

## **Challenges faced in the implementation of UDID (Unique ID for Persons with Disabilities) scheme of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.**

- Sanjiv J Phansalkar and Nikhil Tripathi

### **Abstract:**

According to Census 2011, there are 2.68 crore Persons with Disabilities (PwD) in India (2.21 percent of the total population)<sup>[5]</sup>. In an attempt to create a National Database for PwDs, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities has been issuing a Unique Disability Identity Card (UDID) to each person with disabilities. Data available from the Union Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry shows that a miniscule percentage i.e. 7 per cent of the total 1.44 crore PwDs having Disability Certificates (DCs) have been issued the UDID cards<sup>[3]</sup>. In this paper the focus has been to identify the challenges and issues faced in UDID generation by the involved stakeholders such as beneficiaries, dependents, medical staff, welfare department officials, political representatives and other ground level functionaries related to the scheme. The detailed study has been conducted in one of the districts with nearly 11000 PwD population in Jharkhand state where UDID scheme has been initiated in the first phase of the programme. The research was conducted on the basis of qualitative data based on the conversation with these stakeholders and quantitative data available from the departments.

It has been found that the challenges faced by administration in the generation of UDID cards is linked to lack of dedicated skilled staff at the district level for data collection and verification of applicants. Another important reason is the lack of funds for awareness and required IT infrastructure to facilitate the program at the district level. UDID certificate is not mandatory for availing any direct benefits for PwDs whereas Disability Certificate is. Hence, the demand for DCs is much higher among people than that of UDID. The research suggests and implements steps which can be taken to speed up the performance in the UDID scheme. Increased focus on awareness generation, data collection with the help of Anganwadi Sevika, data entry from the block level operator and fast track verification from District health department can lead to increase in performance for the success of the program. For an increase in the number of people applying on their own, UDID can be mandatorily associated with the existing schemes such as Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) and Swami Vivekananda Nishakt Swalamban Protsahan Yojna.

## **Introduction**

After a successful pilot of Universal Disability Identity (UDID) project, the government has notified the beginning of the project in 15 states in the first phase<sup>[6]</sup>. As on 10th October 2019, UDID Card Project has started in all districts of 10 of these states named Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Rajasthan. UDID Card generation is expected to start soon in Telangana, Tripura, Chandigarh and Haryana in its phase-I<sup>[14]</sup>. Among the 23,18,983 cards generated till date Madhya Pradesh has the highest number with 3,27,675 cards generated<sup>[12]</sup>.

In this research paper an attempt has been made to understand and address key challenges faced by administration in UDID card generation in a district of Jharkhand state. As per census 2011, Jharkhand has 769980 PwD population, which is 2.33 percent of its total population of 32988134<sup>[5]</sup>. Among these, 46.93 percent people are literate and 37 percent of people are working<sup>[15]</sup>. The selected district Rajnagar has 2630 PWDs per 100,000 population<sup>[1]</sup>. There are 3300 PwDs among these who have Disability Certificate issued from the Health Department of the district. 641 people among them are taking pension of ₹ 1000 from Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS) and 2064 people from state's Swami Vivekananda Nishakt Swalamban Protsahan Yojna of the same amount.

## **Geography of the District**

A large part of the district, 40% of the total area is covered under forest. Two blocks Panki and Nala are dense forest areas. These two blocks are at a distance of 40 and 75 kms respectively from the district headquarters with issues of Pattargarhi and Left-wing extremism (LWE). The district has a pleasant climate, forests, hills and a number of beautiful waterfalls. Timber and firewood are the major forest produce. Kendu leaf, Lac, Myrobalans (amla, harre and bahera), Bamboos, Sabai, Kend and Mahua are also found in this region<sup>[7]</sup>.

