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25 Years
EnAble India
Celebration of Human Spirit

Purple Economy

The next frontier of innovation, growth and prosperity

July 2026



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रोहित कंसल, आई.ए.एस.
सचिव

ROHIT KANSAL IAS
Secretary

सत्यमेव जयते

भारत सरकार
ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय
ग्रामीण विकास विभाग
कर्त्तव्य भवन-3, नई दिल्ली-110001
Government of India
Ministry of Rural Development
Department of Rural Development
Kartvya Bhavan-3, New Delhi-110001
Tel.: 91-11-24011801, 24011802
E-mail: secyrd@gov.in

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FOREWORD

India's journey towards Viksit Bharat @2047 will be shaped not only by the scale of our growth, but by the breadth and depth of participation it enables. India @100 must be one where every village, every household and every citizen can contribute to, and benefit from, economic progress. Rural India will be central to this transformation.

For many rural households, disability brings immediate questions around access, awareness and support. Families may not always know where to go, whom to ask, what services exist, what rights are available, or how education, skilling, work, mobility and independent living can be made possible. Addressing this gap is both a social priority and an economic opportunity. With the right local support systems, disability need not lead to exclusion; it can become a pathway to participation, dignity and productive contribution. The Purple Economy offers a powerful lens for this journey. It encourages us to look at divyangjans not only as beneficiaries of welfare, but as active workers, entrepreneurs, producers, consumers, innovators and contributors to national growth.

When inclusion is built into planning and implementation from the beginning, schemes can become powerful platforms for enabling divyangjans to participate meaningfully in local economies and community life. Programmes such as Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) are inclusive by design, with a strong focus on rural employment, durable assets and livelihood security. Complementing this, programmes such as Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) are enabling and de-risking this ecosystem by strengthening financial inclusion, enterprise support and livelihood pathways.

By placing special emphasis on accessibility, participation and support for all, such programmes reflect the principle of leaving no one behind. Industry, financial institutions, civil society and communities can build on this foundation to convert inclusion into enterprise, employment and inclusive growth.

This white paper is a timely and important contribution to that national conversation. It frames inclusion not as a parallel agenda, but as an integral part of India's growth story. It invites us to build systems where every person can learn, earn, create and contribute with dignity.

I congratulate EnAble India and Deloitte for developing this white paper. I do hope that this will nudge all of us to further strengthen rural systems where identification is early, support is available locally, services are connected, livelihoods are enabled and markets are opened.

(Rohit Kansal)

Foreword



Shanti Raghavan
Founder,
EnAble India

When my brother Hari began losing his vision at the age of 15, our family did not know what the road ahead would look like. But somehow, we skipped the stages of helplessness and non-acceptance. We converted emotion into action. We had to discover solutions as we went along: sometimes every day, sometimes every hour.

Our first concern was simple: Hari's education should not stop. If a textbook was not accessible, we had to find another way. If a classroom was not ready, we had to create support around it. If information was unavailable, we had to search, adapt, ask, learn and try again. Every barrier became a problem to solve. We wanted him to live fully.

So, we explored what it would take for him to swim, snorkel, kayak and climb rocks. We looked for adaptations, built confidence and found people who would try with us. He experienced joy, risk, learning, friendship, work, travel and ambition like anyone else. Every unmet need of Hari was an opportunity for innovation, growth and prosperity through jobs and businesses.

Today, Hari works in a leadership position in a top multinational company.

His journey is a systems story. To understand this better, let us imagine a situation where a person is diagnosed with a critical illness and then expected to become their own doctor, having to diagnose their condition, design the treatment, make the medicine, run the lab tests, arrange the equipment, train the caregivers and monitor the recovery – all by themselves.

This sounds absurd, right? This never happens because of a strong healthcare system. But this absence of systems is the reality for millions of persons with disabilities and their families across the world.

This is where the Purple Economy begins. It calls on governments, businesses, civil society, investors, technologists, educators, media, families and persons with disabilities themselves to build the systems that make participation possible.

It is a way to build an economy that is more intelligent, more humane and more prepared for all versions of ourselves.

Join the movement!

Foreword



Romal Shetty
Chief Executive Officer,
Deloitte South Asia

Some of the most important shifts in business begin with a simple question that makes us look again at something we thought we understood.

For me, one such moment came through a conversation with Dipesh Sutariya of EnAble India. What resonated most was his simple yet powerful proposition: persons with disabilities must be seen as participants in the economy in their full capacity as employees, consumers, entrepreneurs, creators, problem solvers and leaders.

That conversation stayed with me because it changed the frame. It also made clear that many of the barriers faced by persons with disabilities are also barriers within our markets, workplaces, products, services, infrastructure and institutions. When those barriers persist, we lose skill, enterprise, demand, innovation and human potential. When we address this with all seriousness, the gains will be felt far beyond one community. At the heart of this paper, we aim to do just that.

That conviction led Saraswathi Kasturirangan and me to take the Purple Pledge with EnAble India. For Deloitte, it meant more than a commitment to building an inclusive workplace. It has become a reminder that accessibility must influence how organisations hire, design, innovate, grow and create value.

This white paper is an outcome of that shared journey. It combines EnAble India's decades of experience in disability inclusion with Deloitte's economic, market and policy perspectives to show why this agenda deserves a place in boardrooms, policy discussions and investment decisions.

India's Viksit Bharat 2047 ambition will depend on how widely and meaningfully people can contribute to the country's growth story. Expanding economic participation is an economic necessity which requires us to ask a sharper question: who is missing from the talent pipelines? Which customers are our products failing to serve? Where are our cities, services and technology still difficult to access?

My hope is that this paper encourages leaders across government, business, academia and civil society to view disability with a fresh perspective. The measure of progress will not be the language we use, but the systems we change, the markets we open, the talent we enable and the dignity with which people are able to participate.

I am proud that Deloitte has been part of this effort with EnAble India, and I look forward to the Purple Economy becoming an enduring part of how India thinks about growth.

Foreword



Dipesh Sutariya
Co-Founder, Trustee, Chairman and Managing Director, EnAble India

Work is core to human dignity. At EnAble India, we have been working to enable a life of dignity for persons with disability for the past 26 years. When I came full-time into the social sector from the corporate world, I found myself wondering what a balanced scorecard would look like for a social organisation. So, I sat down and adapted one. The biggest insight for me came as a surprise. In business, the financial perspective sits at the top because it ultimately defines success. In the social sector, that place is taken by mission. Financial sustainability is still critical, but it exists to enable the mission, not to define it. The mission for every social organisation is different. Ours is a life of dignity for persons with disabilities, where "we are ambitious for the cause" became the mantra.

But what would it take to make that mission a reality at scale?

Think about it, an estimated 4 billion people worldwide wear glasses today, and no one looks at them and sees a disability. Yet that is exactly what glasses corrected once. The market caught up, and the stigma quietly fell away. Glasses did that by accident, over decades. I want the Purple Economy to do it on purpose, everywhere.

A conversation with Romal, combined with Saraswathi's constant can-do attitude, led us to collaborate with Deloitte. Their love, commitment and gratitude gave shape to something we had felt for years but could never quite prove at scale. With that collaboration in place, a business case on the table and persons with disabilities firmly at its centre, the responsibility now shifts outwards. The evidence is here. What remains is the will to act on it. Let's be as ambitious as this cause deserves, together.

My hope for it does not end at publication. I want it in government policy rooms, business strategy meetings, classrooms and retail boardrooms, where they decide who their next customer is. Just as much, I want it in the hands of persons with disabilities themselves and organisations working tirelessly in the sectors, too many of whom have spent years being told what they cannot do. I hope this paper hands back a different mirror, one where they see themselves as drivers of the economy, not people waiting for permission to belong.

SamGhachadvam. Let's move together.

Foreword



Saraswathi Kasturirangan
Chief Happiness Officer,
Deloitte South Asia

People have always been at the heart of Deloitte. As an organisation, we have long believed that our greatest strength lies in the diversity of our people. People do their best work when they are trusted, supported and able to bring their full selves into the workplace. It becomes even more important when we speak about persons with disabilities, because the question is rarely about capability alone. More often, it is about whether the environment has been designed to recognise that capability. Inclusion, wellbeing and belonging are not standalone initiatives for us; they are fundamental to how we build teams, develop leaders and shape our culture.

This belief has guided many of our efforts over the years. Through initiatives such as Project Prernaya, we are working to create equitable pathways for women with disabilities through skilling, mentorship, employment, community engagement and independent living. This programme reminded us that inclusion cannot be reduced to a hiring target but requires preparing workplaces to receive, support and grow diverse talent with care.

Together with Romal, I was also privileged to take the Purple Pledge, a commitment that reaffirmed our resolve to build workplaces where accessibility, inclusion and opportunity are embedded into the way we work, rather than treated as exceptions.

As our engagement with EnAble India deepened, so did our understanding of a much larger opportunity. The Purple Economy challenges us to think beyond individual organisations and asks a more fundamental question: What would change if participation became a guiding principle for designing markets, institutions, public systems and workplaces? It is a powerful idea because inclusive systems should not require people to repeatedly explain the barriers they face. It should have the maturity to anticipate, listen, adapt and act.

I hope this white paper encourages more leaders to make the shift. The future of work will reward organisations that understand people deeply and design for human differences with intention.

I am grateful for this collaboration with EnAble India and to every individual whose experience continues to teach us what real inclusion demands. The Purple Economy gives us a powerful opportunity to build workplaces and institutions where human potential is actively enabled.

Executive summary



The Purple Economy is an economic framework that recognises persons with disabilities as active participants in markets and society. It reframes disability from a lens of welfare, compliance and accommodations to one of participation, productivity, innovation and growth.

Across the world, disability-linked needs remain insufficiently recognised within markets and public systems.[1] As a result, products, services, jobs, infrastructure and support systems often fail to respond effectively to the demands of persons with disabilities. This creates a participation gap that suppresses productivity, limits consumption, constrains innovation and leaves substantial economic value unrealised.

Addressing this participation gap requires a different way of thinking about disability, participation and economic value. Therefore, the Purple Economy is guided by five principles:

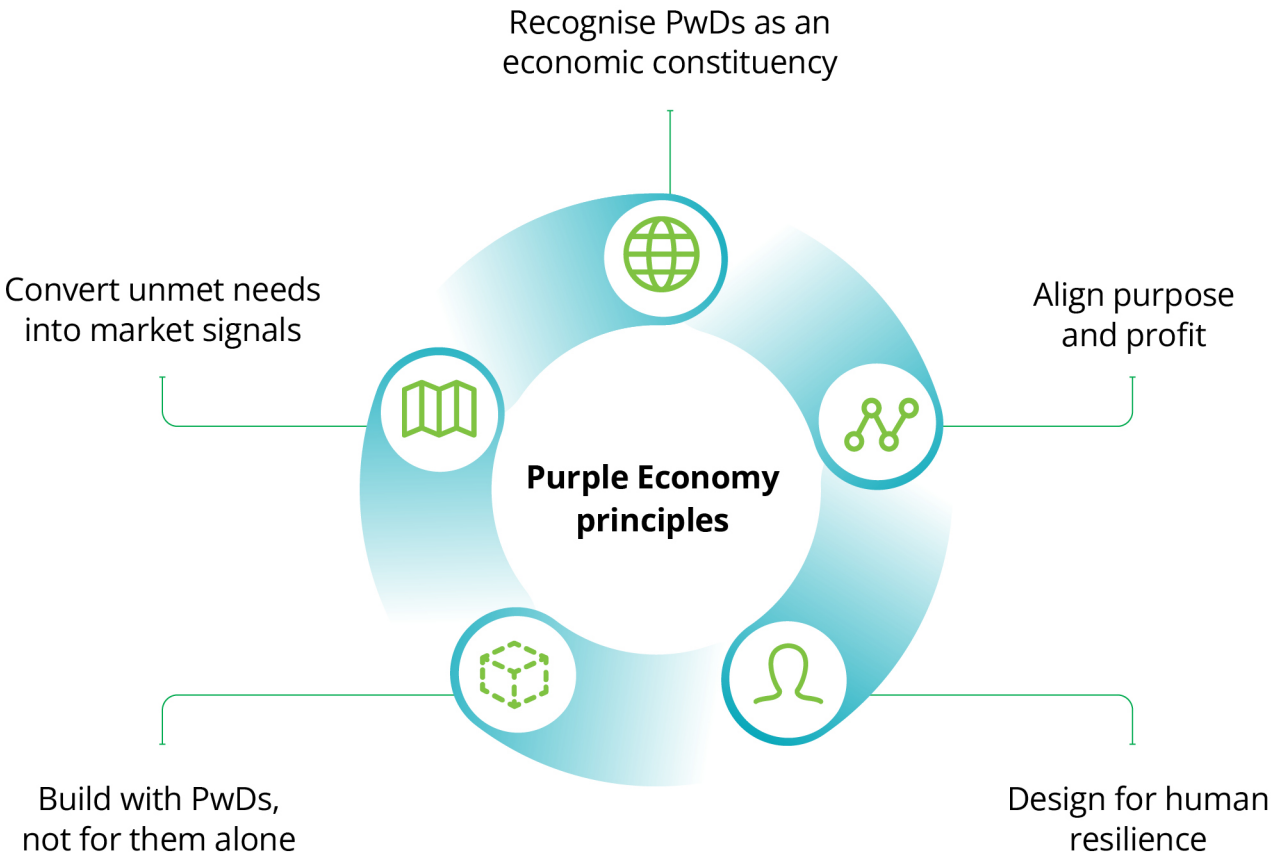
1. Recognise persons with disabilities as an economic constituency
2. Align purpose and profit
3. Design for human resilience
4. Build with persons with disabilities, not for them alone
5. Convert unmet needs into innovation signals



