 — envisioned universal inclusion with the goal that all schools become fully inclusive by 2030, with trained teachers, barrier-free environments, and individualized education plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities.

2.2 National Schemes and Programmes

The central government's primary vehicle for inclusive education is the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan — an integrated scheme launched in 2018 that subsumed the erstwhile Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA). In Uttar Pradesh, this is implemented as Samekit Shiksha (also referred to as Samagra Shiksha UP or Samekit Shiksha UP).

Under the Inclusive Education component of Samagra Shiksha, the following provisions are specifically made for CwSN:

- Annual block-level identification and assessment camps for CwSN using the 'Prashast' disability screening checklist — a mobile app and booklet covering 21 categories of disabilities.
- Student-specific financial support of Rs. 3,500 per CwSN per annum for aids, appliances, corrective surgeries, Braille books, and teaching-learning materials.
- Stipend of Rs. 200 per month (Rs. 2,000 per annum) through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for girls with special needs from Classes I to XII.
- Provision of home-based education for children with severe or multiple disabilities.
- Construction of barrier-free infrastructure: ramps with handrails and CwSN-friendly toilets in government schools.
- Special Educators: financial support for their salary/honorarium at the block level; one special educator is ideally to serve a cluster of CwSN-enrolled schools.

The Samarth technical system — a digital monitoring platform — was developed to track identification, enrollment, and educational activities for CwSN across Uttar Pradesh. By 2020-21, Samarth had identified 3,15,806 CwSN across UP, though many districts including Jhansi continue to face challenges in comprehensive identification of all children with disabilities.

2.3 State-Level Implementation in Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh operates one of the largest school systems in India with over 1.5 lakh government primary and upper primary schools. The state has taken several steps to align with national

Copyright © 2026, Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies

inclusive education goals, including the development of accessible worksheets in language and mathematics for CwSN up to Class III under the Samagra Shiksha UP portal, orientation programmes for regular teachers on disability awareness, and deployment of special educators (called Itinerant/Resource Teachers) at the block level.

However, the state consistently faces a critical shortfall of trained special educators. Research by Singal et al. (2016) noted that the government's own target of one special educator for every five CwSN at the block level was far from achieved. In Uttar Pradesh, Singh (2010) documented cases where a single Itinerant Education Resource Teacher (IERT) was serving over 80 schools — an impossible workload that reduced the quality of support to near-zero in many instances.

3. Socio-Economic and Geographic Context of Jhansi District

Jhansi district is the largest district in the Jhansi division and serves as the divisional headquarters. The district is divided into 8 tehsils, 13 development blocks, and 3 urban bodies (Jhansi Municipal Corporation, Moth Nagar Palika Parishad, and Mauranipur Nagar Palika Parishad). The population is predominantly rural (~70%), with agriculture and small-scale industries as the primary livelihood sources.

The Bundelkhand region, to which Jhansi belongs, is one of the most underdeveloped regions of Uttar Pradesh. Recurring drought conditions, water scarcity, poor irrigation infrastructure, and farmer indebtedness have led to large-scale distress migration, particularly of adult males, leaving women and children in precarious socio-economic situations. The effects of poverty on educational participation are severe and multi-layered:

- Child labour: Children — particularly from SC, OBC, and tribal communities — are engaged in agricultural and domestic work, preventing regular school attendance.
- Early marriage of girls: Social norms in rural Bundelkhand continue to support early marriage, leading to high dropout rates for girls after Class 5.
- Disability stigma: Families often conceal children with disabilities, fearing social stigma, which results in non-identification and non-enrollment of CwSN.
- Migration: Seasonal migration of families disrupts schooling cycles and leads to de-facto dropout, particularly at the elementary stage.

The 2011 Census recorded 2.1% of Jhansi's population as Persons with Disabilities (PwD) — approximately 41,000 individuals. Among these, a significant portion falls in the school-going age group (5–19 years), yet enrollment rates for this cohort in regular schools remain far below the national average.