The mean daily maximum and minimum temperature varies between 29 °C and 18 °C respectively. The average annual rainfall is about 1100 mm, post monsoon is 98 mm, winter rain is 65 mm and pre monsoon is 121 mm<sup>[4]</sup>. The major crops cultivated are Paddy, Millet, Maize, Wheat, Gram, Peas, Mustard, etc. Major languages spoken by people here include Hindi, Mundari, Birhore, Kurukh, and Nagpuri. Hindus, Christians and Muslims form the major religious communities. Sikhs and Jains are a minority in the district<sup>[7]</sup>.

## **Social System and Economy**

In tribal villages patriarchal system prevails. Each village community is represented by Pahans with religious functions consisting of offering public sacrifices to propitiate the local spirits and so to preserve the village from the ravages of wild animals, to obtain a good harvest. The pahans also have the power to inflict punishment for breaches of tribal customs. Similarly in some areas the title of 'Manki' still survives. Akhras and Dhumkuria are to be found in almost every village which is the meeting place of the entire village.

Majority of the population is tribal and they are dependent on agriculture and forests for their livelihood. Lack of food security from the land has compelled many tribal families to migrate out of their own villages. The area is famous for Lac cultivation. A large part of the India's total lac production comes from this area. A number of development agencies are active in the area, prominent among which is a national level development organization called Pradan. Others are missionary organizations such as Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK) and Sita Gramoudyog Vikas Sansthan (SGVS).

## **General Administration of the District**

The responsibility of General Administration of the District lies with the Deputy Commissioner. She is the Executive Head and has three fold roles, which are Deputy Commissioner, District Collector and District Magistrate. She is assisted by other officers for carrying out day to day work in various fields including Deputy Development Commissioner (DDC), Additional Collector, Civil Surgeon (Health), Executive Magistrates, District Welfare Officer, District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO), District Panchayati Raj Officers etc<sup>[6]</sup>.

Civil Surgeon (CS) heads the health department of the district. Under his supervision is DPM-NHM (Unit) which consists of District Planning Manager (DPM), District Data Manager (DDM), District Account Manager (DAM). One another similar unit is for Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP). There are various specialist doctors in various health speciality departments. Among the facilities under the control of Health Department are District Hospital, Referral Hospital, Community Health Centers (CHCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs), and Health Sub Centres (HSCs) which are now being converted into Health and Wellness Centres.

District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) heads the social welfare department in the district. She is assisted by Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) at block level. CDPOs have Lady Supervisors (LSs) and Anganwadi Workers and Helpers to support in running various schemes of the central and the state government. Infrastructure

facility under the control of Social Welfare Department are the Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) of the district.

Among the important people's representatives of the district are the Member of Parliament (MP), Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), Mukhiyas (Panchayat Heads), Panchayat Samiti Pramukhs, Zila Parishad members and Ward Parshads of the Urban Local Body.

### **UDID Scheme in Brief**

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities is in the process of generating UDID Project with a view to create a national data-base for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and also to issue unique ID card to everyone<sup>[14]</sup>.

The aim of the project is:

- To create a national database for PwDs by issuing the card through a web-portal.
- With the enactment of Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016, the types of disabilities have been increased from existing 7 to 21 with the central government having power to add more types of disabilities<sup>[9]</sup>. This will lead to an increase in the number of people with new type of disabilities to be covered under UDID scheme.
- UDID project is to encourage transparency, efficiency and ease of delivering government benefits to PwDs pertaining to scholarship, skill training, inclusive education, rehabilitation, pension, railway concessions to PwDs across the country<sup>[8]</sup>.
- To track physical and financial progress of benefit delivery at village level, block level, district level, state level and national level<sup>[14]</sup>.

It was aimed to complete the UDID project by 2018 after its launch in December 2016<sup>[2]</sup>. With various challenges at different levels of its implementation, so far, 601 districts of 35 States/UTs have generated 23.30 lakh e-UDID Cards with a total of 68.06 lakh applications<sup>[14]</sup>.