[1] Saxena, Abhishek and Saxena, Richa. Realigning Business Strategy for PwDs (Persons with Disabilities) Customers: A Less-Explored Territory in Diversity Inclusion. W.P. No. 2012-12-02. Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad.

From traditional view

- Welfare/ Charity
- Accommodation mindset
- Compliance-driven
- PwDs seen as beneficiaries



To Purple Economy

- Economic participation
- Participation by design
- Growth- and innovation-driven
- PwDs seen as consumers, workers and entrepreneurs

The economic case for Purple Economy

The case for the Purple Economy rests on five interconnected pillars.

1. Unlocking one of the world's largest underserved consumer constituencies: Persons with disabilities and their households represent an estimated US$18 trillion spending power[2].
2. Enabling market expansion: Disability-linked needs span virtually every aspect of life, including education, healthcare, mobility, housing, finance, retail, tourism, sports, entertainment, technology and public services. Many of these markets remain fragmented, underdeveloped or difficult to access.
3. Correcting a significant macroeconomic penalty: International evidence suggests disability exclusion can cost economies between 3 percent and 7 percent of GDP[3] because of lower labour participation, reduced productivity, constrained consumption and underutilised human capital.
4. Creating multiplier effects: Increased participation generates income, employment, entrepreneurship, consumption, demand for services and investment across the wider economy
5. Expanding the frontier of innovation: Disability-linked needs expose unmet needs and underserved markets. Addressing them creates opportunities for new products, services, technologies, professions and business models, while improving outcomes for a much wider population.

[2] Talikowska, Katy. "Why Businesses Must Take Action on Disability Inclusion by 2025." World Economic Forum, 6 Dec. 2024, www.weforum.org/stories/2024/12/why-businesses-must-take-action-on-disability-inclusion-by-2025/

[3] World Bank. 2022. Disability Inclusion and Accountability Framework. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/437451528442789278/pdf/126977-WP-PUBLIC-DisabilityInclusionAccountabilitydigital.pdf

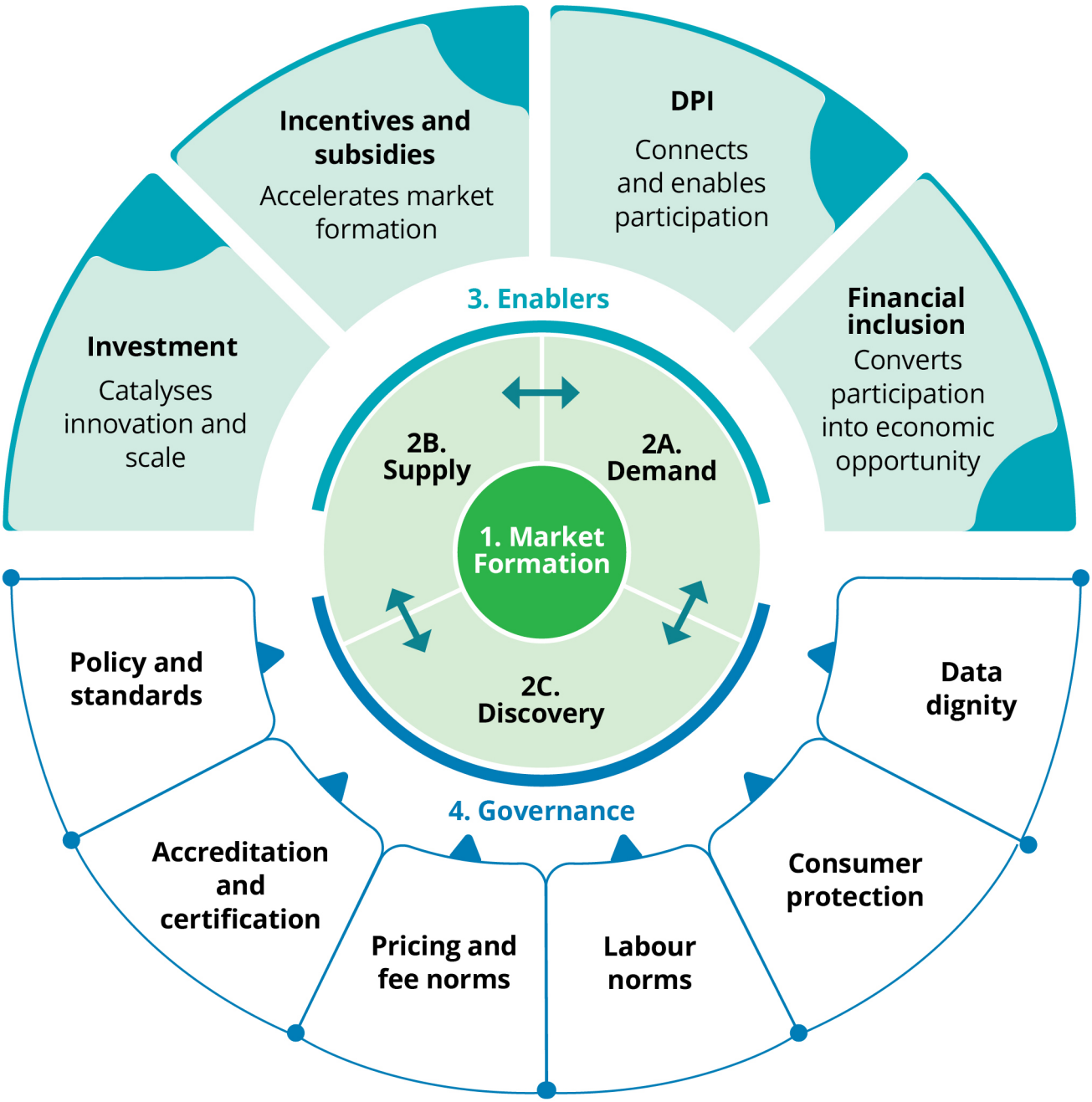
National framework for growth

This paper proposes a National Growth Framework for the Purple Economy centred on market formation. The framework argues that sustainable growth occurs when three engines evolve together: demand, supply and discovery.

Demand emerges when persons with disabilities, families, institutions and governments are recognised as a legitimate economic constituency. Supply responds through the creation of products, services, enterprises, infrastructure, professional capacity and knowledge systems. Discovery ensures that people can find, trust, access, finance and use available solutions through effective distribution, logistics, information systems and marketplaces.

Enabling systems, including investment, incentives, financial inclusion and digital infrastructure, support these engines. They are reinforced through governance mechanisms such as standards, accreditation, consumer protection, labour norms and data dignity. Together, these elements create the conditions necessary for persons with disabilities to participate fully within the economy.





2A. Demand

Demand

- Physical and digital consumption
- Institutional procurement
- Service and maintenance

2B. Supply

Supply

- Knowledge systems
- Production institutions
- Products and infrastructure innovations
- Human capital abundance and participation

2C. Discovery

Market access

- Distribution and access systems
- Transport and logistics
- Information and discovery
- Jobs and products marketplace

The participation-to-scale frontiers model

Building on the National Growth Framework, the participation-to-scale frontiers model illustrates how participation translates into economic transformation. It provides a structured view of how Purple Economies evolve from expanding access within existing mainstream systems, to strengthening specialised ecosystems and ultimately to creating new products, professions and markets.

	Frontier 1 Mainstream integration	**Frontier 2** Systemic inclusion for persons with disabilities	**Frontier 3** Future market creation
Products and services	**Purple aware products and services** Existing products and services made accessible and inclusive	**Specialised products and services discovery at scale** Disability specific products and services grow in quality and scale, supported by trusted information	**Solutions for unmet needs** New and innovative solutions emerge to address unmet needs, creating new categories and experiences
Jobs and enterprises	**Systemic Purple literacy** Institutions, markets and service providers integrate disability inclusion into their core functioning; mainstream jobs and opportunities	**Purple professions and support ecosystem** Specialised roles and support professionals grow in scale and become easier to find and access	**New jobs, enterprises and industries** Unmet needs drive innovation, creating new jobs, enterprises and entire industries that fuel economic growth

Purple economic zones: Bringing the framework to the ground

To translate the framework into action, Purple Economic Zones (PEZs) are proposed as place-based demonstration ecosystems. PEZs bring together enterprise development, skilling, assistive technologies, support services, procurement mechanisms, digital discovery layers, etc., within a defined geography. Their purpose is to demonstrate how participation-led economic development can be operationalised, measured, refined and replicated.

Digital public infrastructure as an enabler of scale

A recurring challenge across disability ecosystems is fragmentation. Solutions often exist but remain difficult to discover, verify, access, finance or scale. The paper identifies Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) as a critical enabler for overcoming these constraints. Shared digital rails can reduce transaction costs, improve discoverability, strengthen trust, enable interoperability and connect participants across the ecosystem.

Applied to the Purple Economy, DPI can support credentialing, registries, marketplaces, service discovery, payments, verification, financing and access to opportunities. By improving coordination between individuals, families, enterprises, service providers and governments, digital infrastructure helps transform fragmented interventions into scalable systems.



How Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) transforms barriers into opportunities

Renu's Journey: Two Paths. Two Futures.

A story of barriers that should not have existed.

Without DPI

Barriers block access. Potential remains unrealised.



1

Life changes at 12
Renu loses her leg in an accident.



2

Education stop
Lack of accessible support and resources. Studies only up to Class 10.



3

Limited opportunities
No information on skills, jobs or schemes. Isolation and low confidence.



4

Potential Lost
Talents remain hidden. Dreams left unfulfilled.

With DPI

DPI opens doors at every step. Renu thrives and leads the way.



1

Life changes at 12
Accident happens, but DPI connects her to the right support early.



2

Rehabilitation and assistive care
Finds nearby rehab centres, assistive devices and therapy services.



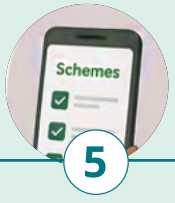
3

Continuing education
Accesses scholarships, accessible learning resources and inclusive education.



4

Skills and mentorship
Connects with mentors, learns ADL skills and gets trained for work.



5

Accesses government schemes
Discovers relevant schemes, checks eligibility and applies online.



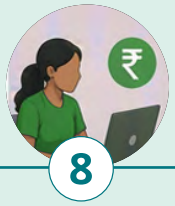
6

Mobility and independence
Uses accessible transport and mobility services to travel independently.



7

Legal help and rights
Gets legal assistance for rights, benefits and protection from discrimination.



