

# Akhil Bhartiya Shiksha Samagam

Report on

## Session 4: Equitable and Inclusive Education: Issues of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)



July 2023

Government of India

Organised By



शिक्षा मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION



कौशल विकास और  
उद्यमशीलता मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
SKILL DEVELOPMENT  
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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## **Akhil Bhartiya Shiksha Samagam**

### **Thematic Session 4: Equitable and Inclusive Education: Issues of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The 2nd Akhil Bharatiya Shiksha Samagam, coinciding with the 3rd anniversary of National Education Policy 2020, was organised on the 29th & 30th of July 2023. The Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated the event on 29.07.2023 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi. The inaugural session was followed by a total of 16 thematic sessions held over two days. A significant thematic session that was held on the 29th of July was “Equitable and Inclusive Education: Issues of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)”.

In the year 2015, India adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. The goal four of SDG mentioned to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (NEP 2020)”. One of the fundamental principles of the NEP 2020 that will guide the education system stipulates full equity and inclusion as the cornerstone of all educational decisions to ensure that all students are able to thrive in the education system. The ultimate aim of the NEP is to increase the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at both the school and higher education levels and bring it at par with the developed countries in the world.

Equitable and inclusive education refers to a system in which all individuals, regardless of their socio-economic background, have equal access to quality education and opportunities for academic success. It aims to address the disparities faced by socio-economically disadvantaged groups and ensure that everyone has an equal chance to learn, grow, and thrive.

NEP recognises that while policies have made steady progress towards bridging gender and social category gaps in all levels of school education, large disparities still remain - especially at the secondary level - particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged groups that have been historically underrepresented in education. Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) can be broadly categorized based on gender identities (particularly female and transgender individuals), socio-cultural identities (such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, and

minorities), geographical identities (such as students from villages, small towns, and aspirational districts), disabilities (including learning disabilities), and socio-economic conditions (such as migrant communities, low income households, children in vulnerable situations, victims of or children of victims of trafficking, orphans including child beggars in urban areas, and the urban poor).

Exclusion and inequity that SEDGs face is only amplified for the women in these SEDGs. The policy additionally recognizes the special and critical role that women play in society and in shaping social mores; therefore, providing a quality education to girls is the best way to increase the education levels for these SEDGs, not just in the present but also in future generations. The policy thus recommends that the policies and schemes designed to include students from SEDGs should be especially targeted towards girls in these SEDGs.

NEP also recognises that there are certain facets of exclusion that are particular to or substantially more intense in higher education. These must be addressed specifically, and include lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities, economic opportunity cost of pursuing higher education, financial constraints, admission processes, geographical and language barriers, poor employability potential of many higher education programmes, and lack of appropriate student support mechanism.

Access to education is also a gender problem wherein female students are often restricted from education. Several forms of learning and physical disabilities also hinder students from getting uninterrupted access to learning in safe environments. NEP 2020 also recognises the issues related to access of education to Divyang and suggest measures to be taken.

According to U-DISE 2016-17 data, about 19.6% of students belong to Scheduled Castes at the primary level, but this fraction falls to 17.3% at the higher secondary level. These enrolments drop offs are more severe for Scheduled Tribes students (10.6% to 6.8%), and differently abled children (1.1% to 0.25%), with even greater declines for female students within each of these categories. The decline in enrolment in higher education is even steeper with the total GER standing at 27.3% with GER for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes falling to 23.1% and 18.9% respectively.

In the vision 2047 for education, it is targeted that GER for Higher Secondary which in 2021-22 is 53.79% to be increased to 75.5 by 2030 and 100 by 2047. Similarly, GER for higher Education which in 2020-21 is 27.3 is targeted to be increased to 41 by 2030 and 65+ by 2047.

