

# **Chapter- I**

## **Introduction**

### **1.0 Background of the Study**

A fundamental human right, education plays a major role in the growth of individuals, communities, and nations. It is the greatest wealth one can attain and is a necessity in today's world. Education means nourishing the good qualities, bringing out the best in each child and working to enhance their natural inner abilities. It helps in creating innovations and meeting the growing needs of every nation. Education aids people to see the world as a just and fair place where everyone is given equal opportunities. It is a must for a promising, self-sufficient, secure future and a stable life. The idea of "Children with special needs" (CWSN) shaped special needs education research, practices, and policy. The concept of special needs children originated in Britain. The government was informed of the results of the Government Commission's investigation into special education in Britain in 1978, which was presided over by Baroness Mary Warnock (Cited in Bowen and Ellis, 1978).

Prior to 1944, educational opportunities were mostly provided through philanthropic initiatives for those with certain handicaps, such as visual and hearing impairment. Education was not as important as training. Children with exceptional needs were the focus of group study during World War II, especially in the United States. Parent groups were founded at that time, and they subsequently applied pressure to enhance educational opportunities. To dispel the stigma connected to the unfavourable labels of the past, the old language, which labelled disabled people as "lame", "defective", "crippled", "less fortunate", "mentally retarded", "spastic", "deaf and dumb" all of which emphasised their flaws, was abandoned and the new language took its place whereby children with impairments were discussed in more general terms "Educational Needs" considering the recommendations of Warnock's committee (Norwich, 17 July 2019).

Krick (1975) defined children with exceptional needs as "schools that have experienced chronic difficulties in educating certain children". Special needs children are distinct persons. In India, special education is a separate educational system that was developed in the 1880s specifically for children with special needs and is not part of the regular school system. Due to the success of global trials involving the integration of special needs children into mainstream classrooms, the Planning Commission incorporated an integrated education program into its plan in 1971. In December 1974, the government introduced the Integrated

Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) program. It was a Centrally Sponsored Scheme designed to help children with special needs (CWSN) succeed and stay in conventional schools by offering them educational opportunities. Children with special needs are expected to enroll in every local school.

Special educators were also provided with training programs. Children with disabilities are first referred to as "Children with Special Needs" (CWSN) by Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). SSA works to ensure that all children receive meaningful and high-quality education, regardless of the type of special requirements, category, or degree of disability.

Children who have disabilities that substantially affect their capacity to do physical tasks and go about their everyday lives are referred to as having special needs (CWSN). These disabilities can be categorized as inherited, cognitive, or brought on by birth trauma.

Physical disabilities can affect a person's ability to move about, to use arms and legs effectively to swallow food and to breathe such limitations may also be evident in other areas such as vision, cognition, speech, language, hearing, and body movement. Disability is not just a health problem or attribute of individuals, but it reflects the problems of individuals experience in their interaction with society and physical movements. Children with special needs remain a neglected part of society and they also experience various barriers due to restriction of participation. The term "disability" has many different meanings. The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) ever, uses the term disability for loss of health, where health is conceptualized in terms of functioning capacity in a set of health domains such as mobility, cognition, hearing, and vision. The societal stigma associated with different forms of disability and general health issues make life more difficult for impaired persons and their families. Due to participation limitations, children with special needs face a variety of problems throughout their lives. These include poor health outcomes, low educational attainment, a lack of social and economic involvement, greater rates of poverty, and an increase in reliance. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 2-4% of people worldwide have significant functional impairments, while sixteen percent of people worldwide have some sort of disability. GBD, 2004 data analysis shows that 15.3% of the world population (approximately 978 million people) has a moderate or severe disability, while around 2.9% (185 million people) experienced severe disabilities. Special education is the delivery of teaching customized to meet the specific needs and peculiarities of children with special needs. The optimal procedure includes developing individualized lesson plans, making material and equipment modifications, and putting interventions in place to help

students with specific needs. The kids should be able to achieve more in the community and at school with the aid of this technique than they could in a typical classroom environment on their own can achieve more than they would if they were only able to get their education in a regular classroom. This includes achievement in the community and in the classroom, as well as personal self-support. By children with special needs, we mean those children whose needs cannot be met within the ordinary classroom environment. Such children need special teaching content, teaching material, teaching staff, and even special schools. Children are considered special when their behaviour and nature deviate from the normal child. "A child with special needs deviates from a normal child, emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially to a point that he/she cannot be benefited from a standard school program and needs special treatment to develop to his optimum capacity," is the working definition of a child with special needs.

### **1.1 Education for Children with Special Needs: An International Perspective**

The 1960s and 1970s saw the introduction of the practice of enrolling special needs kids in regular schools in several countries, which led to new educational initiatives as well as an increase in the knowledge and accessibility of resources available to children with special needs. The UN General Assembly's 1981 proclamation of it as the International Year of Disabled Persons, with the primary goals being equal opportunity and full participation for the disabled, also gave this sector a boost.

The United Nations then declared 1983–1992 to be the Decade of the Disabled. The United Nations established standard criteria this decade for ensuring that children with special needs have equal access to education, with a particular emphasis on schooling in ordinary schools with the necessary assistance. The World Conference on Essential Fatty Acids (EFA), which was held in March 1990 and reaffirmed the ultimate goal of addressing all children's, youth's, and adults' basic learning needs, contributed to the decade's exorability. Thus, various Declarations advocated by organizations such as the United Nations have had a considerable impact on policies affecting children with special needs. But starting in the thirteenth century, there was a shift toward a more accepting attitude toward children with exceptional needs. Christianity led to churches taking in and housing special needs kids in asylums. Until the 18th century, when political reformers, medical leaders, and educators were inspired by the ideas of fraternity, equal opportunity, and independence in France and America, special needs children were ignored throughout the world. This led to a focus on these children's educational needs.

In terms of blind schooling, Valentin Hailly was a trailblazer. He established a school in Paris in 1784, and Louis Braille continued his work. Though there have been attempts to educate deaf children before Hailly, deaf education was not established until Friedrich Moritz Hill (1805–74) created a spoken technique of instruction. The teaching of deaf and dumb kids was enhanced by the development of standardized sign languages. Children who were mentally challenged were first taught through methodical means by Jean Marc-Gaspard Itard (1775–1838). Later theorists like Edouard Seguin (1812–18) and Maria Montessori were influenced by Itard's work. Children with motor impairments are often included into the model classroom after undergoing an appropriate educational evaluation; this often involves the utilization of wheelchairs and specially made workstations. In the sphere of education, France made revolutionary advances. Arunachalam (2010) mentions that Valentine Huay founded a blind school in Paris in 1785. In education, the centralized government played a relatively little role in the first part of the 20th century. A new frontier in the field of special education was established in 1951 when the University of Illinois established the first center for exceptional child research (Devi, 2012).