8

Livelihood and financial inclusion
Finds a job/starts her enterprise. Accesses banking, loans and insurance.



9

Community and leadership
Joins communities, mentors others and becomes an inspiration.



10

Dreams without limits
Travels, learns, leads and builds her dream life.

India as a proving ground

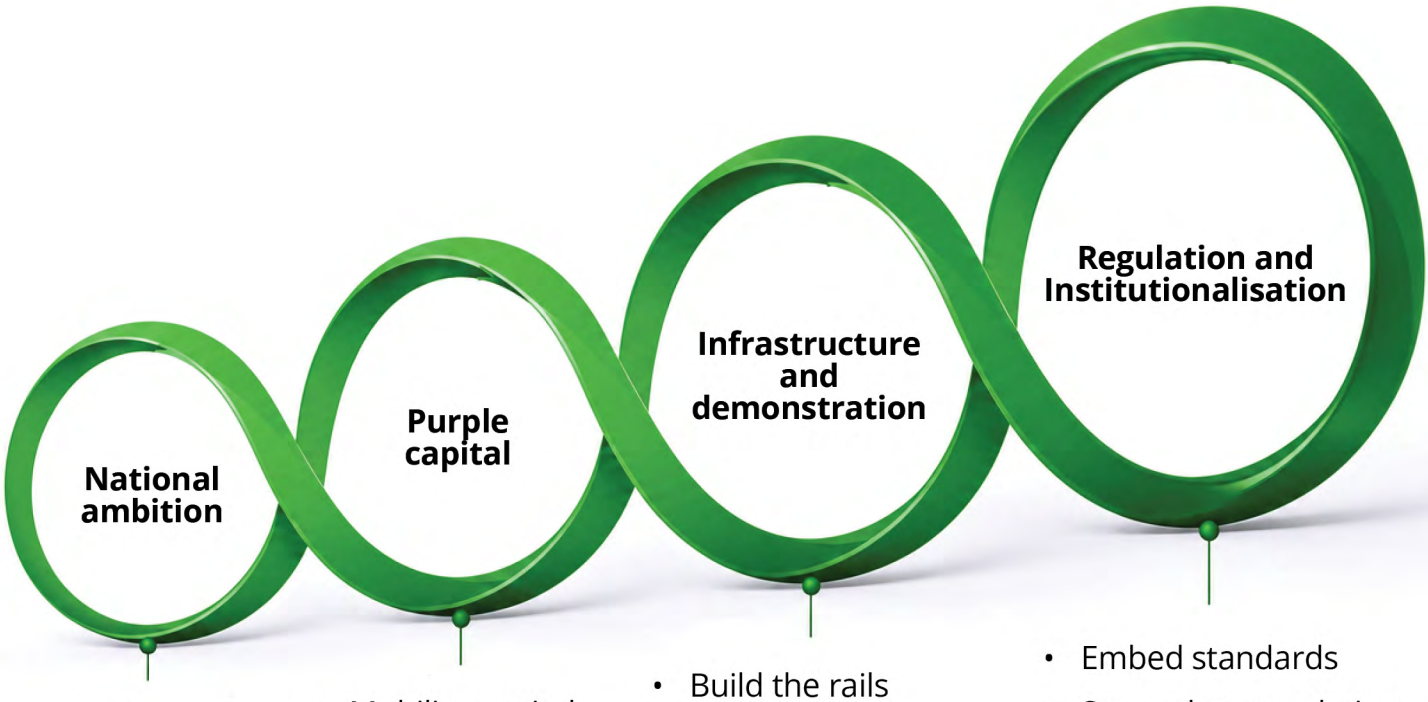
India is uniquely positioned to demonstrate the potential of the Purple Economy. With its demographic scale, expanding consumer base, entrepreneurial ecosystem, DPI and ambition for Viksit Bharat 2047. India also enters this journey with important foundations already in place. The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, the Accessible India Campaign, Unique Disability ID (UDID), assistive technology initiatives, skilling programmes and growing state-level efforts have established a strong architecture for inclusion.

Building on these foundations presents a significant economic opportunity. The report estimates a disability-linked Total Addressable Market (TAM) of ~US$150 billion in India today. This highlights the scale of unmet demand and the economic value that can be unlocked when disability-linked needs are recognised and systematically addressed.

Call to action

The transition to a Purple Economy is a systemic transformation that requires coordinated action across governments, businesses, investors, academia, civil society and persons with disabilities themselves. This report proposes four reinforcing cycles for building Purple Economies. The first focuses on establishing ambition and ownership through economic assessments, measurable targets and institutional leadership. The second focuses on mobilising Purple Capital to support market creation, enterprise development, accessibility transformation and innovation. The third focuses on building enabling infrastructure and demonstrating viable models, such as Purple Economic Zones. The fourth focuses on institutionalising participation through standards, regulation, procurement, governance and representation. Together, these cycles provide a pathway to move from isolated inclusion initiatives to self-sustaining markets that expand participation, strengthen resilience, and create long-term economic value.





- Assess opportunity
- Set targets
- Establish ownership

- Mobilise capital
- Fund markets
- Drive accessibility investments

- Build the rails
- Enable infrastructure
- Demonstrate and scale through pilots and PEZs

- Embed standards
- Strengthen regulation
- Institutionalise participation

Conclusion

The Purple Economy reframes disability from a question of access alone to a question of economic participation. Its central proposition is that when unmet needs are recognised, participation expands; when participation expands, markets grow. The opportunity before governments, businesses and institutions is to convert that participation into sustained economic and social value.

1. Introduction



Every major economic transformation begins with a shift in how society sees value.

Healthcare became an industry when care moved from family burden and charity into systems: hospitals, doctors, diagnostics, insurance, pharmacies, equipment, training institutions, supply chains and public health infrastructure. Pregnancy and childcare became better supported when gynaecologists, paediatricians, physiotherapists, lactation consultants, counsellors and hospital packages were introduced into the system. Digital payments scaled when identity, trust and interoperability were built into the infrastructure. Education expanded when learning was treated not as a privilege, but as a public good and an economic necessity.

Disability inclusion now stands at a similar inflexion point.

For decades, disability has been treated as a peripheral concern – addressed through welfare, compliance, charity, fragmented services or individual family effort. Yet disability is neither marginal nor rare. It is part of the human condition across the life cycle: permanent for some, temporary or situational for many, and increasingly relevant to everyone as societies age, people live longer with chronic conditions and more people navigate complexity in daily life.

What has been missing is not only intent. What has been missing is economic imagination.

The Purple Economy names that imagination. It is the economic opportunity that emerges when the unmet needs, aspirations and participation journeys of persons with disabilities and persons with difficulties are recognised, institutionalised and served through products, services, jobs, businesses, policies, markets and public systems.

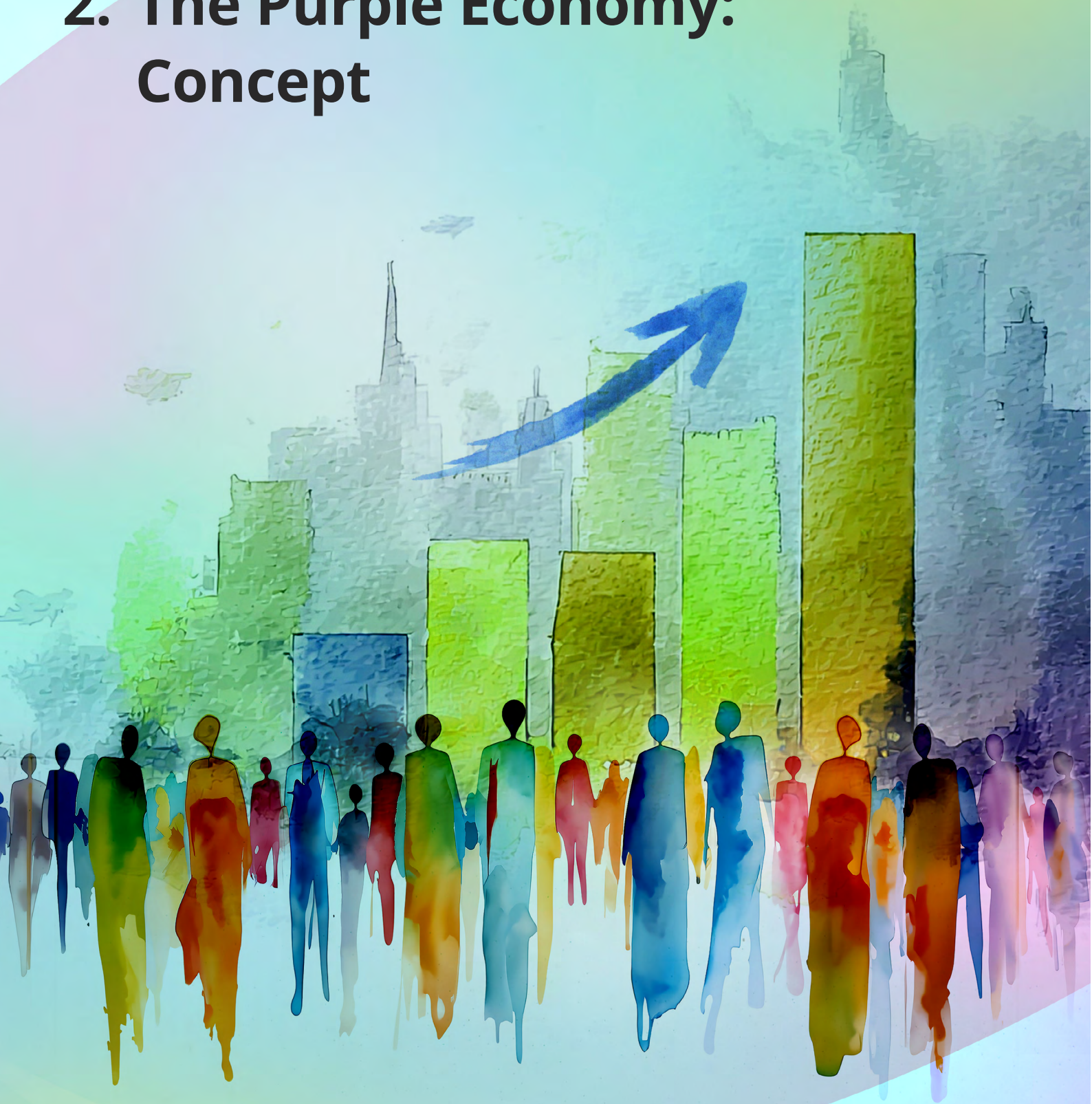
This is not merely about making existing systems "accessible". That is necessary, but insufficient. The larger shift is to see persons with disabilities as customers, workers, entrepreneurs, creators, innovators, taxpayers, citizens and decision-makers. It is to ask what new markets, professions, service models, products, infrastructure, supply chains and institutional mechanisms can emerge when societies build seriously for disability and difficulty.

Globally, persons with disabilities and their households represent one of the largest underserved consumer and participation segments in the world. India, with its scale, digital public infrastructure, financial inclusion systems, entrepreneurial base and Vision 2047 ambition, can become one of the most important proving grounds for this shift. But the framework itself is not limited to India. The Purple Economy is India-anchored and globally relevant: India can be the lens, not the limit.

This white paper is written to articulate the shift of disability inclusion from the margins of social policy to the centre of economic design. It is not a moral appeal alone. It is a strategic roadmap for governments, businesses, investors, technology platforms, civil society and ecosystem builders on how to move from intent to infrastructure. From isolated inclusion efforts to markets where participation becomes default, innovation accelerates, and economic value expands at scale.

> **Once you see the Purple Economy, you cannot unsee it.**

2. The Purple Economy: Concept



Every economy is shaped by what it recognises as value. The Purple economy begins from this recognition.

Every major economic transformation expands participation. Industrialisation expanded productive labour. Public education expanded opportunity. Healthcare systems expanded the ability to function, recover and contribute. Digital public infrastructure expanded access to identity, payments, governance and commerce.