Among the states with UDID card generation Jharkhand has a total of 13015 cards generated till 10th of October 2019 which is 16 percent of the total PwD population of the state<sup>[14]</sup>. From a data of May 20th 2019, a total of 11127 UDID cards were generated in Jharkhand. UDID process is initiated in all the 24 districts of Jharkhand state. Rajnagar district has a total of 466 generated cards with 1156 applications as on 10th October 2019. Where as on 20th May 2019, 453 cards were generated with 1045 applications. The data shows two main things: one is the very gradual increase in number of applications with time and the low rate of acceptance or generation of the cards after the application.

## Steps Involved in Getting UDID Number for a PwD

The registration for UDID is an online process on the website [www.swavlambancard.gov.in](http://www.swavlambancard.gov.in). The information required from an applicant during the registration includes:

- Personal Details (Name, Email, DOB, Age and Gender)
- Disability Details (Disability Percentage (%), disability type, option for “Disability Since” and disability area)
- Highest Qualification in Educational Details
- Employment Details with annual income and details of BPL/APL, and
- Identity Details (Aadhar, PAN, Driving Licence or Other govt ID)

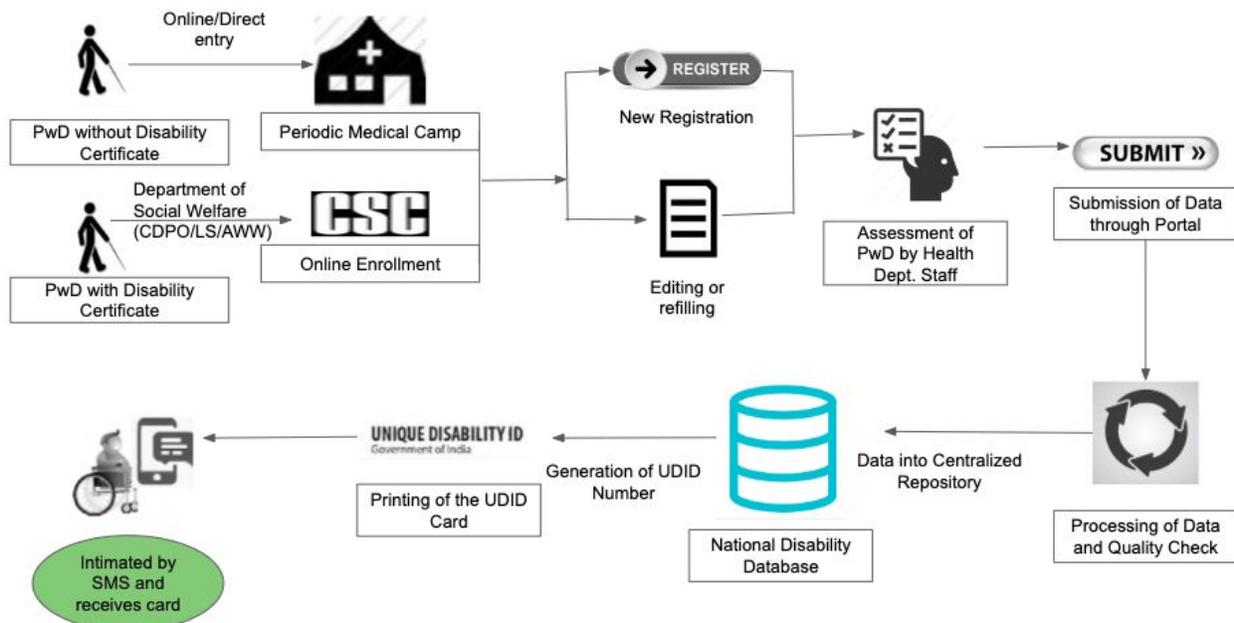


Fig 1: Steps involved in getting UDID number for a PwD

## **Role of various stakeholders in UDID generation**

- **People with Disabilities (PwDs)** are required to register on the UDID portal with the above mentioned details. Once registered, after the login is complete, they will be able to apply online for UDID card. They will also be able to track the status of their application (Verified/Rejected/Shared for Printing/Dispatched). They can put forward their request for renewal of UDID Card and also request for another card in case of loss of their UDID Card. They can even download and print a copy of their respective UDID Card. Moreover, they will be able to view

the latest news/announcements pertaining to disabilities on the website/portal.