In response to proceedings initiated by parents of children with special needs, the centralized courts determined early in the 1970s that schools owed all students equal legal protection and could not discriminate against individual pupils based on special needs. The court determined that schools are required to provide appropriate learning practices for children with special needs, regardless of the cost.

This formal norm was ultimately included into centralized special education legislation. In response, Congress passed the rehabilitation act in 1973, which forbade inequity based on disability kinds among organizations receiving federal funding, including local schools. This proves that all children have the right to education, even those with special needs. However, the statute did not include any funding or a process for monitoring the agreement. The Ordinary Education Initiative (OEI) was an attempt in the 1980s to return accountability for the schooling of children with special needs to ordinary classroom teachers and community schools. The 1990s full inclusion movement advocated teaching all students with special needs in traditional classroom settings using a single, integrated, and approachable educational system. The inclusion of children with special needs in regular school settings was pushed by the federal government. Many children were still denied access to American schools in 1973, despite the fact that by then, laws governing the education of special needs students had been approved in around 45 states. (Cited by Pattnaik, 2010 & (Devi, 2012)



There have been a lot of encouraging remarks made in recent years about the education of kids with special needs on the international scene. There are international laws and practices pertaining to the education of children who have special needs. (Umadevi, 2010) (Devi, 2012). The education for all Handicapped Children Act, commonly known as the Public Law, was passed by the US Congress in 1975. Public Law 94-142 was termed "blockbuster legislation" and heralded as the law with the biggest impact on education in history shortly after it was passed. The main target of Public Law 94-142 is the states, who are in charge of educating their own citizens. In compliance with the law, each state education department must:

- Finding and classifying every child who need special assistance
- Recognizing and assigning children with special needs via evaluation and testing procedures that do not differentiate on the basis of competition, customs, or oral communication skills.
- providing children with special needs with a state-wide Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- Offering special education to kids in the least restricted setting possible. Ensuring the observance of due process, account privacy, and parental engagement in development and placement choices in order to protect the rights of parents and children with special needs (Devi, 2012).

The United Nations Convention on the rights of the child (1989) has been ratified by 177 countries worldwide. Prior to the treaty's special needs section (article 23), there are many general clauses. Article 23 guarantees children with exceptional needs the right to special education, healthcare, counseling, therapy, service research, and physical exercise (Devi, 2010).

The UN Standard Rules for Encouraging Equal Opportunity for People with Disabilities were formed in 1993 and serve as an international standard for decision-making and action relating to children with special needs. They offer substantial support for the expansion of inclusive education for children with special needs on a worldwide scale. In the 1994 publication known as the Salamanca Statement, (UNESCO) championed inclusivity as the standard for education. Representatives from 92 governments and 25 international organizations concurred on this (Devi, 2012).

UNESCO's statement is unambiguous in its request to the international community to support developing inclusive education. This claim states that the best ways to counteract discriminatory attitudes, foster inclusive communities, and develop an inclusive culture and

education for all are through ordinary schools led by inclusive educators. A product of the global meeting on Special Needs Education was the Salamanca Strategy for Action. The Jomtien Declaration and Standard Rules are in opposition to the Salamanca Framework for Action, which states that all kids should attend school irrespective of their circumstances, whether they are linguistic, intellectual, social, emotional, physical, or otherwise. (Devi, 2012).

The problems of children with exceptional needs were taken up in the 2006 Convention on Disability Rights. The Convention offers a unique chance to acknowledge the division created by previous agreements on civil, political, and economic rights and to advance the idea that human rights are interconnected (Arunachalam, 2010 & (Devi, 2012).

## **1.2 Children with Special Needs in India**

Based on data from the 2011 census, 2.68 Cr. (or 2.21% of the total population) of India are handicapped. This corresponds to 121 Cr. persons. Males make up 56% (1.5 Cr.) and females make up 44% (1.18 Cr.) of the disabled population. In an effort to remove obstacles from the environment for people with impairments, the Indian government started the Accessible India campaign on December 3, 2015. As part of the effort, public buildings, transit networks, and information and communications technology will all be made genuinely inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities, both virtually and physically.

Over the years, various national-level programmes, such as the District Primary Education Programme (1990) and SSA (2001) have shaped developments in schools and classrooms, with a center on promoting educational provision for children with disabilities. With a spotlight on providing high-quality elementary education to all students, including those with special needs and girls, the SSA is currently India's premier elementary education program. More importantly, the SSA firmly advocates for the adoption of a "Zero rejection policy" to ensure that no child is excluded from the educational system and brings the concerns of disabled children, also known as "Children with special needs," under the umbrella of "Inclusive education" (SSA, 2007).

Since before independence, special needs education in India has been provided on a volunteer basis by a small number of schools or non-governmental organisations. India is witnessing the necessity of education for children with special needs, just as other regions of the world. Historically, systematic efforts were made to educate children with special needs when Christian missionaries opened schools in India. English missionary Annie Sharp founded the

first school for blind children in Amritsar in 1887. The purpose of the 1944 Education Act, sometimes known as the Butler Act, was to make education universal. Approximately concurrently, India initiated its initial official investigation into the matter of child special education. The Sargent Report, an extensive examination released by the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) that same year 1944 (Sargent , 1968). According to this report, that child with exceptional needs should only be enrolled in special schools if their disabilities need it. A policy for the "Integration" of children with special needs into Indian general schools was developed by this report (Devi, 2012).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the League of Nations in 1945. Every citizen, regardless of gender, race, colour, or religion, has the right to a suitable education, according to Article 26 of the United Nations Declaration of 1948. Additionally, the education and development of children with special needs was prioritized in the five-year plan. In the First Five Year Plan (1951–1956), the provision for children with special needs was placed under Social Welfare rather than the Education Department. The government made a statement on how critical it is to identify and stop the occurrence of children with special needs (Devi, 2012).

The Mudaliar Commission, also known as the Secondary Education Commission, submitted its findings in 1952–1953. This panel made specific suggestions for the educational institutions that serve kids with exceptional needs. In order to provide instruction especially tailored to meet the requirements of children with special needs, the panel proposed that a small number of special needs schools be created in each state (Government of India Amendment, 2002).

Additional facilities, like model schools for deaf and blind children, a women's section in adult blind training schools, and scholarship opportunities were all incorporated in the Two Five Years plan (1956–1961). In September 1955, the Ministry of Education formed a National Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Special Needs. It also suggested assessing kids with particular needs and making an effort to create instructional materials tailored specifically for them. Special educational accommodations were developed for children with special requirements as part of the Third Plan (1961–1966). The National Blind Library was established, and the National Center for the Rehabilitation of the Blind was enlarged (Devi, 2012).