The Purple Economy applies the same logic to disability and difficulty. It asks: What changes when the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities are no longer absorbed silently by individuals, families and civil society, but become visible economic signals that shape markets, institutions, public systems and innovation?

The answer is not a single sector. It is a new economic architecture.

2.1. What is the Purple Economy?

The Purple Economy is an economic framework that recognises persons with disabilities as active participants in markets and society. It examines how systems of production, distribution, and consumption can be redesigned so that persons with disabilities participate not as exceptions but as expected users, customers, workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and decision-makers.

At its core, the Purple Economy is driven by a simple insight: when people are unable to participate, the failure is often not within the individual; it is within the system that has not imagined, designed, distributed or institutionalised the right solution. A child who cannot access a school, a wheelchair user who cannot find the right mobility solution, a blind professional who cannot access digital tools, a neurodivergent person who cannot navigate a service journey, or a person recovering from surgery who cannot find adaptive clothing - each of these situations represents not only exclusion, but unmet demand.

The Purple Economy converts unmet demand into economic opportunity. It creates conditions for new products, services, professions, enterprises, supply chains, advisory models, digital systems and forms of participation.

It is also not limited to persons with disabilities alone. It extends to older persons, caregivers, people recovering from illness or injury, people with chronic conditions and anyone navigating temporary or situational barriers.

Figure 1: Jigar's story



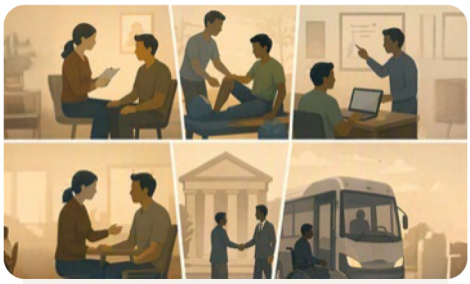
Jigar was a skilled painter. A fall from scaffolding left him with a spinal injury. He became bedridden, and his world shrank overnight.



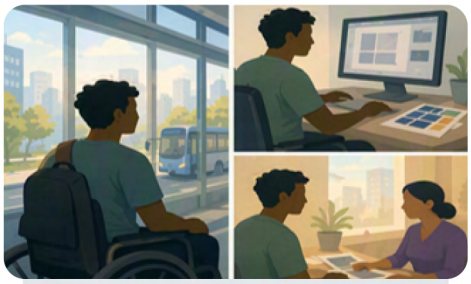
The scarce and fragmented services available were unknown to him and his family. He was dependent on his family for every need. His earnings disappeared, and the family went into a financial crisis.



With the Purple Economy, a known system is created by the collaboration of government, industry, civil society, academia, financial institutions and technology collaborators. This fuels opportunities from unmet needs, inclusive policies and accessible infrastructure.



From the onset of disability, a whole ecosystem steps in for Jigar, including therapists, trainers, counsellors, government support schemes and banks. His needs are recognised, his skills are identified and he is connected to the services, opportunities and pathways best suited to him.



With new skills and the right support, Jigar becomes a graphic designer. Rather than working from home, he travels everywhere on accessible transport, meets clients, places orders, delivers projects and earns with dignity.

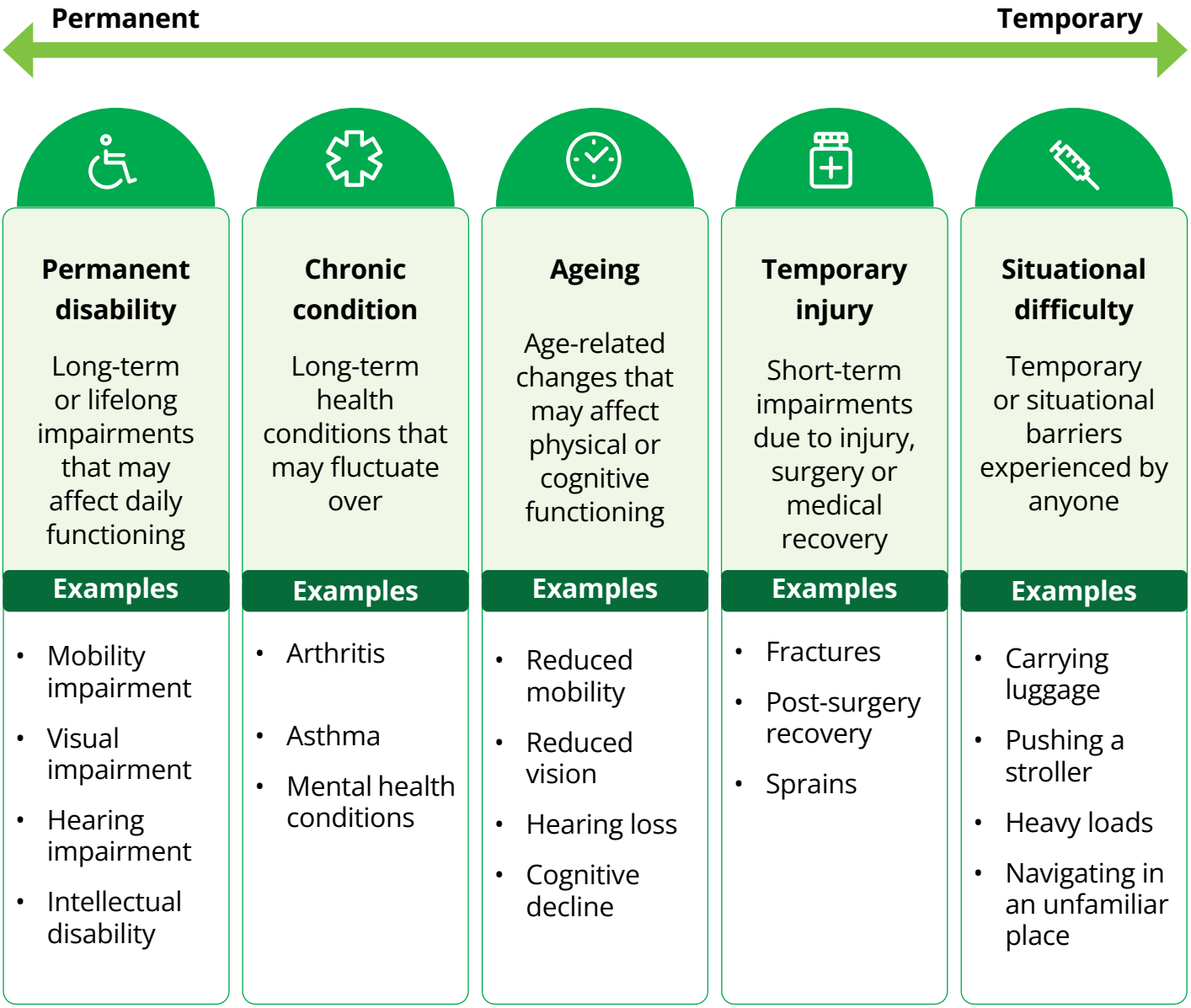


Purple Economy thrives because inclusion unlocks human potential and builds a more equitable and prosperous society. More people participate, more businesses grow and more jobs are created.

When an economy does not recognise a person's needs, the burden falls on the family. When those needs are recognised, they become services, products, jobs, businesses and systems.

Purple Economy includes all

Figure 2: Purple Economy spectrum



Disability is part of human experience; it may be permanent for some, temporary or situational for others, and becomes increasingly relevant as societies age. In that sense, the Purple Economy does not only respond to disability; it builds a more inclusive and future-proof society.

2.2. Why Purple Economy?

By 2022, the conversation around the economic system centred around persons with disabilities was coming to be known as "Purple Economy," with purple representing disability inclusion. It is being championed by Shanti Raghavan of EnAble India, reflecting more than 25 years of EnAble India's work on livelihoods and the life outcomes of persons with disabilities, and from witnessing them become employees, entrepreneurs, taxpayers, active citizens, family supporters and contributors to the economy. Yet these successes also revealed a deeper truth: the journey to being an income generator is not easy for a person with disability - when systems are not designed for people with disabilities, every step towards participation must be fought for.

The insight behind the term was that economies, markets and products have always evolved by responding to human challenges, frictions and limitations. Yet disability-linked needs were too often treated as an afterthought instead of as a source of design, innovation and value creation.

The Purple Economy, therefore, asks how the needs and aspirations of persons with disabilities can shape services, products, livelihoods, technology, public systems and markets.

[4] Mehra, Preeti. 'Developing a "Purple Economy" for Disability Inclusion.' The Hindu Business Line. 22 October 2023. www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/developing-a-purple-economy-for-disability-inclusion/article67449087.ece Media Briefing: Yes Cities – Reimaging Urban Life for People and Planet. World Economic Forum. 2025. www.weforum.org/meetings/world-economic-forum-annual-meeting-2025/sessions/media-briefing-yes-cities-reimaging-urban-life-for-people-and-planet/

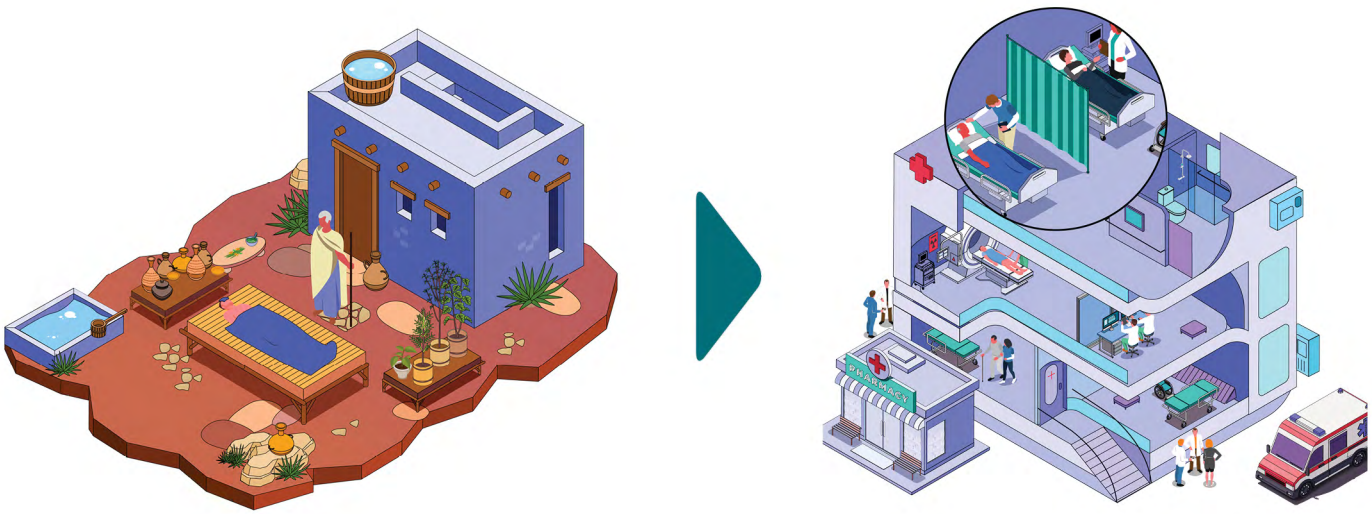
2.3. What history teaches us: When human needs become economies

History shows that many of the world's largest markets and public systems began with the recognition of a human need.

Eyewear is one of the clearest examples. Spectacles originated as a response to impaired vision. Still, society gradually recognised poor vision not merely as an individual limitation, but as a design challenge, a healthcare need and a market opportunity. Today, eyewear spans manufacturing, retail, healthcare, technology, fashion and public health. A person may purchase spectacles from a private provider, while governments and charities continue to support those who cannot afford them. This coexistence reflects a broader recognition that vision is fundamental to learning, work, mobility, productivity and dignity.

Healthcare followed a similar journey. Early hospitals emerged as places of refuge and charity before evolving into centres of diagnosis, treatment, research and professional care. Over time, they gave rise to entire ecosystems of doctors, nurses, pharmaceuticals, medical devices, diagnostics, insurance, digital health and healthcare infrastructure. Healthcare is now one of the world's largest economic sectors, yet public provision, insurance, philanthropy and private markets continue to coexist because health remains a universal human need.