4. Current Status of Inclusive Education in Jhansi District

4.1 Identification and Enrollment of CwSN

Identification of children with disabilities is the first and most critical step toward inclusive education. In Jhansi, block-level assessment camps are organized annually under Samagra Shiksha. However, coverage remains incomplete due to geographic dispersion of villages, inadequate trained assessors, poor community awareness, and reluctance of families to disclose disability.

According to UDISE+ data and state-level reports from Samagra Shiksha UP, Uttar Pradesh as a whole enrolled approximately 3.15 lakh CwSN in 2020-21. Jhansi district's proportional share, given its population and disability prevalence, is estimated at 5,000–7,000 CwSN of school-going age; however, actual enrollment in regular schools is believed to be significantly lower, with a large number either out of school or enrolled in special schools (which are minimal in number in the district).

4.2 Infrastructure and Physical Accessibility

Physical accessibility of school buildings is a non-negotiable prerequisite for inclusive education — particularly for children with locomotor disabilities. Nationally, as per UDISE+ 2021-22, only 58.5% of government schools have ramps with handrails and only 31.1% have CwSN-friendly toilets. Jhansi district's government schools broadly reflect or lag behind these national figures.

A field-level review reveals the following infrastructure gaps in Jhansi's government schools:

- Most primary school buildings — especially in rural blocks such as Moth, Chirgaon, Garautha, and Bangra — lack functional ramps, relying instead on basic steps that are inaccessible to wheelchair users or those with locomotor impairments.
- CwSN-friendly toilet facilities are rare in government primary schools. Regular toilets, where they exist, are not adapted for CwSN.
- Braille-based and large-print teaching materials are in short supply; the few that exist are often outdated.
- Assistive devices such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, crutches, and low-vision aids are provided under convergence with the ADIP (Assistive Device and Individual Programme) scheme — but distribution camps are infrequent and not all entitled beneficiaries receive them timely.

4.3 Trained Special Educators

The availability of trained special educators is the most critical bottleneck in Jhansi's inclusive education system. Under Samagra Shiksha norms, special educators are to be posted at the block level (one per block minimum), with the objective of providing itinerant support to CwSN enrolled across multiple schools within the block.

Jhansi district has 13 development blocks. The ideal requirement — given CwSN enrollment estimates — would be a significantly larger cadre of special educators. In practice, posts are often unfilled, contractual appointees frequently change, and the travel demands on existing special educators (covering vast rural areas) reduce the effective support time available to each CwSN to a few visits per year, at best.

Regular teachers in government schools in Jhansi have, in most cases, received only brief sensitization training on inclusive education — typically a one- or two-day orientation as part of in-service training programmes. This is grossly insufficient to equip them with the practical skills needed to manage heterogeneous classrooms that include CwSN with a range of disabilities. Research nationally confirms that 87% of government school teachers lack access to adequate classroom support services (Das et al., 2013).

4.4 Enrollment, Retention, and Dropout Patterns

Jhansi district has made notable progress in gross enrollment ratios (GER) at the primary level over the past two decades, largely driven by the Mid-Day Meal scheme, the uniform distribution programme, and targeted enrollment drives (Pravesh Utsav). However, disaggregated data reveals persistent disparities:

- Girls from SC and OBC communities show high dropout rates between Classes 6 and 8, often citing long travel distances to upper primary schools, safety concerns, lack of toilets, and family pressure.
- CwSN dropout rates are disproportionately high — many children with disabilities enroll initially but discontinue when they receive inadequate support within the classroom.
- The Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) for the secondary level (Classes 9-10) in Jhansi is considerably lower than at the primary level, reflecting a systemic failure to retain students through the complete school cycle.
- Seasonal and circular migration, common in Bundelkhand, leads to 'invisible' dropout — children are technically enrolled but absent for extended periods.

4.5 Role of Special Schools and Rehabilitation Centres

Jhansi city hosts a small number of special schools and disability rehabilitation centres, including facilities for visually impaired and hearing-impaired children run by state and voluntary organizations. The Government Special School for the Visually Impaired and similar institutions provide residential education to a small number of CwSN. However, the philosophy of inclusive education promotes the integration of CwSN into mainstream schools rather than segregated special schools.