A training center for adult deaf individuals and a school for children with mental health concerns were established. In order to assist students with unique needs in pursuing technical, professional, and higher education, the Scholarship Program was enlarged. The primary focus was on providing specific work opportunities and building services for children with unique requirements through volunteer groups.

Following independence, India's first commission on education was the Kothari Commission. It was observed that special education should be an essential component of education for children with special needs. The Kothari Commission sought to include both typical students and students with special needs in the same educational system. The commission also recommended and provided experimentation with integrated programmes to bring as many children as possible into these programmes (Alur, 2002). In June 1964, the Ministry of Education turned over to the Ministry of Social Welfare supervision over the education, training, and treatment of children with special needs (Government of India, 1965). This Commission promoted the inclusion of students with special needs in the standard education system and recommended two programs: integrated and special education (Devi, 2012).

It also indicated a want for services for other groups, including the partially sighted, those with speech problems, kids with brain damage, and emotionally troubled people. Plans for the education of children with special needs were introduced, and the Fifth Five-Year Plan included provisions in response to the a fore mentioned proposals. The services for children with special needs were known as the treatment of children with special needs under Social Welfare in the Fourth Plan (1969–74). Although there was not enough exposure, this plan expanded and consolidated institutions for children with special needs. In order to properly expand and enhance the work of the four National Institutions for the Blind, the Deaf, the Mentally Retarded, and the Orthopedically Handicapped (all under the Ministry of Social Welfare), a reorganization of their operational procedures was started during the Fifth Plan (1974–1979). It was suggested that the blind and deaf institutes would work well to diversify their training and other programs.

The Institute for the Mentally Retarded updated its Model School to provide more services. More focus was to be paid to other significant programs for the benefit of children with special needs, including protected workshops, scholarships, support for volunteer organizations, and unique job exchanges. An arrangement for the Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) was unveiled by the Department of Social Welfare of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India, shortly after the Fifth Plan was

presented. Once more, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment which subsequently changed to the Ministry of Human Resource Development was dependable for the scheme's 1974 debut by the Indian government. Through resource support, the program gave children with special needs educational chances in conventional schools and assisted in their preservation (Devi, 2012).

Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) was established by the government in 1975 (NCERT Report, 1992). Under the IEDC Scheme, the Ministry of Human Resource Development now oversees this program, which was formerly run by the Ministry of Welfare. Children with non-severe disabilities, as determined by medical measurement, between the ages of 5 and 14 were eligible for entrance to ordinary schools. Numerous kids have been able to integrate to Project Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED). The program covers, among other things, parent counseling and preschool instruction, book and stationery allowances, uniforms, transportation, reader and escort services, hostel accommodations and other supplementary devices (Devi, 2012).

In addition, the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980–1985) placed a strong emphasis on the necessity of averting mishaps and situations that could give rise to children with special needs. In order to assist disabled persons in integrating into society at large, it placed emphasis on the necessity of pre- and post-natal care, vaccinations, a legal framework for accident prevention and treatment, and chances for integrated education, vocational training, and economic rehabilitation. The integrated education program would be expanded and changed to properly address the evolving demands of different sorts of children with special needs, according to the Sixth Plan. (Devi, 2012)

The Department of Education has been offering educational opportunities for children with special needs in regular schools to assist them stay in school since 1982–1983 through the centrally financed Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) program. Preschool instruction for children with exceptional needs is included in the program's scope, along with parent counseling. Never the less, there were no noteworthy advancements in this area during the Seventh Plan's implementation (1985–1990). Regarding education for kids and people with disabilities, there wasn't much to see in the Seventh Plan's Section on Education, Culture, and Sports. It also suggests that, even after being transferred to the Education Department of MHRD, the Scheme on Integrated Education of the Disabled (1983) did not sufficiently document changes in this evolving approach to services for the education of children and persons with disabilities” (Mukhopadhyay, 2006 & (Devi, 2012).

The Baharul Islam Committee was founded in 1988. The group suggested that children with special needs receive free primary education for all. At the secondary and advanced education levels, the state will help with their training and education. It also highlights how critical it is to preserve residential education and advance integrated education. Aiming to "integrate the handicapped with the general community at all levels as equal partners, to prepare them for normal growth, and to enable them to face life with courage and confidence," the National Policy on Education promoted inclusive education in 1986" (Devi, 2012).

Children with exceptional needs who are able to attend normal school should not be placed in a special school, according to the Programme of Action, 1992 (POA). Once they have acquired daily living skills, communication skills, and fundamental academic skills, even students who are first enrolled to special schools for curriculum training and daily living skills should be incorporated into mainstream schools. Once more, the POA, 1992 not only restated the integration principle but also made it a fundamental part of all basic education projects, including as central government-funded teacher education programs, adult education programs, non-formal education programs, and vocational programs (Devi, 2012).

The Eighth Plan (1992–1997) included Education for Persons with Disabilities under its Social Welfare part. Most of the initiatives implemented during the Seventh Plan were long-term and permanent. Although the Achyaraya Rama Murthy Committee of 1990 found the NPE of 1986 to be commendable, it was deemed insufficient in the following areas:

- It did not place enough emphasis on the mobilization of the entire general education system for the education of children with special needs;
- Special schools have been treated differently from other educational institutions with regard to the provision of the educational supervisory infrastructure, which was developed in partnership between the Ministries of Welfare and HRD (Devi, 2012).

The 1993 Delhi Declaration on Schooling for All guarantees every child a place in a school or other education program based on their abilities (Report on Delhi Declaration, 1994). Parliament adopted the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act 1992, which set regulations for human resource training programs related to special education for children with disabilities.

The RCI's main duties include establishing minimum standards of education and training for different categories of professionals dealing with special needs, regulating training policies and programs in the field of rehabilitation of children with special needs, standardizing training courses for professionals in this area, and accrediting institutions and universities that offer rehabilitation-related degree, diploma, and certificate programs (RCI Report, 1996).

New legislation, the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995, was approved in 1994 and mandates that, to the greatest extent possible, impaired children get their education in integrated classrooms. Thanks to the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, children with special needs are entitled to free education in a proper environment until they turn eighteen (India Gazette, 1996).

The government and the World Bank started the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) in 1995 with the goal of creating curricula and training programs for early childhood care, including special needs children. The largest change is that all kids, including those with special needs, are now accountable to the state's district primary schools. Supporting integrated or inclusive education for kids with mild to average impairments was one of DPEP's main objectives (DPEP Calling, 1997).