- **Civil Surgeon** (Disability Certificate Issuing Authority) uses the application to verify the details of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) with her existing record (in case of PwDs with disability certificate) and check for consistency of information in the submitted documents. PwDs without a disability certificate will be referred to designated Specialist/Medical board for disability assessment and once the assessment is over, the assessment details are submitted and Disability Certificate/UDID Card will be issued electronically and transferred to agency for printing and dispatch.
- **District Social Welfare Officer** will be responsible to facilitate the reach to PwDs and provide assistance in filling out the application form in the district by organising awareness camps and reaching to PwDs through the Anganwadi workers in the district.
- **District Collector** is required to monitor the implementation of the UDID project and its effectiveness. He provides the necessary instruction to facilitate the generation the UDID Cards.

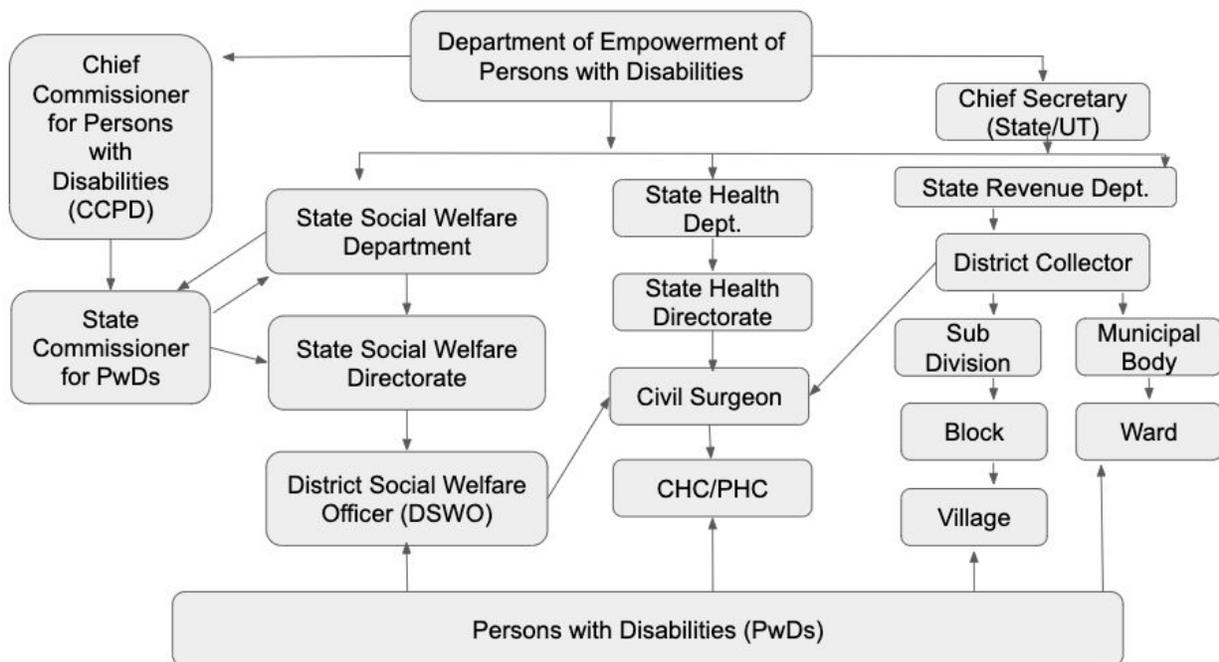


Fig 2: A schematic flow diagram showing all channels for generation of UDID

## **How does UDID fit in with the involved stakeholders in the district?**

In our research, it is found that the role of facilitating the UDID generation in the administration involves three main stakeholders (i) District Collector, (ii) Civil Surgeon (CS) and (iii) District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO). District Collector is mainly involved in monitoring of the process of generation of cards. District Collector or Deputy Commissioner is the head of District administration, acts as the Collector in case of Revenue matters, District Development Commissioner in case of District Developmental works, as District Magistrate in case of maintenance of Law and Order and general administration, as District Election Officer in case of conduct of elections and so on. With the huge amount of responsibilities and priorities of District Collector, keeping a regular eye on the progress of UDID becomes very difficult. However, based on the instruction received from the state or central government she keeps a check on the progress with the CS and DSWO and provides necessary instructions to complete the process on time. In most cases, the direct responsibility of implementation are with CS and DSWO as the key implementers of the scheme.

### **Department of Social Welfare**

The department is headed by the District Social Welfare Officer. The key responsibility of the department as per the instruction from the ministry is to facilitate the process of UDID data entry online or manually. This involves awareness generation, reaching to maximum number of PwDs through existing social welfare infrastructure and entry of the data on the online portal with the required documents.

DSWO runs various programmes of central and state government including the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), Matri Vandana Yojna, Tejaswini (for Socioeconomic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women), Samajik Kuriti Nivaran Yojna, National Creche Scheme of MoWCD, and other social welfare schemes in the district. The state government run pension scheme for PwD, “Swami Vivekananda Nishakt Swalamban Protsahan Yojna” has now been transferred to the Department of Social Security this year. For PwDs the department is involved in providing various benefits like wheelchairs during elections and other benefits based on the priority of the state. UDID scheme’s guidelines state one of the most important roles relating to entry of data of PwD on the portal using the reach of the department to the remotest places of the district.