It is envisioned that for, equitable and inclusive access to education following roadmap of activity for 2022-30 shall be adopted:

- Develop inclusive, equitable infrastructure: Augment physical (such as ramps and washrooms for CWSN) and human infrastructure (equip faculty to support students from vulnerable backgrounds)
- Revamp pedagogy to make learning inclusive: Deliver in-class instruction in the students' mother tongue, especially in the formative years, and then pivot to bilingual instruction (English and the State's language), with the mother tongue continued to be taught as a language
- Enable open and distance learning: Leverage the private sector for large-scale high-quality, inclusive online content creation, such as multi-sensory input/output, and deliver through digital platforms/universities, such as DIKHSASWAYAM
- Develop financial support mechanisms: Create structured scholarship programs to enable all students to continue learning especially focussed on higher education, through both public and private philanthropic channels

For the period from 2030-47 the following activity roadmap shall be adopted:

- Establish and universalise robust infrastructure: Set up best-in-class inclusive phy-gital infrastructure across all districts and equip all faculty, even from remote areas to mentor and teach students from vulnerable backgrounds. Offer all programs, across domains and disciplines, in Indian languages to make learning possible for all
- Make higher education accessible to all: Establish high quality, multi-disciplinary higher education institutes in all districts, focussed especially on increasing women's participation across disciplines, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

- Streamline digital access: Expand access to digital universities and develop high-quality teaching-learning resources in all formats, including print, audio, video, digital, AR, VR, Haptics, etc. in all spoken languages, delivered through easily open digital platforms
- Make learning affordable for all: Deploy and universalize access to financial tools to provide scholarships, loans, and innovative financing instruments to students to enable learning across all levels and disciplines of learning

In order to increase access and proliferation of education and to address the needs of the most vulnerable groups of learners, the government of India has formulated the following regulations which have yielded promising results:

- Towards ensuring quality education for the visually impaired, 'Talking Books' has been developed by NIOS to aid Divyang students with NCERT course on platforms like e-Pathshala & DIKSHA.
- Accessibility Guidelines and Standards for Higher Education Institutions and Universities was released in June 2022 to suggest the institutes to make provisions for persons with disabilities and to provide them an accessible environment for their barrier-free participation in all respects. It also aims to assist institutes in developing an effective accessible mechanism at their premises for the persons with disabilities ranging from the admission process till the completion of the course.
- Basic facilities and amenities for a safe, secure environment for Women and Women Cell for sensitization, policy implementation, monitoring, and grievance redressal in HEIs was released on 22.12.2022 to provide guidelines and solutions to the most pressing issues for women in educational institutes: infrastructural facilities and amenities for a safe and secure environment, and the establishment of women cells to act as centers for gender sensitization, policy formulation and implementation and grievance redressal.
- Minimum Standards and procedures for award of Ph.D. degree Regulations, 2022 which inter alia provides that female Ph.D. scholars and Persons with Disabilities (having more than 40% disability) may be allowed an additional relaxation of two (2) years. Female Ph.D. Scholars may be provided Maternity

Leave/Child Care Leave for up to 240 days in the entire duration of the Ph.D. programme.

- Guidelines for Promotion of Physical Fitness, Sports, Students' Health, Welfare, Psychological and Emotional Well-Being at HEIs of India was released on 12.04.2023 to set encourage an attitude of physical fitness and to set up Student Services Centres (SSC) in institutes to deal and manage the problems related to stress and emotional adjustment of students, especially from rural backgrounds, female students, students from divergent cultural backgrounds, and students with special needs.

### **Expected Outcomes of the Session**

(a) Understanding the issues faced by the most vulnerable groups with special focus on:

(i) Female learners

(ii) Learners from marginalized communities

(iii) Learners with physical or learning disabilities

(b) Formulating new and innovative methods to increase the accessibility of both school and higher education

(c) Leveraging the role of digital means such as online classes and exams as a method of bridging the educational gap

### **Roadmap for the Institutes**

The NEP 2020 emphasizes on ensuring that all children have access to quality ECCE, which is crucial for bridging learning gaps and promoting early development, especially for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The policy recognizes the importance of foundational literacy and numeracy skills for all children and aims to ensure that every child achieves these fundamental skills by grade 3. This focus on early literacy and numeracy is particularly important for children from socio-economically disadvantaged groups, therefore inclusive learning is provided in classrooms under NIPUN Bharat Program. The Government of India constitute a 'Gender-Inclusion Fund' to build the nation's capacity to provide equitable quality