The developments in providing integrated education for children with special needs were outlined in the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997–2002). Since the Disabled Act of 1995 was passed, children with special needs up to the age of 18 are now required by law to attend school.

Early in 1998, the Indian government and five UN organizations that assisted children with special needs joined together to launch Janshala (Janshala Report, 2003). The purpose of the National Trust Act of 1999 is to safeguard the welfare of people who have multiple disabilities, cerebral palsy, autism, and mental retardation. The purpose of the Trust Act is to empower and enable children who have exceptional needs.

The World Bank (2009) indicates that enrollment of children with special needs in primary school has significantly improved in India since 2000 based on a review of administrative data gathered under the Special School Act (SSA 2009). However, significant disparities in gender and types of impairment are evident. Analysis of 2013 DISE (Department of School Education, MHRD) data highlights variations in school enrolment for children with various types of disabilities. Where those with autism and cerebral palsy are least represented in the school-going population. Furthermore, significant intrastate differences in the enrolment of children with various types of impairments are evident (Single 2014). Children with physical impairments scored 12 scale points worse in reading and comprehension than their classmates, even after adjusting for historical variables. Regarding pupils who require special education, inclusive schools should prepare textbooks, develop learning-friendly evaluation

procedures, and make the necessary adjustments to the content, presentation, and teaching strategies, as per the national curriculum framework for school education (NCERT, 2000, Report on National Curriculum Framework, 2000).

One of the six EFA Goals, which was agreed upon by the World Education Forum (2000), is that by 2015, all children especially girls children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and members of ethnic minorities will have access to and be able to complete high-quality, free primary education. The goal is to educate every kid by broadening the definition of inclusive education to include minority and impoverished students as well as those with special needs. Both integration and inclusion are regarded as desirable objectives in the 2000 Draft National Policy on Special Education. Offering everyone access to a high-quality education and maintaining the equal access and opportunity principles of financial aid are two definitions of inclusion given in the 2003 Kochi Declaration (North-South Dialogue on Inclusive Education).

A thorough Action Plan for the Inclusive Education of Children and Youth with Disabilities was developed in 2005 (Action Plan Report of Inclusive Education, 2005), with the main objective being to ensure "the inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in all available mainstream educational settings, by providing them with a learning environment that is presented, available, reasonable, and suitable to help develop their learning and abilities". It focuses on enrolling and maintaining all students with special needs in the mainstream education system in classify to promote their learning and capacities through appropriate curricula, organized schedules, teaching methodologies, resource use, and community affiliation. Additionally, it offers a need-based educational system and other forms of support to children. Lastly, it supports higher and vocational education by ensuring that all educational institutions' reservation quotas are properly implemented (Action Plan Report on Inclusive Education, 2005).

Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh made the following announcements in March 2005 during a speech in Parliament: all schools in the nation will be handicapped friendly by 2020, and all educational facilities, including dorms, libraries, labs, and buildings, will have barrier-free communication. Singh emphasized the significance of inclusive education and how it will help children with special needs integrate fully into the general school curriculum. Additionally, he pledged to progressively roll out appliances and assistance for children with special needs across the nation.



The National Policy for People with Disabilities was unveiled by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment in February 2006. The policy document's main objective was the education of kids with special needs. The government initiated the Inclusive Education of the Disabled at the Secondary Stage (IEDSS), a centrally financed program, on January 15, 2009. Additionally, it details precisely what educators must do in order to uphold inclusivity. The Right to Education Bill, approved by the Indian parliament on August 4, 2009, is a constitutional amendment that ensures free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14. The bill's initial draft was written in 2005.

The law's requirement to reserve 25% of seats for underprivileged students at private schools drew strong opposition. The Central Advisory Board of Education subcommittee that drafted the bill stated that this clause is a crucial requirement for establishing a democratic and egalitarian society. Initially, a 50% reservation for underprivileged kids attending private schools was suggested by the India Law Commission. The final bill's language was approved by the cabinet on November 1, 2008, and it includes a 25% reserve for underprivileged and disabled students attending private schools. More than 3500 NGOs provide special needs services to children in India. Non-governmental organizations offer children with special needs a variety of services, including educational, rehabilitative, scientific, and referral services. Various services are offered by certain NGOs.

NGOs work closely with prestigious organizations such as the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE), and the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) to improve the lives of children with special needs.

Many disabled people are still not included in the federal and state governments' plans for emancipation. Compared to the national norm of over 65%, children with special needs have a pitiful literacy rate of 49%. The remarkable national rate of about 76% is greatly exceeded by the male impaired literacy rate of only about 58%. Compared to 54% nationally, the female impaired population has an appallingly low down literacy rate of 37%. Only 9% of literate children with special needs finish secondary education, according to figures from the National Sample Survey Organization from 2002 (Action Plan Report on Inclusive Education, 2005).

It is therefore reasonable to say that, despite India's efforts to boost the enrollment of children with special needs, progress in granting access to teaching for all has been glacial, and there are grave concerns regarding the quality of schooling for those students who do attend school.

### **1.3 Children with Special Needs in Assam**

India's Northeastern region includes the state of Assam. It is bordered by Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and the Himalayas range to the North, Nagaland, and Manipur to the east, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, and Bangladesh to the South, and West Bengal to the west. Assam covers 78438 km<sup>2</sup> within 89.42' E to 960 E longitudes and 2408 N to 2802 N latitudes.

Since independence, the state of Assam has lost significant territory, including the district of Sylhet to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1947, Nagaland in 1958, Meghalaya in 1970, and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1972; it now has the Brahmaputra Valley, the Barak Valley and the adjoining hills of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar. The state is divided into 31 administrative units or districts, Viz, Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Morigaon, Nagaon, Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, Karbi Anglong, and North Cachar Hills.

In order to fulfill the constitutional mandate to educate children in the age range of 6 to 14 years old and the goal of universalizing elementary education (UEE), Assam, along with the other states, launched the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001–2002. The guidelines provided in the SSA implementation framework, along with the experience gained from the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), serve as the foundation for the management structure for the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan implementation in Assam.

Since its inception, SSA Assam has been making a serious and passionate effort to expand the scope of elementary education in the state for every child up to 14 years of age and has recorded some significant achievements. In order to guarantee that no child is left out of the educational system, SSA implements a zero-rejection policy. Through a range of activities, it aims to provide inclusive education to all children and integrated education for the disabled. Additionally, it seeks to promote a wide range of methods, choices, and techniques for teaching children with special needs. Both official and non-formal educational settings, such as the Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Sanjogi Shiksha Kendras (SSK), Hard to Reach (HTR) centers, Residential Bridge Course (RBC) centers, and others, offer SSA interventions.

