

## Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016: Through Critical Lens


Ralte L<sup>1\*</sup>

DOI:10.54741/SSJAR/6.1.2026.319

<sup>1\*</sup> Lawmsangpuia Ralte, Visiting Faculty, Department of Sociology, ICFAI University, Mizoram, India.

Women with disabilities in Mizoram state have made up a sizeable portion and have faced issues in certain sections of society. RPwD Act, 2016 was established in India and it was also immediately implemented in the state. Through this Act, persons with disabilities are set to be empowered in all walks of life. This paper seeks to analyse the impact of the Act in terms of providing employment opportunities to women with disabilities in the state. The findings show that women with disabilities have acquired less chances of having employment opportunities as compared to women without disabilities and this had led them to be in a state of poverty and income deficiency and calls the need to empower them by providing vocational trainings.

**Keywords:** RPwD Act, 2016, women with disabilities, mizoram

Corresponding Author	How to Cite this Article	To Browse
Lawmsangpuia Ralte, Visiting Faculty, Department of Sociology, ICFAI University, Mizoram, India. Email: <a href="mailto:lawmsangpuiaralte46@gmail.com">lawmsangpuiaralte46@gmail.com</a>	Ralte L, Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016: Through Critical Lens. Soc Sci J Adv Res. 2026;6(1):68-72. Available From <a href="https://ssjar.singhpublication.com/index.php/ojs/article/view/319">https://ssjar.singhpublication.com/index.php/ojs/article/view/319</a>	

**Manuscript Received**  
2025-12-14

**Review Round 1**  
2025-12-31

**Review Round 2**

**Review Round 3**

**Accepted**  
2026-01-19

**Conflict of Interest**  
None

**Funding**  
Nil

**Ethical Approval**  
Yes

**Plagiarism X-checker**  
4.43

**Note**



© 2026 by Ralte L and Published by Singh Publication. This is an Open Access article licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> unported [CC BY 4.0].



## **1. Introduction**

Disability is a condition which affects the individual at the medical, social, technical and health levels. The conditions of disability lead to a marginalized place in society, culture, economics and politics. The hardships associated with disability are centuries old and persons with disabilities have constantly fell into a state of stigmatization and inferiority complex, which in turn denied them of their chances for holistic development in society (Beaudry, 2016; Davis, 2017; Schipper, 2006). In present day, disability has been constructed and studied with a more humanist attitude, especially in the field of academics (Goodley, 2010). The study of disability has started to point out problems associated with disabilities stating that persons with disabilities are not the problem but rather, the problem lies in the creation of "normalcy" by society which in turn leads to the creation of "problems" centred around persons with disabilities (Bashishtha, 2024).

The term "disability" is a word which is largely associated with negativities. It can be acquired right from the onset of birth or can be acquired at later stages in life due to old age and accidents. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995, has laid down seven types of disabilities namely-blindness, hearing impairment, leprosy-cured persons, locomotor disability, low-vision, mental illness and mental retardation (Narayan & John, 2017; Bose, 2021). The Act also defined disability stating that it refers to a person who has more than 40 per cent disability in conditions such as blindness, low vision, persons with intellectual disabilities and mental illness, hearing impaired and leprosy cured as certified by medical authorities.

Women with disabilities are the worst sufferers of disability by facing double the hardships as compared to men. Their rights are often violated and many times, their rights are being denied to them.

## **2. Legal introspection of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016**

On 1<sup>st</sup> October, 2007, India witnessed a remarkable feat as it signed and ratified.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which came into force on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2008. The UNCRPD serves as the heart of the disability rights movement and has been regarded as a landmark international treaty that laid down the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities. It has also requested all the signatories of the convention to amend their existing laws to comply with UNCRPD's principles. The UNCRPD has viewed disability as a result of clashes between impairments with that of societal attitude and ignorance leading to roadblocks for persons with disabilities. This has prevented their chances to freely interact equally with others in society (Chauhan, 2021; Srilata, 2022).