education for all girls as well as transgender students. Similar 'Inclusion Fund' schemes shall also be developed to address analogous access issues for other socio-economically disadvantaged students, and other marginalized groups. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyayas is being strengthened and expanded to increase the participation in quality schools (up to Grade 12) of girls from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This Policy is in complete consonance with the provisions of the RPWD Act 2016 and endorses all its recommendations regarding school education. Barrier free access, for all children with disabilities is developed as per the RPWD Act under Samagra Shiksha Scheme along with Assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools, as well as adequate and language-appropriate teaching-learning materials, (e.g., textbooks in accessible formats such as large print and Braille) is made available to help children with disabilities. NIOS has developed high-quality modules to teach Indian Sign Language, and to teach other basic subjects using Indian Sign Language. Assessment and certification agencies, including the proposed new National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, will formulate guidelines and recommend appropriate tools for conducting such assessment, from the foundational stage to higher education (including for entrance exams), to ensure equitable access and opportunities for all students with learning disabilities. The home-schooling option is available for children with severe disabilities. The NEP 2020 recommends an increase in scholarships and other financial support mechanisms to ensure that socio-economically disadvantaged students can access higher education and educational opportunities without financial barriers.

With these trendsetting initiatives, India aims to create a more inclusive and equitable education system. Close collaboration between stakeholders including government, policymakers, civil societies, industry, and NGOs will be crucial for accelerated impact of the same in the country. It will also help in collaborative action and allow for calibration by leveraging the expertise offered by the institutions outside of Governments.



## ISSUES

The session addressed several critical issues, which include but are not limited to the following points:

- Improving equitable access to quality education for SEDGs to ensure higher GER in HEIs.
- Lack of basic facilities and amenities for SEDGs to ensure an inclusive, healthy, safe, and secure environment on campuses.
- Unequal gender ratios especially impact the gross enrolment ratio of women in higher education.
- Lack of sensitization among varied stakeholders which would ensure policy implementation, monitoring, equalizing access to inclusive quality higher education, ensuring respectful dignity, promoting egalitarian and constitutional values, and grievance redressal in Higher Education Institutions in India for SEDGs.
- Insufficient fellowship/scholarship and additional facilities such as accommodation in all HEIs for SEDGs to reduce the economical constrained faced by them.
- Insufficient mechanisms to revisit and address the primordial concept of marginality at the level of Higher Education and the lack of government initiative for dealing with this issue.
- Lack of processes that ensure that biases against marginality of any kind are removed with the interventions of equitable and inclusive education.
- Lack of concerted efforts towards reducing the digital divide among students and improving the access of SEDGs to technological advancements.
- Unavailability of research-based qualitative data on literacy to draw focus on the specific concerns.
- Unmotivated efforts towards ensuring proper implementation of advantageous policies for SEDGs at the ground level.
- Lack of proper training and professional development for teachers/other education facilitators.
- Lack of varied assessment tools to identify the uniqueness and the distinct spark among children.

## DISCUSSION

Education is a necessary pre-condition for the reconstruction of the pluralistic society on the principles of equality and justice; it must have an equitable opportunity for socio-economically disadvantaged groups in all HEIs. The democratic values, envisaged in our Constitution, can be acquired only through equitable opportunities for the SEDGs. Education is the stepping stone towards better life and development of all sections of society, especially SEDGs.

Different sub-groups of the population are at different levels of enrolment in higher education. NEP 2020 has set the goal of 50 percent enrolment up to 2035 compared to the current 26.3 percent (2018-19) which needs planning – setting the goals, action strategies, and time-based implementation plan. In order to achieve this target, the approach to equity and inclusion must be common across schools and higher education institutions. The present thematic session was focused on identifying the key challenges and the way forward toward achieving this goal.