All students in the state, regardless of community, socioeconomic background, or level of ability, are entitled to education that will enable them to pursue careers, pursue sustainable employment, and make important contributions to society as engaged citizens. The idea of

inclusion is essential for fostering societal transformation and is necessary for the democratization of opportunities that would grant all children access to education. Due to a number of demographic, economic, emotional, and other considerations, inclusion is a reality in our state and has developed into a useful area. Consequently, the goal is for kids with special needs to overcome their obstacles by assisting them in growing in self-assurance, accepting of their situation, interacting with classmates in the regular classroom, and contributing as much as possible to all of the extracurricular activities that students without disabilities take part in. Assam is home to a large number of children with special needs. The majority of them do not attend school. Approximately 3-4% of Indian children aged 6-11 have special needs, according to government figures. However, according to household surveys carried out in Assamese areas, the percentage of impaired children in the relevant age group is only 1% to 2% (Annual Progress Report, SSA, 2002). Universalization of elementary education is contingent upon the attendance of these children who have physical or intellectual disabilities in schools. From mild to severe, special needs children are enrolled in the general stream of formal education.

An attempt was made to achieve basic education universality through district management of the educational system with the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP). This program's concentration is on kid-focused, special needs groups. Different approaches were proposed to meet these children's educational needs. Because of the unique governmental activities in schools, it is vital to standardize and promote intervention across numerous educational departments and municipal organizations in charge of basic education for children with special needs.

Children in Assam can receive special education through the Sarva Siksha Abhijan program, which was started by the department of education in the state. The program is called Entailing Inclusive Education for the Disabled. Barpeta, Darrang, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Sonitpur, Karbi-Anglong, and Morigaon are the nine (9) districts of Assam that created an educational program under the DPEP for children with exceptional needs. The state's main goal for inclusive education is to provide all special needs students with an integrated and inclusive education in general schools. The initiatives are carried out directly through the State and District Mission Offices and their organizational structure. A four-level inclusive education initiative is presently being implemented in Assam. These primarily occur at the levels of the state, district, block, and gaon panchayat.

The state takes action to ensure that all children with special needs receive an adequate education, to prepare appropriate teaching-learning processes that meet their needs, to assurance that all children with special needs achieve a sufficient level of learning, and to sustain human resource development initiatives. The implementation of inclusive education, which facilitates the education of disabled children and out-of-school children with special needs in general schools, carries out these actions. Before Assam implemented Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in 2002–2003, a house-to-house assessment was conducted in several districts to identify children with special needs. The survey revealed almost 20,000 children with exceptional needs, 8,000 of whom did not attend school. The following activities serve as the cornerstone of the state's inclusive education program for kids with special needs.

- All identified children will undergo formal and functional evaluations.
- Early detection and identification of children with special needs through an intensive campaign.
- Assigning all special needs students with the required support services to regular schools.
- Assisting all children with special needs with appliances, aids, and equipment by working with the State Welfare Department, National Institutes, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Offering assistance in the form of physical contact, resource rooms, special equipment, learning materials, remedial instruction, special education techniques, co-curricular activities, appropriate curriculum adaption, etc.
- Intensive training and instruction for instructors to help typical teachers become more sensitive to the needs of special needs children in the classroom.
- Offering resource support through resource instructors who have received specialized training, with an emphasis on education children with special needs particular skills.
- After conferring with parents and specialists, educators design and oversee customized lesson plans for every student with exceptional needs.
- Conducting community recruitment, providing parental training, and teaching parents of special needs children basic survival skills and nurturing techniques.
- Establishing resource groups to guarantee efficient program administration and planning for inclusive education.

- Special schools will be reinforced to achieve reserve support.
- Remove architectural barriers in schools to make admission easier and provide disabled-friendly facilities.
- Keep an eye on the program and evaluate it on a regular basis by creating appropriate monitoring systems.

This analysis encompasses all public and private special schools in Assam. For the 2022–2023 school year, 2,033 pupils were enrolled in special education programs. The state presently has 20 special schools; 16 of them are run by approved private organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and 4 are run by the government.

As a result, a brief description of existing special schools in Assam is presented in chronological order as below:

#### **Government B.D.S Deaf and Dumb School (1949)**

In Guwahati, Kahilipara, one of the first and oldest institutions for deaf and dumb children was founded on March 1, 1949. The institution is run by the Social Welfare Department, Assam, and is supported by the government. Mrs. Binjumoni Das is the school's current principal.

During the year (2022-23) the institution had an enrollment of 400 students from class I to XII. It is a residential school with a provision of free education and a free boarding facility. The school admits only the hearing impaired (Deaf and Dumb) children who can't access and afford to attend the normal education system.

#### **Srimonto Sankar Mission Blind School (1955)**

This school was established in the year 1955 in Barhampur (Nagaon district) and is run by the Department of Education (under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan). One of the prominent and oldest schools of North East Assam exclusively for visually impaired children. The present principal is Mrs. Guno Bora. The education is provided from primary to high school with residential facilities for students. During the session (2022-23) nearly 80 students were enrolled. The medium of instruction is Assamese. The school promotes subjects such as music, crafts, and physical education. It believes in the overall development of students by balancing academics, extracurricular activities, and sports in the state-of-the-art facilities on campus.

**Assam Andha Sishu Vidyalaya (1969)**

Assam Andha Sishu Vidyalaya is a government aided school situated in Lakhimpur district (Bihpuria). Because it provides for the educational needs of children who are visually challenged, this institution is considered remarkable. On October 2, 1969, Assam's former education minister, Shri Prembahadur Bora, built this institute after realizing the significance of education for blind children. Currently serving as the school's principal is Mr. Digonto Hazarika. There are 75 students enrolled in the school, ranging from class I to class IV (2022–2023). The Assamese government's Department of Education oversees this residential school. For the past 11 years, the school has been effective enough to achieve a 100 percent pass percentage on the exam.

**Moran Janomangal Adarsha Blind School (1972)**

Established in 1972, this school is situated in the Tiliki Amguri Vec, Khowng block (Dibrugarh District) and is considered one of the oldest as well. The school is mainly for visually impaired children. Classes at this school ranged from I to X. It is an Assamese medium school and is co-educational. The school is a private-aided institution. It is located in a rural area consisting of 30 students in the academic session 2022-23. All pupils are eligible for free boarding and education at the school.