Figure 3: Evolution of healthcare



The historical lesson is clear: when society recognises a human need, it does not choose between care and commerce. It builds systems in which public purpose, professional capability, innovation and markets evolve together. The Purple Economy applies this same principle to disability, asking what becomes possible when disability-linked needs are recognised not as exceptions, but as legitimate signals for system design, market creation and economic value.

2.4 The Purple Economy has always existed in fragments

One of the most important shifts in understanding the Purple Economy is to recognise that some fragments have existed. What is new is the frame.

> Globally, people have been building parts of the Purple Economy without naming it. NGOs have created support systems. Families have invented workarounds. Assistive technology companies have built products. Accessibility professionals have tested platforms and spaces. Special educators, interpreters, job coaches, counsellors, mobility trainers, rehabilitation professionals and caregivers have enabled daily life, learning, work and independence. Persons with disabilities have built enterprises, designed solutions and navigated systems with ingenuity.

Yet much of this activity has remained invisible to the mainstream economy.

It is often seen as social work, family responsibility, charity, medical support or isolated innovation. As a result, the economic value of this work is under-recognised. The jobs are not sufficiently formalised. The services are not widely distributed. The products are not easily discoverable. The demand is not aggregated. The market is not fully built. And in many areas, the products, services and delivery systems that people need have not yet been invented.

The Purple Economy makes this invisible economy visible.

Once it is seen, the opportunity expands. What was once treated as an individual struggle can become a service. What was once a family workaround can become a product category. What was once NGO expertise can become a professional ecosystem. What was once inaccessible can become a market opportunity. What was once scattered can become infrastructure. What once was an assistive solutions provider struggling to find a market can become the platform that powers the distribution and logistics ecosystem.

2.5. Daily life and life stages of persons with disabilities as an economic system

A single intervention does not define the life of a person with disability. It is a continuous journey across daily life, life stages, institutions, markets, public systems and social spaces.

Each stage creates distinct needs and aspirations, driving demand for products, services, infrastructure, skills, technologies and support systems. Early childhood may require screening, therapy and parent support; schooling creates demand for inclusive education and accessible learning; adulthood expands into skilling, employment, entrepreneurship, finance, mobility and independent living; while ageing and acquired disability increase the need for rehabilitation, caregiving, assistive technologies and accessible communities.



Figure 4: Life-stage participation

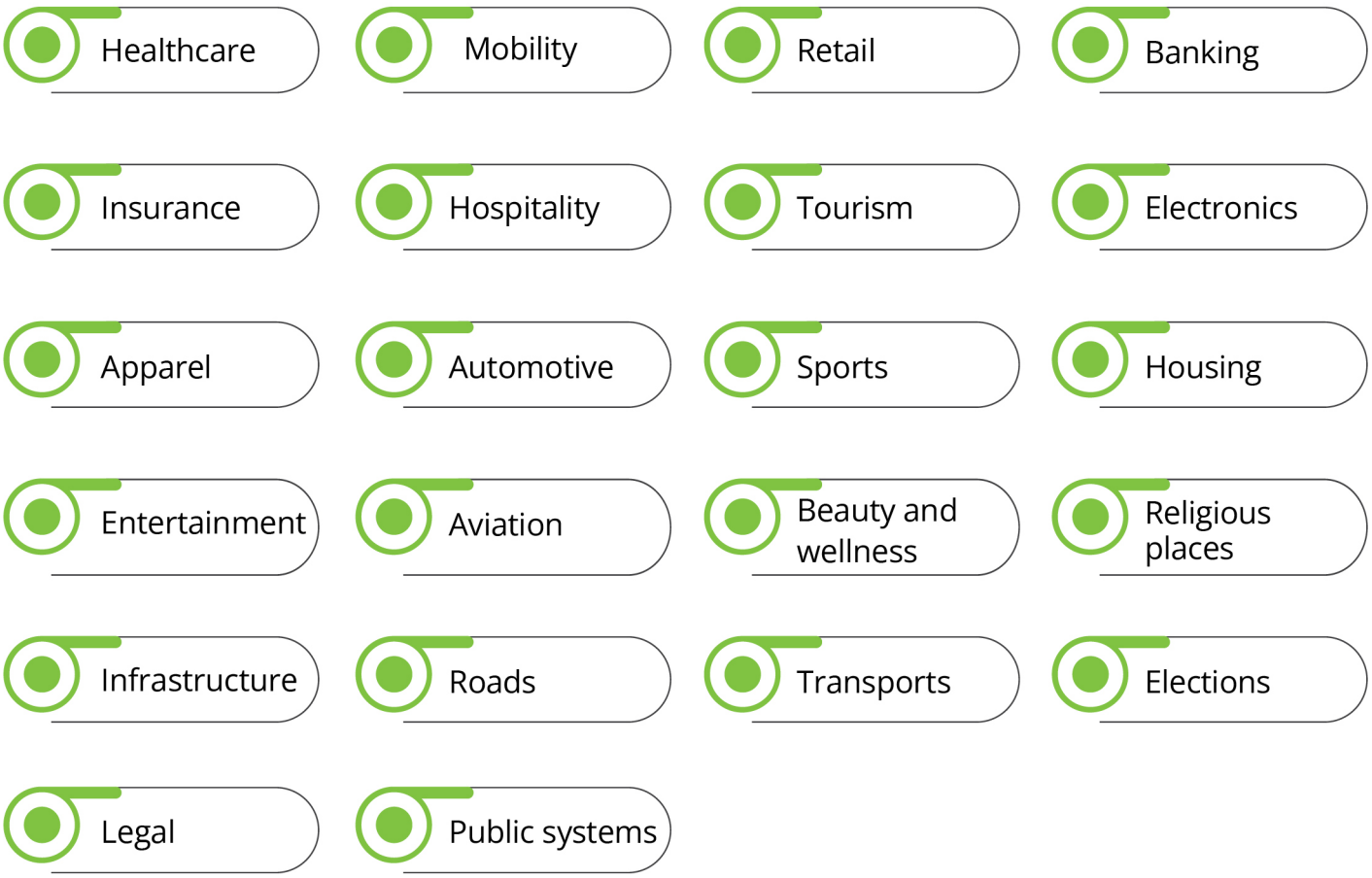
	Childhood	Education	Work	Self-employment	Family	Ageing
Unmet needs	• Early diagnosis • Therapy and development support • Accessible play and learning material • Family guidance	• Accessible learning • Assistive devices and software • Inclusive classrooms • Transport and mobility • Career guidance	• Workplace accessibility • Inclusive hiring • Job coaching and support • Career progression	• Access to finance • Business training and mentoring • Accessible market platforms • Legal and compliance support	• Care services • Inclusive housing • Financial planning and insurance • Parenting support	• Accessible healthcare • Mobility and daily living support • Social participation • Digital inclusion
Solutions	• Early intervention centres • Therapy programmes, inclusive toys • Parent training platforms	• Accessible EdTech • Screen readers • Sign language services • Scholarships • Accessible transportation	• Accessible work infrastructure • HR training • Job coaches • Flexible work policies	• Micro-finance and grants • E-commerce platforms • Legal aid • Market linkages	• Care services • Insurance products	• Geriatric Care • Home Modifications • Mobility Aids • Community programs
Jobs created	• Early intervention specialists • Therapists • Special educators • Assistive tech technicians	• Special educators • Sign language interpreters • Accessibility specialists • EdTech developers • Mobility support staff	• Job coaches • Accessibility auditors • Workplace trainers • HR inclusion specialists	• Business mentors • Financial advisors • Marketing experts • Legal consultants	• Caregivers • Counsellors • Financial planners • Social workers • Community facilitators	• Geriatric caregivers • Physio-therapists • Health advisors • Mobility specialists • Digital literacy trainers/Digital engagement trainers

	Childhood	Education	Work	Self-employment	Family	Ageing
Services and products	• Therapy centres • Inclusive toys manufacturers • Assessment tools • Parent support apps	• EdTech platforms • Assistive devices • Accessible learning content • Transport services	• Accessibility firms • Inclusive hiring platforms	• Inclusive e-commerce • Financial services • Adaptive products • Training platforms	• Home care agencies • Inclusive housing • Insurance products	• Senior care services • Mobility products • Telehealth • Community engagement platforms
Outcomes	Better development and school readiness	Higher learning outcomes and employability	Dignified jobs and financial independence	Thriving businesses, wealth creation and innovation	Stronger families, financial security and well-being	Active, healthy, independent and respected ageing

Figure 4 maps where Purple Economy opportunities can emerge from a life-stage perspective. It is an illustrative representation and does not imply that individual journeys are linear or uniform. Nor does it suggest that these opportunities are already mature, affordable, accessible or scalable. In many cases, they represent Purple Economy opportunities precisely because the current ecosystem remains fragmented, undersupplied, difficult to navigate or unaffordable.

Yet participation extends far beyond major life stages. Every day, persons with disabilities participate in the economy through housing, mobility, education, healthcare, finance, retail, workplaces, public services, digital platforms and community life. Figure 5 illustrates the breadth of sectors in which these interactions occur. Across many of these sectors, needs remain fragmented, under-supplied, difficult to discover, or unaffordable, creating opportunities for better products, services, institutions and markets (See Appendix B).

Figure 5: Daily life participation



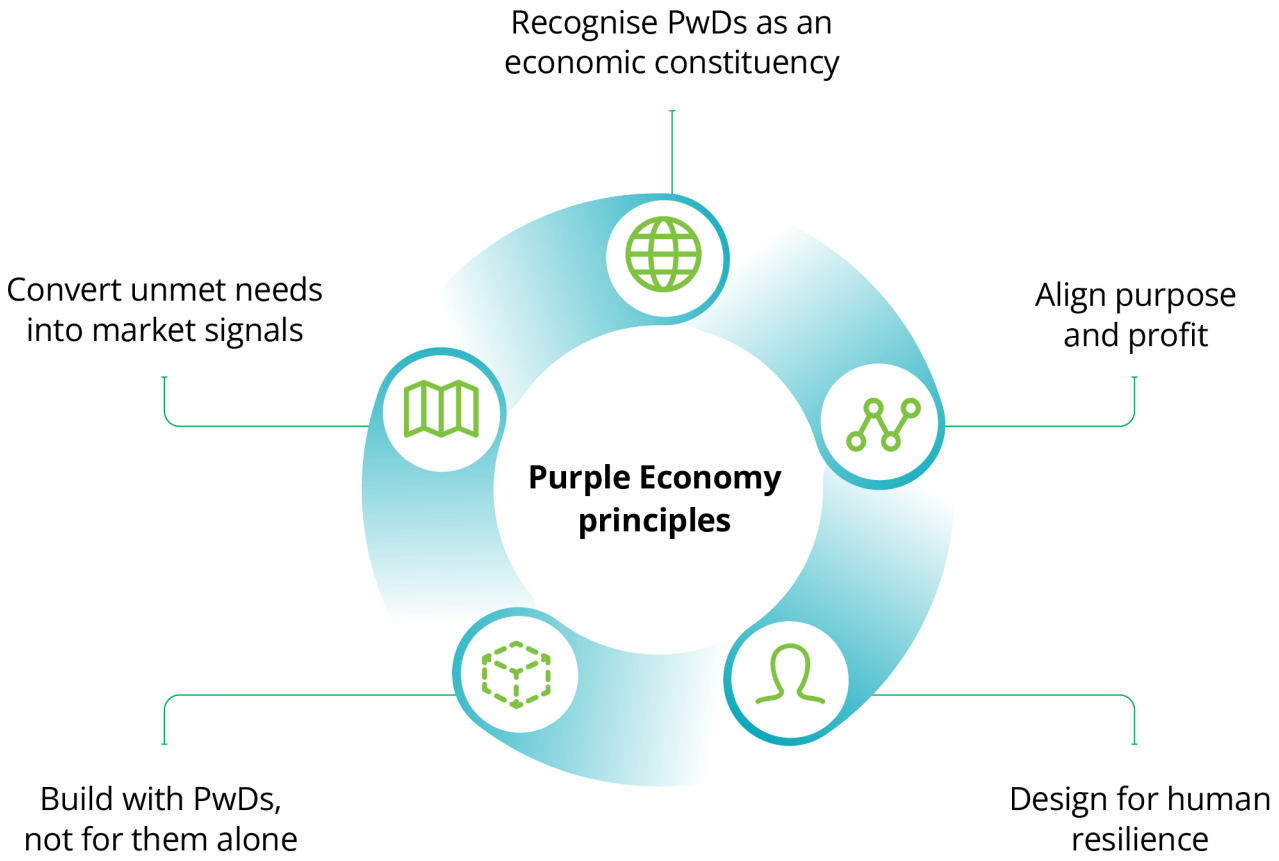
The Purple Economy, therefore, is not a single market or industry. It is a way of recognising how disability-linked needs and aspirations manifest in everyday life, and how these needs can drive innovation, market creation and economic value. The opportunity is not confined to one sector; it exists wherever persons with disabilities live, learn, work, travel, consume, create and participate.