S. No.	Activity	Chair/Panelists
1.	The Chair	Shri Saurabh Garg, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
2.	Panellist/Speaker 1	Prof. T.V. Kattimani, VC, Central Tribal University, Andhra Pradesh
3.	Panellist/Speaker 2	Shri Srijan Pal Singh, Founder, Dr.Kalam Foundation
4.	Panellist/Speaker 3	Shri B. Kartikey Dhanji, State Project Director, Samagra Siksha, Bihar
5.	Panellist/Speaker 4	Ms. Cynthia McCaffery, UNICEF Representative in India
6.	Session In-Charge	Shri B. K. Singh, Director, Ministry of Education, Gol
7.	Session In-Charge	Dr. G.S. Chauhan, Joint Secretary, UGC
8.	Session In-Charge	Suravi Sarawgi, YP
9.	Rapporteurs	1. Sh. Kishore Kumar, EO, UGC 2. Dr. V. Jayaprakash, US, UGC 3. Mr. Vinod Singh Yadav, DS, UGC 4. . Sh. Lokesh Kumar Jangra, SO, UGC 5. Prof. Meenakshi Khar, NCERT 6. Dr. Ashish Kumar Srivastava, NCERT

Mr. B.K. Singh, Director, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, commenced the event by introducing the esteemed panellists and outlining the structure of the program. He first introduced the Chair Shri. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Mr. Singh highlighted Dr. Garg's invaluable contribution to several areas including digitalizing agriculture, direct income transfer scheme for farmers, improving the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policies, preparing the framework for digital payments, revamping the gold sector policies, and leading negotiations for the Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs).



He then invited Prof. T.V. Kattimani, Vice Chancellor, Central Tribal University, Andhra Pradesh. Mr. Singh recognised Prof. Kattimani's role as the former Vice Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak (MP). Born into a deprived tribal family in the Koppal district of Karnataka, Prof. Kattimani's life's challenges and experiences taught him to think about the people of deprived classes of society and to try to help them in overcoming their agonies. This was also acknowledged by Mr. Singh.

The next speaker to be invited was Shri Srijan Pal Singh, Founder of Dr. Kalam Foundation. Mr. Srijan was applauded for being a Gold Medallist from IIM Ahmedabad

and having previously worked as the Former Advisor (Technology) to the 11th President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Mr. Srijan's contributions towards cutting-edge and futuristic technology in areas such as space, nuclear, next-generation medicare, energy, and development sectors in collaboration with experts from global universities and renowned institutions were also highlighted.

Shri. B.Kartikey Dhanji, State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Bihar was introduced as the third speaker of the session by Mr. Singh. Mr. Dhanji's journey started as an IAS officer of the 2008 batch from Bihar Cadre. His first posting was at Danapur as SDM. Mr. Singh acknowledged his work during Central Deputation from 2016-2019 as Private Secretary to the Minister of State for Education, Ministry of Education. Further, Mr.Dhanji's tenure as the Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet Secretary, Government of India was also mentioned by Mr. Singh.

Ms. Cynthia McCaffery, UNICEF Representative, India was introduced as the last speaker for the session. Prior to her assignment in India, Ms. McCaffrey served as UNICEF Representative in China, providing overarching leadership and management of UNICEF's China office and in collaboration with the Government of China, supporting programmes benefitting children and women. Mr. Singh then praised Ms. McCaffery's several leadership roles since 2011 in New York, including Director Office of Innovation, and Director Office of the Executive Director and Chief of Staff.

The event promised to be an enriching discussion, with each panellist bringing unique expertise and perspectives to the theme of equitable and inclusive education. During the session, the panellists discussed key initiatives that have shown promising results in achieving equality and inclusivity in education, including:

**Chair – Shri Saurabh Garg, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**



The Chair of the session, Shri Saurabh Garg, in his keynote address, emphasised that SEDGs need to be treated with dignity which is also well articulated in SDG 4. Goal Four of SDG mentioned to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030 (NEP 2020)” He said that the Hon’ble Prime Minister has also reiterated that one of the targets of the policy is to provide quality education to all students, especially to them who are historically marginalized and disadvantaged.

He further pointed out that another target of the policy is to provide quality higher education to SEDGs including Divyang, women, and vulnerable groups for their betterment, quality enhancement of innovative skills, and academic excellence so that they may also contribute effectively towards nation-building. He believes that the use of Indian languages and digital technology can be crucial to the education and well-being of SEDGs. The need for collective action and community engagement was recognized. It was added that there is a need for a mechanism to assist students through continuous mentoring and counseling. He highlighted that collective attention

and concerted efforts have to be made to have in place an education system that embraces diversity and inclusivity, and empowers every learner to reach their fullest potential.