**Jorhat Blind School (1974)**

The Assamese government founded the Jorhat Blind School in 1974. It is situated in the Jorhat district's Atilagaon ward number 16 and Assam's oldest blind school. The school's main goal is to educate pupils who are visually impaired. The Assamese Social Welfare Department is in charge of running this school. It has 150 pupils in Class I to XII (2022–2023). The school offers a hostel for kids with exceptional needs. The medium of instruction is the Assamese language. Basic computer applications such as internet access are taught using a special computer designed for the blind donated by the Ministry of Information Technology. Entrepreneurship programmes are also introduced in the school.

**Guwahati Blind School (1976)**

This school was established on 4th January 1976. It is located in Basistha, Kamrup district. The school is mainly established for visually handicapped children and is a residential school. It is run by the government and funded by the Social Welfare Department, Assam. The present principal is Mrs. Nirupama Bhattachary. The main subjects taught at the school

include languages, mathematics, science, social studies, and physical education. During the session (2022-2023) 250 students were enrolled, with grades ranging from class I to X.

#### **Ghilamara Blind School (1985)**

Ghilamara Blind School was established in 1985 and is located in a rural area of Bordoloni block in Lakhimpur district. This school is managed by an NGO and is co-educational and residential with classes ranging from I to X. Assamese is the medium of instruction. The school has 45 visually impaired students enrolled for the academic year 2022-23.

#### **Sishu Sarothi (1987)**

Founded in 1987, Sishu Sarothi is a prominent non-governmental organization in the Guwahati (Birubari) Kamrup area that works for the rights protection and legal assistance of children with special needs in North Eastern India, as well as for their rehabilitation, education, livelihoods, advocacy, and awareness. Mridula Barua is the current principal. The Schools had 110 pupils in the 2022–2023 session providing instruction in classes I–X. This organization's primary goals are to protect and defend the rights of people with disabilities, guarantee their equal chances, and encourage their involvement and inclusion in a world free from barriers. To realize its vision of empowering people with disabilities in North East India, the institution works to ensure justice, equality, and dignity for all stakeholders in the region. Through its work, it strives to enable persons with disabilities to achieve and maintain maximum independence, as well as full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life.

#### **Prerona (1992)**

Prerona is the spastic society of Jorhat, situated at Cinnamara on the southern fringes of the town. It educates children with special needs and facilitates the rehabilitation of physically challenged persons from all walks of life. It was set up in 1992; the institution is affiliated with the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy (Kolkata). Prerona's management committee consists of parents or family members of disabled persons who oversee the institute's operations. It runs a special schools centre as well as a National Trust respite care service. It also provides rehabilitation programmes for children with special needs. The teachers at Prerona have received training from Indian Institute for Cerebral Palsy, but in 2019-21 the institution ran the RCI approved training programme. Its goal is to facilitate them reach their full physical, emotional, and intellectual potential. Prerona makes every effort to treat children with special needs as useful and self-reliant; its motto is "To Meet the Challenge of Life". In the academic session 2022-23, it had 150 students. Residential facilities are also

offered by them. To help guardians and welfare workers recognize these youngsters and enroll them in the institution, the institution also provides formal training.

#### **Jorhat Deaf and Dumb School (1995)**

The school was established in the year 1995 by the Late Tarun Gogoi, former Chief Minister of Assam. During the session 2022-23, the school has 70 hearing-impaired students. Rajkumar Kedia (District Officer) is the present principal-in-charge of the school. It is a residential school, providing education from Nursery to class VIII, and is being managed by the Social Welfare Department of Assam. The schools have the condition of speech therapy for their students and in addition give attention to extracurricular activities like sports, music, drama, etc.

#### **Monfort School (1996)**

Monfort School was established in 1996, at 10th Mile in Guwahati. It is a co-educational school affiliated with the Central Board of Education (CBSE). It is managed by the Institute of Monfort Brothers of St. Gabriel. The school consists of 55 special children during the session (2022-23). The school is a typical educational institution that accepts students with exceptional needs. English is used as the instruction language. The institution's current principal is Brother. Dr. James P.K. SG.

#### **Ashadeep Day Rehab Centre (1996)**

Ashadeep is one the prominent NGOs situated in Guwahati (Lachit Nagar), Kamrup District. The centre was established on 1st January 1996. Dr. Ayana Goswami is the present principal. During the sessions (2022-23), the schools enrolled 57 students, mostly students who are mentally retarded. Children with cerebral palsy, autism, various disabilities, and intellectual disabilities can receive instruction and training from Ashadeep. Guardians of children with special needs are also given access to counseling services, which help them comprehend the therapies and instructional strategies that can be used in a home environment. Since 1996, this centre has been functioning as a Day Rehabilitation Centre for mentally challenged persons/children.

#### **Saraswati Bagdhawni Jatiya Bidyalaya (1999)**

This institution was established on 4th February, 1999, and is located in Guwahati (BihagiNagar, Birkuchi), Kamrup district. Mrs. Dulumoni Kalita is the present principal of the school. Sarawati Bagdhawni Jatiya Bidyalayais one of the pioneer institutions of north-eastern India for empowering hearing-impaired students. The school provides speech training



with innovative therapy and completes schooling facilities for students. In the year (2021-2023) the schools had a total number of 72 students. It has hostel facilities with 50 capacities.

#### **Special Residential School for Handicap (2000)**

Situated in Kahara Pathar, Bajali District, the school was founded in 2000 and is managed by a non-governmental organization. Currently serving as the school's principal is Md. Abdur Rahman Choudhury. The school has only 55 students during the session (2022-23). The school offers residential facilities for the children. The majorities of the students is from low-income families and are mentally challenged with cerebral palsy being more dominant. The physical infrastructure of the institution is extremely poor due to a lack of government support.

#### **Tapoban Student's Welfare Home (2005)**

Tapoban is an institute run by the Student Welfare Mission located in the Bajali district, which was established in 2005. Mr. Kumud Kalita is the current principal of the school. The school received financial assistance from the Social Welfare Department, Assam. It is a residential school and had a total enrolment of 110 students (2022-23). The main aim of Tapoban is to assist in meeting the basic needs of special children. The school offers education from class I to class X. It is also worth mentioning that the school is very proud to produce special children who continue their education in the mainstream with good results in the school board examination (i.e., matriculation). Children with special needs might receive effective physiotherapy treatments from them in addition to high-quality schooling.

#### **Destination Child Home (2005)**

Destination Child Home is a home for the mentally challenged situated at Kahilipara, Guwahati, which was established on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2005. The organization is run by Mrs. Rupa Hazarika. It is a home to 40 mentally challenged inmates many of whom are abandoned, orphaned, or street children in the session (2022-23). It also houses mentally challenged individuals above 60 years of age. The goal of Destination Child Home is to create comprehensive and inclusive education for children, as well as ample opportunities for education, access to medical services, family life experience, and participation in family activities. The main aim of this centre is to bring out the hidden talents of Children with special needs and shape them through proper training and guidance so that they can contribute excellence to society.