2.6. Principles of the Purple Economy

The Purple Economy is guided by a set of principles that move the conversation from accommodation to participation, and from isolated access to economic design.

From traditional view

- Welfare/ Charity
- Accommodation mindset
- Compliance-driven
- PwDs seen as beneficiaries



To Purple Economy

- Economic participation
- Participation by design
- Growth- and innovation-driven
- PwDs seen as consumers, workers and entrepreneurs

Recognise persons with disabilities as an economic constituency: The Purple Economy begins by recognising them as customers, workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, suppliers, creators and decision-makers. This shift is fundamental. A beneficiary receives support; a customer shapes markets. A worker contributes skill; an entrepreneur creates value. When persons with disabilities are recognised as an economic constituency, systems begin to respond differently.

Align purpose and profit: The Purple Economy rejects the false binary between social impact and financial return. It recognises that purpose scales with market movements. When businesses solve real, unmet needs of people with disabilities and difficulties, they not only do good; they also create value, build trust, expand markets and unlock new customer relationships.

Design for human resilience: Human ability is never fixed. Disability, illness, injury, ageing or situational barriers can enter any life at any time. The Purple Economy, therefore, designs for the full range of human needs. When systems are designed for people who experience the highest friction, they often become easier, safer and more useful for everyone. A Purple-ready economy strengthens resilience across society.

Build with persons with disabilities, not for them alone: The Purple Economy must be shaped by persons with disabilities themselves. They are not only users of systems. They are co-designers, testers, advisors, entrepreneurs, employees, leaders and decision-makers. “Nothing about us without us[5]” is only a rights principle. It is also good economics, because systems designed without users often fail.

[5] "Nothing About Us Without Us" is a foundational principle of the global disability rights movement. It recognises that persons with disabilities must be active participants in shaping the policies and systems that affect their lives. United Nations. UN Enable - International Day of Disabled Persons, 2004 - United Nations, New York. www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/iddp2004.htm



Convert unmet needs as innovation signals: The Purple Delta: Many disability-linked needs remain unmet because systems have not recognised them as demand. “Purple Delta” is the gap between the value currently captured by the economy and the much larger value that could be unlocked through inclusive design and systemic participation.

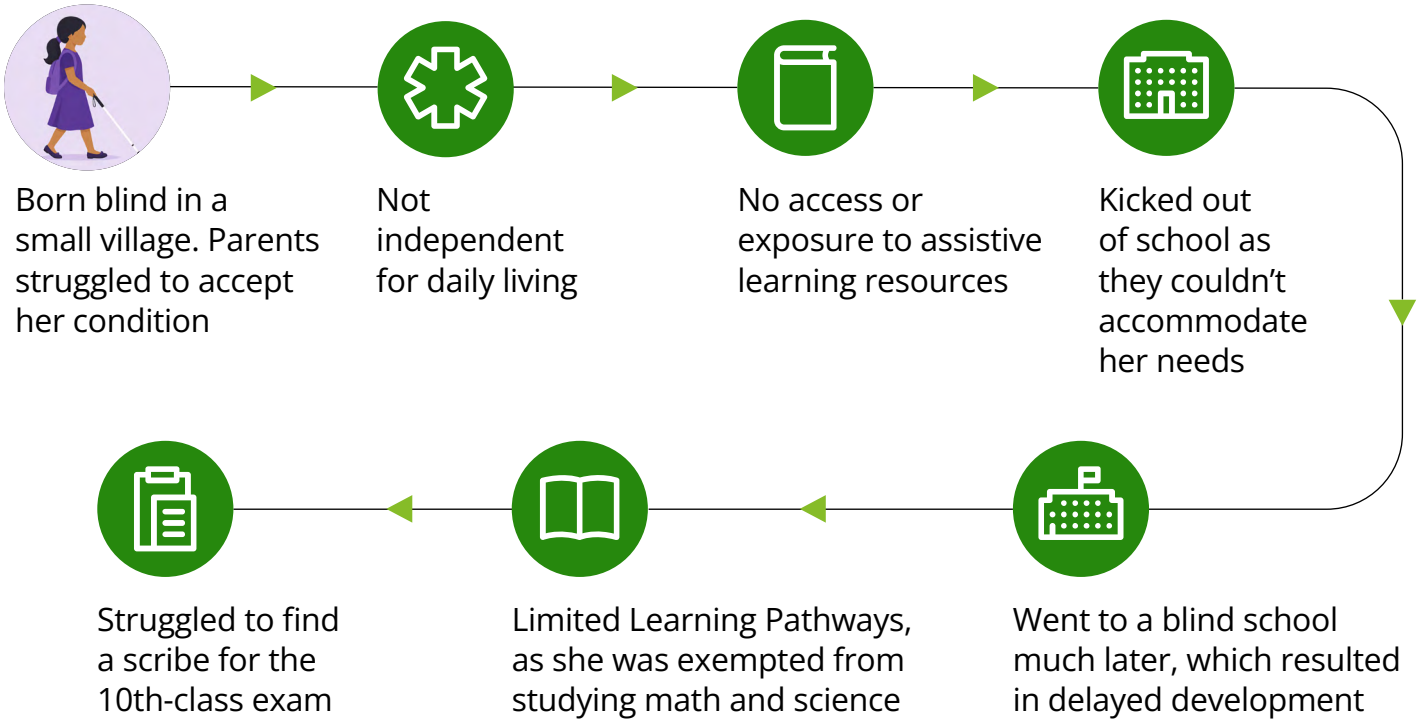
This delta encompasses lost productivity, suppressed consumption, unrealised entrepreneurship and the inefficiencies created by inaccessible systems that require parallel or compensatory solutions. Making this gap visible is critical. It shifts the conversation from moral obligation to economic rationale, enabling governments, businesses, and investors to see inclusion not as a social cost but as a measurable opportunity for growth, efficiency and market expansion.



Figure 7: Cheena's Story of unmet needs

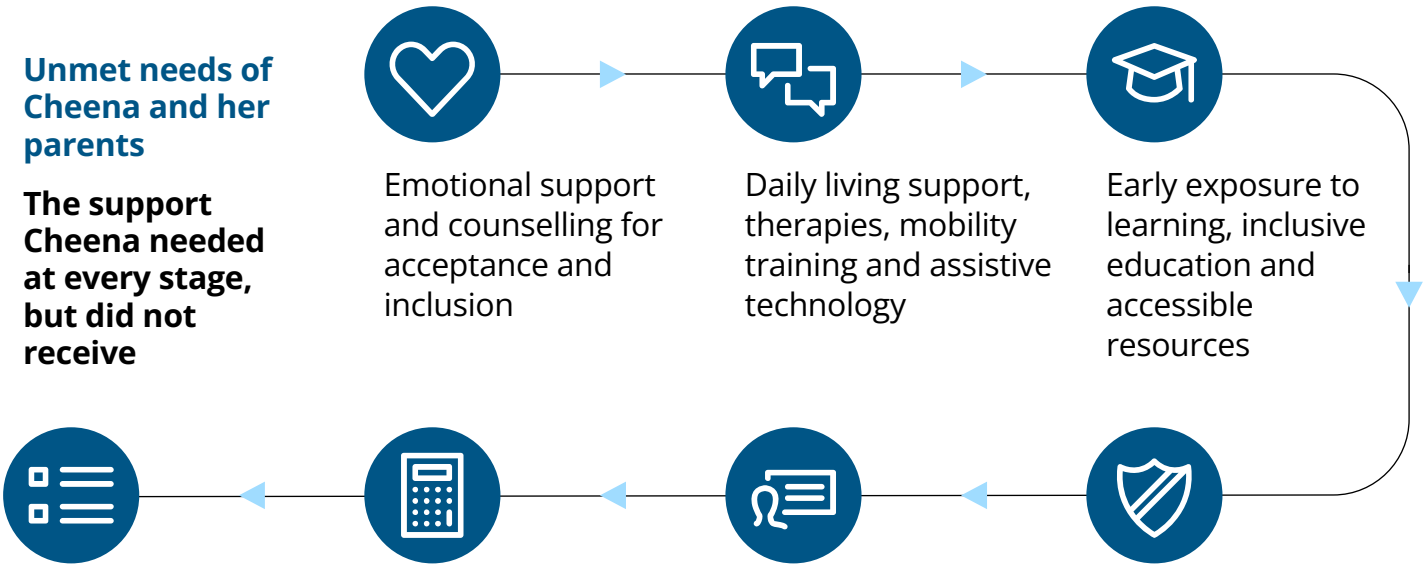
Cheena's Journey

A story of barriers that should not have existed.



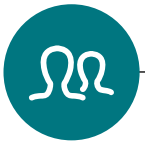
Unmet needs of Cheena and her parents

The support Cheena needed at every stage, but did not receive



Jobs and services that could have helped

The right support, at the right time, can change lives



Counsellors, psychologists and parent support groups

- Support for acceptance and mental well-being
- Family counselling and guidance



ASHA workers, therapists, caregivers and rehab professionals

- Daily living skills training
- Physiotherapy and mobility training
- Assistive devices and mobility aids



Inclusive educators, resource teachers and NGOs

- Early learning support
- Accessible study materials
- Exposure visits and learning resources



Schools, counsellors and RTE support services

- Inclusive school admission
- Enrolment and retention support
- Grievance redressal



Special educators, low vision experts and development professionals

- Early intervention
- Individual education plans
- Development support



Subject teachers, tutors and EdTech platforms

- Math and science learning support
- Assistive technology for learning



Exam cell coordinators, scribe providers and assistive tech services

- Timely scribe support
- Accessible exam process
- Training for schools and exam staff

3. The case for the Purple Economy



The economic case for the Purple Economy rests on five interconnected pillars: the latent purchasing power of an underserved consumer base, the scale of net-new market creation, the macroeconomic necessity of reversing GDP losses, the compounding velocity of inclusive capital and the role of disability-led design as an incubator for mainstream innovation. When viewed through this lens, disability inclusion is not a redistributive cost. It is a strategic investment in productive capacity, market expansion, innovation and long-term national resilience.

3.1. The consumer imperative: Tapping into latent purchasing power

Persons with disabilities and their extended networks represent one of the world's largest under-recognised consumer constituencies. While disability has historically been viewed through the lens of social welfare, this demographic also represents substantial purchasing power. Globally, disability-linked spending power is estimated to exceed US$18 trillion.[6] This includes expenditures on products and services that persons with disabilities and their households already purchase or would purchase if markets were better designed to meet their needs.

The Purple Economy does not assume that this spending is currently accessible to businesses. It argues that a significant portion of this demand remains underserved because products, services, platforms, environments and customer journeys are not designed for persons with disabilities. The opportunity lies in making this demand visible and reachable.

By reducing friction, improving usability and designing around real needs, businesses can unlock new consumers across sectors ranging from banking, insurance, retail and mobility to hospitality, education, healthcare, housing, digital services and public infrastructure. In doing so, the Purple Economy provides a strategic blueprint for converting unmet needs into market demand and capturing a significant, underserved share of wallet.

