

What is PWDS?

Persons with disabilities (PWDs), according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities, include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

The International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) refers to disability as “an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations”.

Although there is no widely accepted definition of persons with disabilities, two definitions can be found in the National Policy for Special Education in Pakistan: **“Disability”** means the lack of ability to perform an activity in a manner that is considered to be normal. A person with disabilities means a person who, on account of injury, disease, or congenital deformity, is handicapped in undertaking any gainful profession or employment, and includes persons who are visually impaired, hearing impaired, and physically and mentally disabled.

The 1998 Population Census defined the term disability as, any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of the ability to perform an activity in the manner and within the range considered normal for a human being. Impairment means any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or functional”.

According to the census for 1998, there are 3,286,630 people with disability constituting 2.54 per cent of the population (Bureau of Statistics, 1998). The figure is underestimated, as the definition of disability did not include moderate and mild disability. Data collectors for the census were not trained to identify and classify all forms of disability.