**Titabor Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School and Training Centre (2006)**

The school is located near Jorhat (Titabor, Letakujaan Gaon) and was established in 2006. Mrs. Minu Dhandiya is the present principal of the school. The school consists of grades from I to VIII and is co-educational. Assamese is the medium of instruction. During the session (2022-23) it has 50 students. It is a private-aided school that also provides pre-vocational training. It offers residential facilities. It educates and trains hearing-impaired children.

**Sarothi – A Centre for Ability Development (2007)**

It is a non-governmental organization based in the Nalbari district that has worked over the years to promote the overall development of society for children with special needs. The centre was established in 2007 by a group of local people who wanted to contribute to society. It helps kids with special needs by offering daycare and housekeeping services. Children with special needs, together with those with hearing impairments, are supported at Sarothi's daycare center. It enables the mentally and physically challenged persons to stand on their own feet. The institute has 150 children enrolled during the session (2022-23).

**Assam Rehabilitation Centre (2012)**

This center was established in the year, 2012 by Dr. Rabinder Singh. It's a private organization purely run on the fees received from the students. The institution currently has 40 children enrolled during the session (2022-23). The center primarily deals with autistic children, providing them with education, therapy, and medical care. At present, the center is located in a private building in Athengrabari (Guwahati), Kamrup district.

**Arunoday Deaf and Dumb School (2015)**

Arunoday Deaf and Dumb School was established in 2015 in Kaplabori, Nalbari district. It consists of 40 children with disabilities (2022-23). The school is primarily funded privately. The medium of instruction is Assamese. The school serves students from class I to IV and is mainly for hearing-impaired students.

**1.4 Statement of the Problem**

The study of education for children with special needs falls under a particular area of specialty. The high level of specialized attention and care that children with special needs require is not provided in specialized classrooms. Children with special needs possess the right to an education that is appropriate for their needs and ability level as citizens of our country. For this reason, no child should be kept out of the educational system. Many

interventions need to be implemented in order for special education to be provided to children with special needs.

As a result, greater work is needed to demonstrate a sincere commitment to researching and putting into practice the best strategies for eliminating impairments, involving all societal levels. The aim of this research is to collect data on specific needs children's education when they enter a four-wall school. thus, the investigator identified the study's problem as:

**“A Study on Education for Children with Special Needs in Assam”**

### **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The following goals are intended to be accomplished by the current study:

- i. To find out the types of disabilities children with special needs in special schools of Assam.
- ii. To determine the facilities available for children with special needs in special schools.
- iii. To determine the problems faced by children with special needs in special schools of Assam.
- iv. To evaluate the various problems faced by teachers in the teaching-learning process in special schools.
- v. To know parents' perception towards their children's education.
- vi. To determine the role of the Government's schemes/ Policies towards improving the education of children with special needs in Assam.

### **1.6 Needs and Significance of the Study**

All children, including those with special needs, are constrained to an education that fulfills their requirements. The educational objectives of children with special needs are identical to those of typical children. Education must be about preparing all children, by their abilities, to live full and independent lives in which they can donate to their communities, collaborate with others, and learn throughout their lives. Education aims to help children develop in all aspects of their lives, including spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social, and physical growth. Children with special needs are first and foremost children, and they share many characteristics with other children of the same age. Many aspects of a child's development supply to the whole child, including personality, verbal and non-verbal communication skills, resilience and the capacity to appreciate and enjoy life, as well as a

desire to learn. Because each child has unique strengths, personalities, and experiences, specific disabilities will have varying effects on them.

The main availability of sufficient qualified professionals for the evaluation of PWDs (Persons with disabilities) in Assam has badly affected the enumeration of PWDs (Persons with disabilities) in the region. The majority of school employees are not trained to design and implement instructive programmes for children with special needs in regular schools. Universities experts may be used in designing curriculums that may help in changing the attitudes of people towards PWDs (Persons with disabilities). Under certain conditions, Assam government departments are limited in their ability to carry out specific programmes. In such a situation, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) will undoubtedly play an important role. As a result, both government and non-governmental institutions should prioritise the establishment of special schools. In order to train and then work with the child, many organizations must also have procedures in place that can be developed by leaving and experiencing education. It will also support the preservation of control over the standard of instruction given.

Few research have been done in this area in Assam. Studies on schooling for children with special needs are essentially nonexistent. Investigating the main problems and difficulties faced by educators, administrators, and parents of special needs students at special schools in great detail is essential. The demands of children with special needs will be very essential to society, and the study's results will be helpful in developing various plans for the effective operation of special education facilities.

### **1.7 Delimitation of the Study**

The current investigation is limited based on the following criteria:

- i. The study is restricted to special schools run by the Government and registered NGOs.
- ii. The study is delimited to the teachers working in special schools.
- iii. The study is covering from Class I to Class X children of special schools.

### **1.8 Operational Definitions of Key Terms**

#### **Children with special needs**

Children who are incapable of learning or engaging in other activities due to a disability, or a combination of disabilities, are classified as having special needs. Special needs children include those with Mental Retardation, which causes them to develop at a slower rate than other children. Speech and language impairment such as problems in expressing or

understanding others, Physical disability, including vision problems, cerebral palsy, learning disabilities, or other conditions.

### **Special School**

A special school is one that serves pupils with exceptional learning requirements as a result of severe learning challenges, physical disabilities, or behavioral issues. Special schools are built, staffed, and equipped with resources especially meant to give children with special needs the special education they need.

### **1.9 A Brief Description of the Study Area**

Assam, also referred to as the "land of Red River and Blue Hills," is the northeastern state that guards India's borders. Assam's 78,438 square kilometres make up 2.39 percent of the nation's total land area. Assam is encircled by international borders that span over 3,200 kilometers. For the people living along both of its banks, the powerful river Brahmaputra provides a lifeline. There are six administrative zones in Assam.

These zones are Northern, Upper Assam, Lower Assam, Hill zone, central zone and the Barak valley zone. The state of Assam presently has 33 districts. There are 80 sub-divisions, 184 revenue circles, 26395 villages. Out of 33 districts seven districts are namely Dima Hasao, East Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong, Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri covered by Autonomous Councils. For the purpose of present study special schools have been selected that covered districts out of 33 districts of the state, viz- Kamrup, Barpeta, Nagaon, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur, Nalbari and Jorhat.