[6] Talikowska, Katy. "Why Businesses Must Take Action on Disability Inclusion by 2025." World Economic Forum, 6 December 2024. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2024/12/why-businesses-must-take-action-on-disability-inclusion-by-2025/

3.2. The market expansion: Unlocking the value of the Purple Economy

Beyond capturing existing spending, the Purple Economy actively constructs a massive new value ecosystem by fulfilling unmet needs. When fully realised, it constitutes a vast, standalone market.

This is because disability intersects with every aspect of human experience, and this opportunity cuts across life stages and daily life cycles. A child may need early identification, school support, accessible learning, family guidance and assistive devices. A young adult may need skills training, transport, digital tools, mental health support, career counselling and workplace readiness. An entrepreneur may need credit, procurement access, accessible payments, marketplaces and logistics. An older person or someone recovering from surgery may need adaptive clothing, home modifications, mobility aids, rehabilitation and daily living services.

When combined, the convergence of these unmet needs across various life stages and daily life cycles creates a massive economic opportunity. To illustrate this potential in an emerging economy, a conservative estimate positions the Indian market alone at US$150 billion. (See the “India Spotlight” section for more details.)

3.3. The macroeconomic correction: Reversing the GDP penalty

While the Purple Economy represents a massive opportunity for market expansion, continued exclusion carries a measurable and severe macroeconomic penalty. Gaps in education, employment, mobility, finance, healthcare, technology and public participation do not affect individuals alone. They reduce labour force participation, suppress productivity, constrain consumption, increase family dependence and weaken the efficient use of human capital across the economy.

International evidence from organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and the World Bank has suggested that

disability-linked exclusion can cost countries between 3 percent and 7 percent of annual GDP.[7] These losses arise not only because persons with disabilities are excluded from jobs, but because entire support systems remain underbuilt: families lose productive time, businesses miss customers, governments carry higher long-term dependency costs and markets fail to develop needed services.

The Purple Economy reframes this cost. Investments in inclusive systems, assistive technologies, services, accessible infrastructure, professional training and digital access are not merely social expenditures. They are investments in productive capacity, market depth, household resilience and national growth.

3.4. The velocity engine: Creating multiplier effects

The economic effects of the Purple Economy extend beyond direct inclusion. They create multiplier effects by expanding incomes, strengthening consumption, improving productivity, generating jobs and increasing the availability of products and services that enable participation.

As persons with disabilities gain access to education, employment and entrepreneurship, their incomes increase. But aspirations grow when people see products, services, experiences and opportunities that cater to them. When markets are inclusive, they do more than meet their demands; instead, they expand the horizon of aspiration by creating new possibilities for participation and consumption. Access to better products and services creates new goals and new reasons to earn, save, invest and participate. This reinforcing cycle is the Purple Economy Flywheel.

The first multiplier is employment and enterprise participation. As more persons with disabilities participate in employment, entrepreneurship and self-employment, household income increases and dependency reduces. This stimulates consumption across all sectors.

The second multiplier is job creation around unmet needs. Many current “purple jobs” already exist but remain under-supplied: speech therapists, special educators, job coaches, interpreters, mobility trainers, daily living advisors, accessibility testers and rehabilitation professionals. As demand becomes visible, these jobs can be amplified, regularised, financed and scaled.

The third multiplier is new business creation. Unmet needs can generate new enterprises: adaptive clothing, daily living service providers, accessible travel advisory, inclusive

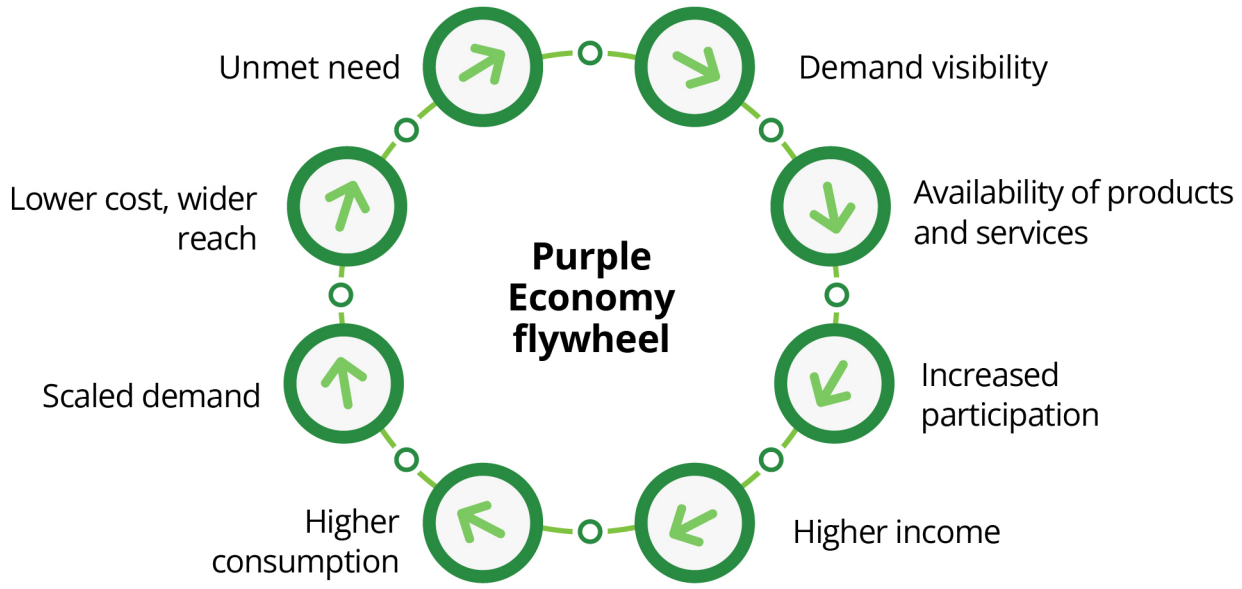
[7] World Bank. 2022. Disability Inclusion and Accountability Framework. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/437451528442789278/pdf/126977-WP-PUBLIC-DisabilityInclusionAccountabilitydigital.pdf

education support, accessible product distribution, new insurance products, inclusive banking, AI-based support tools and many others. These businesses serve persons with disabilities directly, but many eventually serve larger markets as well.

The fourth multiplier is productivity and efficiency. Accessible transport, workplaces, digital platforms, financial systems and public services reduce friction for persons with disabilities and improve usability for older persons, caregivers, first-time users and people recovering from injury.

In this sense, the Purple Economy is simultaneously a human capital strategy, an innovation strategy, a productivity strategy and a market strategy.

Figure 8: Purple economy flywheel



First multiplier	Second multiplier	Third multiplier	Fourth multiplier
More PwDs participate in employment, entrepreneurship, platform work, self-employment and MSMEs	High demand, undersupplied roles concerning the unmet needs of PwDs are amplified, regularised, financed and scaled	Unmet needs can generate new enterprises that serve PwDs directly and often expand to larger markets	Reducing friction for PwDs contributes to productivity and efficiency

3.5. The innovation incubator: Pioneering mainstream breakthroughs

Disability has always been an innovation frontier because it reveals needs before mainstream markets recognise them. Many products and systems that are now common began as responses to specific human difficulties. This is often called the curb-cut effect, i.e., when we design for people facing the highest friction, we often improve usability for everyone.



Figure 9: How accessibility innovations became mainstream products

The keyboard/typewriter

The modern keyboard traces its origins to early typewriter experiments developed to help blind individuals write independently. In 1808, Italian inventor Pellegrino Turri is believed to have created a writing machine for his blind friend, Countess Carolina Fantoni da Fivizzano, while similar accessibility-driven innovations were undertaken by Agostino Fantoni for his blind sister. What began as an assistive solution for written communication eventually evolved into the typewriter and later the keyboard, now one of the foundational interfaces of modern communication and computing.

Audiobooks

Audiobooks originated in the 1930s when organisations such as the American Foundation for the Blind and the US Library of Congress began recording books for visually impaired readers. Advances in cassette tapes, CDs and later digital platforms transformed audiobooks into a global mainstream content industry consumed by millions worldwide.

Curb cuts

Curb cuts, the sloped sections built into sidewalks were originally designed to enable wheelchair access across streets and pavements. Over time, they became universally beneficial for parents with strollers, cyclists, travelers with suitcases, delivery workers and the elderly. Today, curb cuts are one of the prominent examples of how accessibility-focused design improves public infrastructure for society as a whole.

Touchscreen interfaces

While researching multi-touch surfaces, Wayne Westerman developed severe carpal tunnel syndrome, motivating him to create touch-based computer controls that required less force and movement. Originally designed to help people with dexterity impairments and repetitive-strain injuries, this technology was later acquired by Apple and became the foundation of the iPhone's touchscreen interface. Today, touchscreens are ubiquitous.

Automatic doors



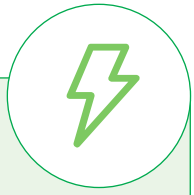
Automatic doors were originally introduced to improve accessibility for wheelchair users and individuals with limited mobility. Today, they benefit a far wider population including parents with strollers, travellers carrying luggage, delivery workers, elderly individuals and people navigating busy public spaces making movement more seamless and efficient for everyone.

Live transcribing



Live transcribing and real-time captions were developed to support deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals by converting speech into text instantly. Today, they are widely used in virtual meetings, classrooms, public events, multilingual communication and noisy environments improving accessibility, comprehension and productivity for all users.

The electric toothbrush



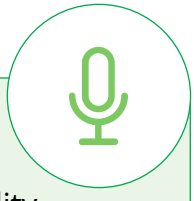
The first powered toothbrush, Broxodent®, was introduced in Switzerland in 1954 by Dr Philippe-Guy Woog for individuals with limited motor skills and orthodontic patients who faced difficulty maintaining oral hygiene. Today, electric toothbrushes are a mainstream healthcare product used globally.

Subtitles and captions



Originally developed to improve accessibility for deaf and hard-of-hearing users, subtitles and captions are now widely used across streaming platforms and social media. They have also expanded global access to foreign-language content, significantly increasing the international reach of entertainment and digital media.

Voice technology



Voice technologies such as speech recognition, dictation software and screen readers were originally developed to help people with mobility, dexterity and visual impairments access and navigate digital devices. Over time, these accessibility-focused innovations evolved into mainstream tools, powering virtual assistants, voice typing, navigation systems, features used by millions every day.

By treating disability as the ultimate stress-test for design, we are architecting the future of universal user experience. Every breakthrough in the Purple Economy, wherever it occurs, inevitably spills over to benefit every human being as we age or navigate a complex world. This innovation engine holds the power to fundamentally transform the very DNA of every industry, rewriting the standards of participation and efficiency across sectors of the global economy.

But the Purple Economy asks us to go further. It is not only about one feature becoming popular. It is about the full economic journey through which a need becomes a product, then a service, then a supply chain, then a profession, then a market and eventually a normal part of everyday life.

Disability-linked needs are still often stuck at an earlier stage of this journey. A wheelchair may exist but not reach the last mile. A professional service may exist but remain inside a small NGO network. An accessible feature may exist but not be embedded into mainstream platforms. A family may create workarounds that could have been services. A person may lose years of participation because the right product, advisor, counsellor, store, supply chain or support professional was not available at the right time.

The Purple Economy positions these gaps as opportunities for innovation. It asks companies, governments, investors and innovators to treat disability-linked unmet needs as a design brief for the future. The next wave of inclusive innovation will not be built only through ramps and checklists. It will be built through research and development, service design, supply chains, AI, adaptive products, inclusive retail, digital public infrastructure, financing, professional training and customer insight.



India spotlight: A proving ground for Purple Economy

India is uniquely positioned to demonstrate the potential of the Purple Economy at a population scale. Its demographic diversity, entrepreneurial ecosystem, manufacturing capability, expanding services economy, DPI and ambition to become a Viksit Bharat by 2047 create the conditions to transform participation into a driver of economic growth.

Importantly, India does not start from scratch. Over the past decade, the country has established a strong foundation through the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016; the Accessible India Campaign; the Unique Disability ID (UDID); assistive technology programmes; skilling initiatives; and a growing number of state-led efforts. Yet significant participation gaps persist across employment, entrepreneurship, education, accessibility and income.