With UDID scheme, the major challenges faced in 2 years since initiation is the lack of manpower support for operation coupled with unavailability of funds for awareness

generation. The responsibility of the monitoring of UDID program in the district has been assigned to the District Coordinator of the Tejaswini programme by the DSWO. The first notification about implementation of UDID came through a letter from the Chief Secretary in March 2017. The letter stated the requirement of training for the initiation of the program, designation of a state coordinator at the state level and support through fund of 2 lakhs for awareness and 1 lakh for IT infrastructure to each district. There was a request letter from the state in July 2017 for the fund for all districts of the state to the ministry for the program. Lack of dedicated fund for awareness generation in a time bound manner became one key issue leading to lesser reach and awareness about the program among the PwDs.

From the data on UDID generation after one year of initiation i.e. March 2018, it was found that 5 applications were filled with 3 cards generated from the portal. Even with its limited IT infrastructure and funding to facilitate the process, with additional push from the department of empowerment of PwDs the district facilitated 303 applications by April 2018<sup>[14]</sup>. It was found that this was done by coordinating with the CDPOs at the block level identifying PwDs in their block and tagging them with their nearest Anganwadi worker. “For a successful implementation and reach to the PwDs, timely support and repeated check from the state and central level is required,” says the coordinator.

In our implementation phase of the project, we followed a similar process from the Social Welfare Department with the instruction of the District Collector. An instruction to all the CDPOs/LS and AWW was given again to get the UDID formed filled for the tagged candidate as per election data source of PwDs with the help of nearest common service centres (CSCs) for those already having the disability certificate. Even with an accelerated generation of UDID in the district this time, it is felt that given the additional financial support and human resource UDID card generation could have been faster and in a better time-bound manner.

### **Department of Health and Family Welfare**

Civil Surgeon (CS) also called Chief Medical Officer (CMO) heads the department. CS is the signature authority of the district for the generation of UDID card. In the process of UDID generation, Health department plays the most crucial role. Firstly, it is involved in the issuing of disability certificates (DCs) to PwDs, which is a mandatory document for UDID card. The other role of Health department is the verification of the documents submitted by the applicant on the portal. Once approved by the department, the form is sent to the concerned agency for printing and dispatch.