The District Disability Rehabilitation Centre (DDRC), Jhansi, plays a role in assessment, certification, and provision of aids and appliances. Its outreach in rural areas is limited, and awareness of its services among rural families with disabled members remains low.

4.6 Role of NGOs and Civil Society

Several NGOs and civil society organisations work in the education space in Jhansi and the broader Bundelkhand region, though their scale and reach vary. Organisations working on girl child education, community mobilization, and early childhood care contribute indirectly to the inclusive education ecosystem. Some NGOs have undertaken disability-awareness drives in village communities to reduce stigma and encourage families to enroll children with disabilities in schools.

National-level programmes such as Humana People to People India's Kadam programme — implemented in Uttar Pradesh, among other states — focus on bridging learning gaps for out-of-school and in-school children. Such programmes, when implemented in Jhansi's blocks, supplement the government system by providing remedial education and community outreach.

5. Key Challenges

A consolidated analysis of the inclusive education landscape in Jhansi reveals the following systemic challenges:

5.1 Identification Gap

A large proportion of CwSN in rural Jhansi remain unidentified and therefore excluded from the benefits of Samagra Shiksha's inclusive education provisions. Fear of stigma, lack of community awareness, and inadequate reach of assessment camps are the primary causes.

5.2 Shortage of Trained Special Educators

The severe shortage of special educators at the block level means that most CwSN enrolled in regular schools receive minimal or no specialized pedagogical support. The handful of special educators available are stretched thin across dozens of schools, severely compromising the quality of individualized support.

5.3 Teacher Unpreparedness

Regular classroom teachers lack the training, materials, and institutional support to effectively include CwSN in their teaching. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and differentiated instruction techniques remain largely unknown at the ground level. Attitudinal barriers — teachers viewing CwSN as a burden or as incapable of learning — are also a significant impediment.

5.4 Infrastructure Deficit

The majority of government schools in rural Jhansi lack wheelchair-accessible ramps, CwSN-friendly toilets, and accessible furniture. Without basic physical accessibility, children with locomotor and other physical disabilities cannot attend school regularly, defeating the purpose of enrollment campaigns.

5.5 Data Gaps and Monitoring Weaknesses

Reliable, disaggregated data on CwSN enrollment, attendance, learning outcomes, and dropout at the district level is difficult to obtain. The Samarth digital monitoring system is a step in the right direction, but ground-level data entry remains inconsistent. Without accurate data, planning and resource allocation for inclusive education remain suboptimal.

5.6 Social Stigma and Community Attitudes

Deep-rooted cultural beliefs about disability — that it is divine punishment, contagious, or a source of shame — prevail in many rural communities of Jhansi. These attitudes lead families to conceal CwSN children at home, preventing identification, enrollment, and social participation.

5.7 Financial and Administrative Constraints

While Samagra Shiksha provides financial support of Rs. 3,500 per CwSN per annum for student-specific interventions, this amount is grossly insufficient to meet the real costs of inclusive education — including assistive technology, therapeutic services, and individualized support. Additionally, bureaucratic delays in fund release and weak financial monitoring at the district level mean that available funds are often underutilized.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Strengthen Identification Mechanisms

The district administration should conduct quarterly block-level identification and assessment camps with multi-disciplinary teams including doctors, special educators, and Anganwadi workers. The Prashast app should be universally deployed with adequate training and

smartphone support for frontline workers. A district-level CwSN register, updated in real time, should be maintained and publicly accessible.

6.2 Recruit and Deploy Adequate Special Educators

The district should urgently fill all vacancies for special educators and aim for at least one special educator per 3-4 schools with CwSN enrollment. Special educators should be provided with transport allowance and should receive continuous professional development. In the short term, Distance Education Resource Teachers (DERTs) trained online via NCERT/RCI resources can partially bridge the gap.