The outcome of the signatories for India was the introduction of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 after passing many rounds of scrutiny in the Parliament. It was finally passed by the two houses of Parliament in the year 2016 and it replaced the previous Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (Chauhan, 2021). It further received the Presidential assent and was finally notified on 28<sup>th</sup> December, 2016 and immediately came into full force from 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2017 onwards. This Act was meant to be a game-changer in the country and aimed to end the centuries-old discrimination and neglect faced by persons with disabilities in all spheres of society such as education, employment and accessibility. The country also witnessed paradigm shift in which the perspectives of disability have changed from charity-based to human-rights perspective. High hope was placed on the Act to empowered the disabled communities and to impart awareness on the issues of disability and to inculcate feelings of acceptance among the general public (Narayan & John, 2017).

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 has stated 21 types of disability – blindness, low-vision, leprosy-cured persons, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, dwarfism, intellectual disability, mental illness, autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, chronic neurological conditions, specific learning disabilities, multiple sclerosis, speech and language disability, thalassemia, hemophilia, sickle cell disease, multiple disabilities, acid attack victim, Parkinson's disease. The Act assures that all the persons with disabilities in India assures the provision of "right to equality, life with dignity,

and respect for his or her own integrity equally with others” by the government (Bose, 2021; Mowat, 2015).

The RPwD Act 2016 has ensured that the government should take appropriate measures towards the upliftment of women and children with disabilities and to ensure that they enjoy their rights equally with others in society. According to this Act, the government should take full matter to safeguard all persons with disabilities from experiencing abuse, exploitation and violence of all types. The state governments and local authorities are tasked with the role of promotion, protection and ensuring education to all persons with disabilities in society along with others. In a similar instance, the government should provide adequate support and facilities for persons with disabilities so that they could avail to specific training in vocational training centres and have further scope for self-employment. Occupation and employment opportunities should be provided by the government without any discrimination and reasonable accommodation should be provided by the government as well. In terms of healthcare, the Act ensures the provision of barrier-free access for persons with disabilities in both government and private hospitals and all other health centres in the country.

### 3. Methods

This study uses mix methodology of both qualitative and quantitative method. It uses interview schedule and observation methods to gather data. The Institutional Human Ethics Committee of Mizoram University permits the ethical permission for this study (No. MZU/HEC/2024/004). The data is entered in an excel sheet and after data cleaning is done, they are transported into a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software in which data is then presented in the form of frequency and percentages, all written in tabular form. In terms of observation, the researcher uses participant and non-participant observation method to further supplement the responses gathered from the interview schedule.

For the selection of respondents, 163 women with disabilities from the two biggest districts of Mizoram are selected and thus, Aizawl and Lunglei serve as the universe of this study. All the participants gave their oral consent to be included in this study. The main objective is to analyze the conditions and status of the respondents in terms of discrimination,

education, occupation, and healthcare in society. In this sense, The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016 came into context and the researcher singled out five sections from this Act to know whether women with disabilities in Mizoram enjoy the rights in the area of education, occupation, healthcare and a promise to end discrimination against persons with disabilities stated by this Act.

### 4. Occupation

Currently, this study has only completed the “occupation” section of its objectives. Occupation can simply be defined as the work that people are engaged in to earn an income. It is basically an activity that fills most of the working hours to receive a financial or equivalent award. It is a sociological criterion that is interrelated to the positions held by individuals in society and is also used as a determinant of health and income in society. This study is conducted to know the occupation status of the women, and a cross-examination between their educational level and their occupation status is also conducted in the process. The respondents are asked whether they are currently employed, unemployed, or are still studying.

On the other hand, employment is the state of being employed to receive financial or equivalent rewards. Among the women who had occupations, they were further asked whether they were employed in the field of government, private, self-employed, or unemployed. A further cross-examination is done based on their occupational status.