**Speaker 1 - Prof. T.V. Kattimani, Vice Chancellor, Central Tribal University, Andhra Pradesh**



Prof. Kattimani, in his presentation, highlighted the following key points in regard to the social inclusion and education of the SEDGs:

- Education is an instrument for social change.
- Quality education must be given to the SC/ST, women, and LGBTQ, who are socially excluded. NEP 2020 focuses on them and advocates for equal opportunity so they come into the fold of quality education and contribute to the country's development.
- Vulnerable tribal people have to be given special attention.
- Enhancing education through Mother Tongue.
- Appointment of Multilingual Medium Educators (MLMEs) in tribal areas.
- Tribes and marginalized communities have skills that need to be enhanced and nurtured.

- Setting up institutions and courses for sports studies for tribal people as they have shown remarkable achievements in sports.
- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for reducing the dropout rates

**Speaker 2 - Shri Srijan Pal Singh, Founder, Dr. Kalam Foundation**



Mr. Srijan, in his presentation, highlighted the following key points in regard to the social inclusion and education of the SEDGs:

- Technology can bridge the gap between haves and have-nots.
- Three critical challenges education faces, particularly in the context of SEDGs are:
  - (i) Education in India works on maximizing the averages of the learners based on their performance in schools, which is not the right approach for ensuring quality education.
  - (ii) Education is futuristic – how to make our leaders' and stakeholders' future ready is the real challenge.
  - (iii) Experiential learning has been to emphasised for enhancing the learning experiences of the children.

- Ed-tech can help SEDGs by creating an immersive environment by mitigating cost, and language barriers, and provision of constant power supply and internet. He further informed the audience that Kalam Foundation is already focusing on these areas.
- Development of curricular laboratories in Indian languages and access to students
- Access to labs of the future world in AR/VR to gamify simulator/ vocational skills.

### Speaker 3 - Shri B.Kartikey Dhanji, State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Bihar



Mr. Dhanji, in his presentation, highlighted the following key points in regard to the social inclusion and education of the SEDGs:

- Govt. of Bihar is working towards improving the quality of education by training teachers and recruiting trained teachers by BPSC.
- Running schemes for girls' education by improving education's structural and financial aspects.
- Identification of CWSN and provision of Unique Disability Identity cards (UD ID) prepared in convergence with the Department of Health and Department of social welfare.



- The organisation of Self Esteem based programmes in marginalized areas.
- CHAHAK Program, Summer Camp, and Residential schools are the schemes that are bringing social change to the disadvantaged groups in the state of Bihar

**Speaker 4 - Ms. Cynthia McCaffery, UNICEF Representative, India**



Ms. McCaffery, in her presentation, highlighted the following key points in regard to the social inclusion and education of the SEDGs:

- Expressed her happiness over how the education for SEDGs has been given importance through policy intervention.
- UNICEF works hand in hand in some tribal areas.
- Incredible involvement and investment in education is seen by Indians for their children.
- NEP-2020 guides villages in achieving the goals of Primary Education. It reiterates the implementation of right to education and access to education.
- UNICEF is sharing the best practices of India with other countries.
- G20 has given a platform to showcase the achievements in this area with other countries.

- Media and films are also being used to address gender biases.
- NEP 2020 empowers every child and allows them to learn and to learn well.

The panel discussion was followed by the question and answer session. This segment of the session addressed the issue of the pre-module concept of marginality and how it can be revisited and addressed at the level of higher education and what role regulators can play in dealing with the issue; the steps required to be taken up to reduce the digital divide among the students in general and SEDGs in particular; need for research-based qualitative data on literacy; steps to be taken for effective implementation of the policies at the ground level and making the teacher future ready.



Overall, the session is expected to generate actionable strategies, policies, and collaborations that support NEP 2020's vision of increasing the GER to create an equitable and inclusive educational system, especially to address the concerns of SEDGs.