### Disability Certificate (DC):

A camp is organised at the district hospital twice a month on fixed dates i.e. 15th and 30th. PwDs come to this camp for their checkup by a designated medical staff and get an immediate certificate with the mention of type (among 21 listed disabilities under RPwD Act 2016<sup>[9]</sup>) and percentage of disability. There are two main kinds of disability certificates: permanent and temporary. Temporary disability certificate is valid for a limited period of time. In this particular case, the UDID generated is also valid for the same time period unless extended by the medical staff. One of the issues faced by the people is reaching these camps which are held at the district level. PwDs from far-off places from headquarters, find it difficult to reach the camp for the certificate. This certificate is a mandatory document for almost all the benefits given by the government for PwD including pension.

The process of issue of disability certificate happens in the district on pen and paper mode. There are districts who have shifted to digitalised disability certificate document. A digitalised disability certificate is easy to verify and maintain record for the department. During the verification phase for UDID card many cases are rejected due to the visibility issues in the scan of disability certificate document. Out of the total of 1156 application of UDID till date in the district, a total of 303 cases have been rejected. When we look at the national data, only 23.30 lakh e-UDID Cards have been generated with a total of 68.06 lakh applications<sup>[14]</sup>.

### Verification of UDID:

The responsibility for the verification of the UDID application on the portal is with the District Data Manager (DDM) of Integrated Disease Surveillance Project (IDSP). DDM along with one Epidemiologist runs the IDSP program to keep a track on communicable disease spread in the district. The work involves, regular data entry, field visits and feedback to CHCs and HSCs on the regular update from them. He is also involved in the training related activities on IDSP.

UDID verification work comes as an additional responsibility to the DDM due to unavailability of a dedicated staff for UDID with required expertise and knowledge on the 21 diseases listed in the RPwD Act 2016<sup>[9]</sup>. In many cases, the person finds it difficult to understand the terms on the disability certificates. However, with experience he is able to do this work at a better pace. As per the guideline, he is bound to verify or reject the application within a time frame of one month. Out of 1156 applications till date

381 applications are shown as “Not Verified”, as per the DDM, these are the applications with DCs not belonging to the district hence required authentication is not possible. These cases are referred to the concerned districts. For the 442 verified application by the DDM, the delay caused in dispatch by the agency is another reason for UDID not reaching on time to the PwDs.

In the implementation phase of the research, with the support of the CS two data operators were assigned during the camp on 15th and 30th of October for immediate registration on the portal after DC generation. In coming months, the camps are planned to be organised at the block level in the CHCs in a similar way to give an extra mile push for the UDID scheme.

### **Other challenges in its implementation**

In the discussion with different stakeholders, it was experienced that awareness about a scheme of a government can be through word of mouth in cases where there is ample demand due to the linked benefits. In other cases, government infrastructure needs to invest effort and resources on awareness generation and creating the required demand. UDID card is not currently associated with any direct benefits such as pension. This can be one important reason for the limited awareness and lack of effort from the people applying on their own for the UDID cards. The procedure of application being online and mostly in English language also limits the reach of the project to each of the most vulnerables.

There are very limited number of people aware about UDID with its details. Among the PwDs in the district who knew about some card being issued, very few are aware of the associated benefits. Many think that it is something which will make the process of getting pension through Swami Vivekanand Nishakt Protsahan Yojna faster.

The Divyang Icon (PwD Representative of the district) was aware about the scheme in quite detail. He was also aware about the Disability Card being issued from past few years and believed that very few PwDs have applied for it. His concern was about the process of card generation being too slow, card not reaching to people even after applying and the cost associated with online application done through private sources. Though he agreed that if given the right push in the right manner, this can be done for many people in the district. There is a representative of Divyang in each panchayat according to him and most people are connected through some or other channels. According to him financial support to PwDs for UDID application not being there is one of the core challenges in implementation of the scheme.