**Table 1:** Occupation of the Respondents

District	Occupational status			
	Employed	Unemployed	Studying	Total
Lunglei	3 (1.8%)	3 (1.8%)	14 (8.6%)	20 (12.3%)
Aizawl	21 (12.9%)	97 (59.5%)	25 (15.3%)	143 (87.7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>24 (14.7%)</b>	<b>100 (61.35%)</b>	<b>39 (23.9%)</b>	<b>163 (100%)</b>

**Source:** Field Survey

In the above data, the occupation status of the respondents is pointed out and it shows that among the women in Lunglei, there are only 3 (1.8%) women who are employed and another 3 (1.8%) unemployed women. As many as 14 (8.6%) women are still studying in a special school and a few girls are enrolled in government schools as well.

The situation presented in Aizawl is somewhat similar as there are 21 (12.9%) women who are employed as against 97 (59.5%) unemployed women. Only a handful of women, i.e., 25 (15.3%) women are still studying either in special schools or government schools. Among all the girls who are still studying in both districts, there are no girls with disabilities who are enrolled in private schools as they are enrolled either in special schools or government schools.

*"No one wants to hire me! They have no faith in my ability and the employer cannot see past my disability when I gave my interview in private company recruitment. Besides, my family was always worried about me and did not trust me to move about in the street as well, which lowered my confidence level. This further lowers the chances of finding employment for me."* – Miss P1, low vision.

Overall, 100 (61.35%) women are unemployed while 39 (23.9%) of the women are still studying, and only 24 (14.7%) women are employed. In Lunglei, most of the women are still studying and they form 70% of the entire population in the district and 15% of them are also unemployed. Whereas in Aizawl, unemployed women form the majority of the population as 67.83% of them are currently without a job followed closely by women who are still studying which is 27.27%. Between the two, the unemployment rate of women is higher in Lunglei.

Unemployment is extremely high amongst women with disabilities in Mizoram and the occupation rate of respondents is very low. Most of the women are dependent on the income of their family members and only a handful of them (14.7%) are financially independent. The reason for their unemployment is due to the reluctance of employers to hire them due to their disability and also because their family members do not encourage them to find employment. Few women are currently studying and the data also reveals that the education level of the respondents is very low which propelled the women to be in a state of unemployment.

## 5. Conclusion

In terms of findings, only the occupation status of the respondents is analyzed and the results show that the occupation status of women with disabilities in Mizoram is still low even though RPwD Act 2016,

has laid down measures for policy-makers to provide better occupational and employment chances for persons with disabilities. This may or may not be reflective of the other results which are in dire need to be conducted especially in the field of education, societal issues and socio-economic profiles of persons with disabilities in the state. The other areas to be explored include the issues of the respondents in terms of healthcare and the level of discrimination faced by the women respondents. The final results will eventually show whether the introduction of RPwD Act 2016 in Mizoram state in India is effective for women with disabilities residing in the state.

## References

1. Bashishtha, P. S. (2024). Disability in beckett: A philosophical investigation. *Drishhti the Sight*, 13(1), 104- 107.
2. Beaudry, J. S. (2016). Beyond (models of) disability?. *The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 41(2), 210-228. doi:10.1093/jmp/jhv063.
3. Bose, A. (2021). *A review of the rights of persons with disabilities act 2016*. Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies.
4. Chauhan, U. M. (2021). Caregiver's perceptions of barriers to implementation of the "Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) act, 2016" in India. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 17(3), 248. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17450128.2021.1910760>
5. Davis, L. J. (2017). *Introduction: Disability, normality and power*. Routledge.
6. Goodley, D. (2010). 'Learning difficulties', the social model of disability and impairment: challenging epistemologies. *Disability & Society*, 16(2), 207-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590120035816>
7. Mowat, J. G. (2015). Towards a new conceptualization of marginalization. *European Educational Research Journal*, 14(5). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474904115589864>
8. Narayan, C. L. & John, T. (2017). The rights of persons with disabilities act, 2016: Does It address the needs of the persons with mental illness and their families. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 59(1), doi:10.4103/psychiatry.IndianJPsychiatry\_75\_17.

9. Schipper, J. (2006). *Disability studies and the Hebrew Bible*. T & T Clark.

10. Srilata, K. (2022). *This kind of child: The disability story*. Westland Books.

Disclaimer / Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of Journals and/or the editor(s). Journals and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.