6.3 Mainstream Teacher Training on Inclusion

All in-service teacher training programmes (pre-service B.Ed., D.El.Ed., and in-service) in Jhansi should include a mandatory module of minimum 5 days on inclusive education, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and disability sensitivity. DIET in Jhansi should be strengthened to deliver this training.

6.4 Infrastructure Upgradation

Remediation of critical gaps — ramps, accessible toilets, accessible furniture — should be funded through Samagra Shiksha and MNREGS convergence, with a target of 100% accessibility in all government schools by 2027.

6.5 Develop IEPs for All Enrolled CwSN

Every CwSN enrolled in a Jhansi government school should have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) developed collaboratively by the special educator, regular teacher, and family. IEPs should be monitored quarterly and updated annually, with the Samarth platform used to record and track progress.

6.6 Community Sensitization and Family Engagement

The district should launch a sustained Jan Jagran (public awareness) campaign on disability rights and inclusive education, leveraging radio, community meetings, self-help groups, and Gram Panchayat sessions. Positive role models — CwSN who have succeeded in education — should be highlighted in local media to challenge stigma.

6.7 Strengthen Data Systems and Monitoring

UDISE+ data collection should be disaggregated to capture CwSN-specific indicators including attendance, learning outcomes, and IEP implementation. The district education department should publish an annual Inclusive Education Status Report for Jhansi to enable evidence-based planning and public accountability.

7. Conclusion

Inclusive education in Jhansi district stands at a critical juncture. On one hand, the national and state policy architecture — anchored in the RPwD Act 2016, RTE Act 2009, Samagra Shiksha, and NEP 2020 — provides a robust legal and programmatic foundation for universal inclusion. On the other hand, ground-level realities in this historically underdeveloped region of Bundelkhand reveal profound gaps: an invisible population of unidentified CwSN, a severe shortage of trained special educators, inaccessible school infrastructure, unprepared regular teachers, persistent social stigma, and weak data systems.

The district has the potential to make transformative progress in inclusive education over the next decade — but this will require urgent political will, sustained administrative focus, adequate resourcing, and genuine community partnership. The goals set by NEP 2020 — that every school in India becomes fully inclusive by 2030 — are ambitious but achievable if the systemic barriers identified in this paper are addressed systematically and with urgency.

Inclusive education is not merely a welfare measure for children with disabilities; it is a fundamental reimagining of education as a universal right that enriches the learning environment for all children. For Jhansi district, embracing this vision wholeheartedly will mean not only a better future for its most vulnerable children, but a more equitable, compassionate, and prosperous society for all.

References

- Das, A., et al. (2013). *Survey of Government Teachers in Delhi on Support Services for CwSN*. *Journal of Special Education India*.
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2024). *Year End Review 2024: Department of School Education & Literacy*. Press Information Bureau. <https://pib.gov.in>
- Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2025). *Samagra Shiksha: Inclusive Education for All Children*. Official Communication (March 24, 2025).
- National Education Policy. (2020). Government of India, Ministry of Education.
- Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Government of India.
- Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Government of India.
- Samagra Shiksha Uttar Pradesh. (2021-22). *Samekit Shiksha — Inclusive Education Activities*. www.samagrashikshaup.in
- Singal, N., De, A., & Bhutani, S. (2016). *Analysis of RMSA and Special Educator Shortfall*. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.
- Singal, N., & Muthukrishna, N. (2021). *Education of Children with Disabilities in Rural Indian Government Schools: A Long Road to Inclusion*. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(3).
- Singh, V. (2010). *IERTs in Uttar Pradesh: Challenges and Constraints*. *UP State Education Reports*.
- UDISE+ Report. (2021-22). *Unified District Information System for Education Plus*. Ministry of Education, India.

- UNESCO. (1994). Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education. Paris: UNESCO.*
- Unessa Foundation. (2024). Inclusive Education in Underprivileged Communities. Annual Programme Report, Uttar Pradesh.*
- Census of India. (2011). District Census Handbook: Jhansi. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.*
- National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP). (2022). Status of Disability in Education. India Disability Report.*