## WAY FORWARD

The way forward for the session addresses the role of multiple stakeholders such as the Government, Academic Institutions, and Private Organizations

1. NEP 2020 has created a space and opportunities for ensuring equity and equality in the education system and the learning of children. Its vision must be continued to be implemented to create an equitable and inclusive educational ecosystem. (Stakeholders – Government, Academic Institutions, Private Organisations)

2. Improving and maintaining quality in education is a challenge and it has to be taken up in sync with the broader recommendations of the NEP 2020 framework. Better educational quality will attract increased participation from SEDGs. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions, Private Organisations)

3. Technology has a role in bridging the gaps in social and economic spheres. (Stakeholders – Private Organisations)

4. ICT and technology should be made accessible to all. (Stakeholders – Private Organisations)

5. UNICEF has observed a positive impact of NEP 2020 in the area of the education of SEDGs, which needs to be further strengthened. (Stakeholders – Government)

6. Participation of the community and other stakeholders, particularly in the States of Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, has shown success in developing material for children with special needs, and gender equality in school education because of the recommendations of the NEP 2020. Similar concerted efforts are required in other States and UTs. (Stakeholders – Government)

7. Assessment practices need to be re-looked for assessing the uniqueness among children. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions)

8. Strengthening teacher training programs with a focus on modern teaching methodologies, student-centered learning, and subject-specific knowledge are important improvements to be undertaken. Encouraging continuous professional development with advanced pedagogical techniques is also crucial. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions, Private Organisations)

9. Emphasis on self-awareness among students to know one's strengths and harness one's full potential. Accepting identities among students and consciousness of bias can assist students in harnessing higher human spirits of confidence, courage, leadership, sportsmanship, compassion, and ideals of service to the nation. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions)
10. The proactive role of communities, students, parents, and organisations in creating awareness and countering negative attitudes and stereotypes. Introducing Parent-Teacher Meetings as regular events and leveraging them to encourage community participation in children's learning experiences. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions, Private Organisations)
11. Setting up Student Service Centres and Equal Opportunity cells to adopt an inclusive approach to improve student education, participation, engagement, and retention. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions)
12. Mentorship programs for guidance and support of new entrants, struggling students, and educators as well as to enable authentic and enriching learning experiences. These can be planned with the support of professionals. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions)
13. Introducing the concept of bridge courses for students from vulnerable groups, students with special needs, and those unable to perform at par with other students of their age. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions)
14. Increasing accessibility to laboratories and ensuring the availability of quality equipment/devices for learning. (Stakeholders – Academic Institutions)
15. Regional languages for Tribal and SEDGs; these include dictionaries of terminologies, development of technical books, and development of scientific terminologies by the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT). (Stakeholders – Government)
16. Access to future technology and skills learning modules for students. (Stakeholders – Government).

## **CONCLUSION**

Thematic Session – 4 “Equitable and Inclusive Education: Issues of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs)” addresses the ultimate aim of the NEP 2020, which is to increase the overall GER in HEIs. The session documented how this goal cannot be achieved without addressing the inherent disparities faced by SEDGs in accessing quality education. Therefore, the goal of building an educational ecosystem that is equitable and inclusive is the need of the hour.

Throughout the session, the inputs of the distinguished Chair and Panellists highlighted major interventions, projects, and schemes that the Government of India and individual State Governments have initiated to ensure that the existing gap that hinders access to higher education for SEDGs can be bridged systematically. Additionally, key focus areas such as the increased role of technology and tech-related tools, improved assessment criteria, better training for education facilitators, availability of additional resources to minimize financial constraints faced by SEDGs, etc were addressed in detail. The ‘way forward’ for the session further identified workable solutions that varied stakeholders such as the Government, Academic Institutions and Private Organisations can implement to achieve realistic results.

The session aimed to start a conversation around the issues faced by SEDGs in light of the recommendations of NEP 2020 and to minimise the hurdles to their educational achievements. The probable steps that can be taken to improve the situation on the ground call for bringing pedagogic and systemic reforms, development of resources, sensitisation of the stakeholders, and social participation in realising the goal of equitable and inclusive education. Based on the ensuing discussion and the solutions identified during the session, there is hope that goal-oriented concrete steps will be taken to ensure that India builds an equitable and inclusive educational ecosystem.