Location: The Indian subcontinent's north eastern most region is home to Assam. The region lies between the Patkai and Naga Ranges and the eastern Himalayan foothills, spanning latitude 24°10' N to 27°58' N and longitude 89°49' E to 97°26' E. Boundaries: Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura border Assam on the south; Bangladesh, Meghalaya, and West Bengal border it on the west; Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh border it on the north; Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh border it on the east. The research area's profile: Assam is separated into three major geographical areas:

- \* Brahmaputra Valley

- \* Barak Valley or Surama Valley, and

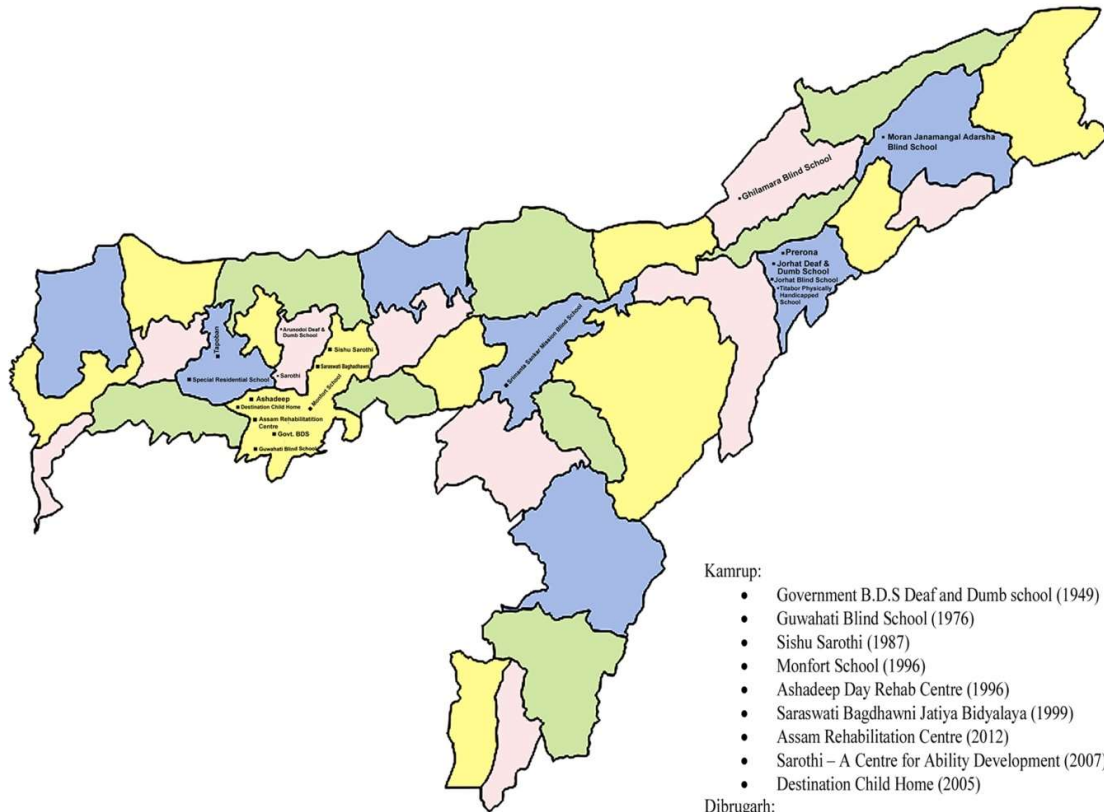
- \* The hilly areas of Karbi districts.

Flora and Fauna: With its abundance of tropical rainforests, deciduous forests, riverbank grasslands, bamboo orchards, and various wetland ecosystems, Assam is one of the world's most biodiverse regions. Two of the state's prominent wildlife National Parks are two UNESCO World Heritage sites- the Kaziranga National Park, home to the endangered one horned rhino and the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, near the Bhutan border.

Population and Literacy: As per 2011 census, the population of Assam stands at 3,12,05,576 of which 1,59,39,443 are males and 1,52,66,133 are females. Further, the literacy rate stands at 72.19% of which 77.85% is male literacy rate while the female literacy rate is 63.00 %.

Assam is bordered to the northeast and north-east by Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, and Myanmar; to the south by Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Meghalaya; to the west by Bangladesh and West Bengal; and to the northeast again by Arunachal Pradesh. There are 3,11,69,272 people in Assam, according to the 2011 census, with 1,52,14,345 women and 1,59,54,927 men. 12.90% of the population resides in cities, while 87.10% of people live in rural areas. The state has a sex ratio of 954 and a population density of 397 people per square kilometre (Indian Census Report, 2011). The primary language of the state and the language used by its citizens is Assamese. The economy of Assam is insignificantly agricultural. The populations of the state of Assam are known as "Asomiya" (Assamese), which is also the state language of Assam. The state has a large number of tribes, each unique in its tradition, culture, dress and exotic way of life. Different tribes like Bodo, Kachari, Karbi, Miri, Mishimi, Rabha, etc co-exist in Assam; most tribes have their own languages though Assamese is the principal language of the state. A common of the Assamese are Vaishnavas (a sect of Hinduism). In Assam, the caste system, although it exists, is not as outstanding as in other parts of India. Other religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam etc. are also experienced in Assam. The state festival of Assam is the Bihu which is distinguished in three parts during a year with great display and magnificence by all Assamese, irrespective of caste, creed or religion (Assam State Portal, <http://Assam.govt.in> about us). The total population of Assamese speakers in Assam is nearly 15.09 million which makes up 48.38% of the population of state according to the Language census of 2011.

## Location of Special Schools in Different Districts of Assam



### Kamrup:

- Government B.D.S Deaf and Dumb school (1949)
- Guwahati Blind School (1976)
- Sishu Sarothi (1987)
- Monfort School (1996)
- Ashadeep Day Rehab Centre (1996)
- Saraswati Bagdhawni Jatiya Bidyalaya (1999)
- Assam Rehabilitation Centre (2012)
- Sarothi – A Centre for Ability Development (2007)
- Destination Child Home (2005)

### Dibrugarh:

- Moran Janamangal Adarsha Blind School (1972)

### Jorhat:

- Jorhat Deaf and Dumb School (1995)
- Titabor Physically Handicapped (Deaf & Dumb) School and Training Centre (2006)
- Jorhat Blind School (1974)
- Prerona (1992)

### Nalbari:

- Assam Andha Sishu Vidyalaya (1969)
- Arunoday Deaf and Dumb School (2015)

### Barpeta:

- Special Residential School for Handicap (2000)
- Tapoban Student's Welfare Home (2005)

### North Lakhimpur:

- Ghilamara Blind School (1985)

### Nagaon:

- Srimonto Sankar Mission Blind School (1955)