There is a need for awareness generation about UDID among many important stakeholders in the district. During interaction with the PwDs applied, in one of the

cases, it was found that the applicant was found to reach the social welfare department at some point for pension benefits under SVNSPY and the operator there applied for UDID based on the provided documents from her side. In another case, from a remote village a 7 year old boy was found to have applied after a nearby CSC operator convinced him that his pension will be processed faster with this particular online application.

### **Summary of the Challenges Observed**

Among the various challenges for better performance of UDID scheme at the district level, limited awareness about the scheme among the PwDs comes out to be the most significant one. This limits a large number of PwDs applying on their own or through a nearby CSC centre. Adequate financial resources and IT infrastructure support from the Department Empowerment of PwDs can help increase awareness through newspaper, banners, posters, nukkad nataks etc. UDID scheme being mandatory for benefits such as pension will also lead to more number of people applying for the card. Within the departments associated with the implementation of the project at the district level, having a dedicated skilled person with Health and Social Welfare Department will help miles in the performance of UDID. There should be strict guidelines to the involved agency from the state for printing of the cards to dispatch them on time and track the delivery once verified from the Health department. It was found that agencies wait for a bulk number of cards to get verified before printing and dispatch. Some of these steps can certainly help the process of generation of UDID card achieve its desired goal.

### **Way out**

There can be diverse possibilities for better performance in the UDID scheme. Based on the challenges observed in this particular context, the district administration is following the below mentioned steps to enhance the generation of UDID cards:

- To address the identification of all PwDs data, one reliant source is election data. Election PwDs data is taken with the help of election BLO (Mostly Anganwadi Workers) for people with age above 18 years. Another set of data is taken from Swami Vivekananda Nishakt Swalamban Protsahan Yojna which has a lower age limit of 5 years. Hence most of the PwDs above the age of 5 years is recorded with the Department in the process.
- In a district level meeting of CDPOs and LSs, a training for the basic details related to UDID is done and the manually filled UDID forms provided. The data obtained by the department is tagged with AWW of the nearest centre in the meeting. AWWs are instructed to get the details filled with the help of the nearest CSCs for the tagged PwDs.
- Health Department is facilitating the UDID card data entry along with DC generation with the health camp on 15th and 30th of the month. Steps are being taken to shift the DCs from pen and paper mode to online.

- Identification of the rejected cases of UDID with the health department database is done and tagged with nearest AWW to facilitate the approval of the genuine cases.

With the right approach from both the departments, with limited resources at hand, an effort towards better performance of UDID scheme is being made at the district level along with the identification and redressal of the challenges faced.

### **Conclusion**

The performance of the UDID scheme after its initiation in 601 districts of 35 states/UTs<sup>[14]</sup> is yet to achieve its desired pace of reaching to PwDs. With the high rate of pendency in cards reaching to the beneficiaries, high rejection rate of applications, limited awareness among people related to the scheme, the goal to create a national database for PwDs needs a more nuanced approach. A policy document must specify the responsibilities and accountability for achieving specific goals with a possible time-frame. Otherwise, it becomes difficult for the agencies to accept the responsibility with their tight set of priorities and things might not get done. For a successful performance of the UDID Scheme the districts should be provided adequate financial and infrastructure support on time from the department. Regular monitoring and push from the monitoring authority ensures that the program for inclusion remains a priority amidst a large number of tasks at hand and limited resources of the district. Many of the challenges related to the scheme as observed in this particular case might be applicable to others. Districts might be having challenges of their own based on their specificity as well. What is required for the better performance in UDID generation is the right approach in addressing them with the goal to reach out to all PwDs as per the guidelines of the RPwDs Act 2016.

\*the names have been changed for data confidentiality purposes

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