Figure 10: The participation gap: Key data on PwDs in India

36%

workforce participation rate of PwDs compared with 60 percent of people without disability*

<25%

Indian workplaces have accessible infrastructure (ramps, adapted washrooms, assistive technology)^

<1%

of MSMEs registered on Udyam are PwDs-led enterprises, representing 685,273 of 79.4 million registrations**

52.8%

Literacy rate among PwDs against the national literacy rate of 72.98 percent^*

45.3%

Literacy rate among women with disabilities, compared with 61.9 percent among men with disabilities*

20.1%

The workforce participation rate is significantly lower than that of men with disabilities*

69%

PwDs reside in rural areas as opposed to 31 percent in urban areas, limiting access to skilling, healthcare, assistive technologies, etc.^*

These gaps represent more than social exclusion; they signal unmet demand, underutilised capabilities and underdeveloped markets. Based on a conservative estimate of 100 million persons with disabilities, this report estimates a Total Addressable Market of approximately US$150 billion across disability-linked products and services (see Appendix A for more detailed methodology). As India enters its next phase of economic growth, the opportunity lies not only in expanding rights and access but in converting participation into new markets, enterprises, jobs and innovation.

* NSS Report No. 583: Persons with Disabilities in India
** Ministry Of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises Dashboard
^UNDP India. Bridging the Gap: Enabling Disability Inclusion in India's Private Sector Workplaces.
^* Census 2011

Figure 11: Sizing the Purple Economy in India

100 million

Conservative PwD population base

Estimated from a range of national and global sources, including Census 2011 estimates, World Bank assessments and WHO's global estimate

26.8 million

The National Sample Survey of Persons with Disabilities and the Census of India (2011) consider only **seven disabilities.**

55–90 million

People with Disabilities in India: World Bank, 2009

>200 million

Global estimate of ~15 percent of population based on World Report on Disability – **WHO, 2011**

10 groups of the disability spectrum

- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Psychosocial disability
- Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Chronic neurological conditions
- Complex medical conditions
- Multiple disabilities
- Physical disabilities

Dual-evidence approach

- Review of existing reports and sectoral studies on disability-related costs
- Interviews with PwDs capturing lived experiences, actual spending patterns, unmet needs and aspirational consumption

5 macro expenditure heads

- Healthcare and rehabilitation
- Education and vocational training
- Assistive technology and devices
- Activities of daily living
- Financial support

Calculating the market value

US$500 billion
Total Unrestrained Market (TUM)

The 'ability to pay' filter

~US$150 billion
Total Addressable Market (TAM)

Since 69 percent of persons with disabilities reside in rural areas, physical access networks alone cannot scale fast enough. Digital interventions are not just conveniences; they are the only pragmatically viable way to bypass geographic barriers and aggregate rural demand at a population scale.

The country's success in building population-scale DPI has demonstrated how shared systems can expand access, reduce friction and unlock participation. Applying similar principles to accessibility and inclusion creates an opportunity to redesign systems to address unmet needs, strengthen market responses and unlock new consumers, enterprises, jobs and services. The result is not simply greater inclusion, but deeper markets, stronger institutions and more resilient economic growth.

This transition is already beginning to take shape. The Union Budget 2026[8] signals an important shift from viewing disability primarily through welfare and support towards strengthening economic participation. Through the proposed Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana, the government has identified high-growth sectors with strong potential for inclusive workforce participation. In contrast, the proposed Divyang Sahara Yojana seeks to strengthen India's assistive technology ecosystem by supporting domestic manufacturing, research and innovation, and expanding access through assistive technology marts. Together, these initiatives reflect the early building blocks of a Purple Economy by developing human capital while simultaneously strengthening markets for inclusive products and services.

Emerging growth sectors for the Purple Economy

The sectors identified under the proposed Divyangjan Kaushal Yojana illustrate where the Purple Economy can generate meaningful employment, entrepreneurship, innovation and long-term economic participation.

Information Technology (IT): India's IT and Business Process Management (BPM) sector is a cornerstone of the country's digital economy, employing over 6 million people and witnessing sustained growth driven by AI, cloud computing, cybersecurity, digital transformation and the rapid expansion of Global Capability Centres (GCCs). As these sectors evolve towards higher-value digital services, they are creating demand across software engineering, AI development, data and analytics, cybersecurity, digital operations, accessibility engineering, product design, customer experience and enterprise technology services. The sector's digital-first work environments, remote collaboration and outcome-based roles reduce many traditional barriers to participation while simultaneously creating opportunities to develop accessibility technologies, inclusive digital products and AI-enabled solutions that will underpin the broader Purple Economy.

Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC): Recognised by the government as a strategic sunrise sector, with the industry projected to scale up to US$100 billion by 2030, the AVGC industry sits at the convergence of creativity, technology and the digital economy. Rapid growth in gaming, immersive media,

[8] Divyang Kaushal Yojana to Provide Customised Training To Divyangjan in IT, AVGC and Hospitality Sectors. Ministry of Finance. PIB. 2026. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2221393&reg=3&lang=2
[9] IT & BPM Industry in India. https://www.ibef.org/industry/information-technology-india
[10] Powering the AVGC-XR Revolution. PIB. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2191085&reg=48&lang=2

virtual production, animation and extended reality is generating opportunities across animation, game development, visual effects, digital art, programming, sound design, quality assurance, digital production and creative storytelling. The sector's project-based, technology-enabled and increasingly flexible work models can expand workforce participation while fostering disability-led innovation. At the same time, it presents opportunities to create accessible gaming, inclusive digital content, adaptive learning experiences and universal design solutions, positioning accessibility as a source of innovation rather than compliance.

Hospitality: Tourism and hospitality remain among India's largest employment-intensive sectors, contributing ~7 percent of GDP[11] and supporting over 76 million jobs.[12] Continued growth in domestic tourism, international arrivals, business travel and visitor infrastructure is generating opportunities across guest services, reservations, administration, concierge services, finance, procurement, digital marketing, food production, facilities management and back-office operations. With inclusive workplace practices, assistive technologies and targeted skilling, the sector can significantly expand workforce participation for persons with disabilities. More importantly, hospitality represents a major market opportunity through accessible tourism. By embedding accessibility across hotels, transport, attractions and visitor experiences, India can unlock a rapidly growing global consumer segment while strengthening its competitiveness as an inclusive tourism destination.

Food and Beverage: India's food and beverage ecosystem is expanding rapidly through food processing, organised retail, e-commerce, quick-service restaurants, cloud kitchens and modern supply chains. Growth across food manufacturing, packaging, quality assurance, logistics, inventory management, retail operations, catering and digital food commerce is creating employment opportunities across diverse skill levels while strengthening value addition within agriculture. The sector also offers significant potential for entrepreneurship through home-based enterprises, micro-food businesses, catering services, packaged food brands and community enterprises. For the Purple Economy, food and beverage presents an opportunity to expand employment and strengthen disability-led entrepreneurship, inclusive supply chains and accessible businesses that participate across local, regional and national markets.

Together, these developments illustrate how India is beginning to move from disability inclusion as a social imperative to participation as an economic imperative. Building the Purple Economy, however, requires more than sectoral opportunities; it requires the ability to connect people, markets, institutions and services at scale. This is where India's Digital Public Infrastructure offers a unique advantage. By leveraging interoperable digital systems to improve discoverability, trust and coordination, India can accelerate participation across the economy and demonstrate how accessibility can drive productivity, innovation and inclusive growth.

[11] Tourism Expansion in India. PIB. https://www.pib.gov.in/FactsheetDetails.aspx?Id=149085&reg=48&lang=2
[12] Tourism as a Key Driver for Employment and Growth Budget 2025-26 Focuses on Infrastructure, Medical Tourism, and Heritage Conservation. PIB. https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2099519&reg=48&lang=2

4. A national growth framework for Purple Economy



The Purple Economy will not emerge through individual products, services, schemes or institutions alone. Like any economy, it grows when needs become visible, solutions become available, and systems enable participation at scale. This requires more than isolated interventions; it requires an architecture that connects markets, policy, technology, finance, enterprise and institutional ownership.

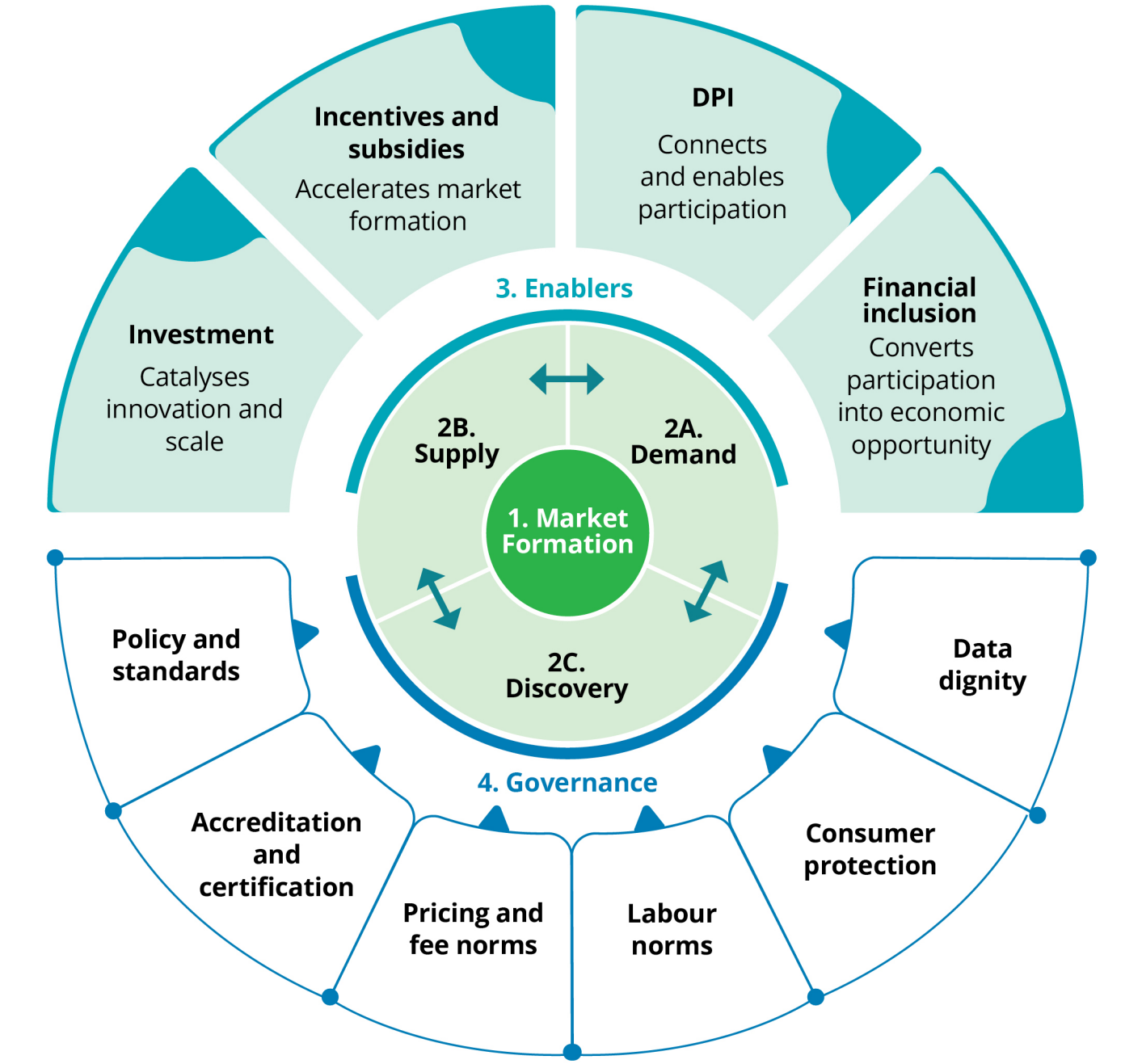
The National Growth Framework provides that architecture. It explains how disability-linked needs can translate into market formation by strengthening demand, expanding supply, improving discovery and market access, enabling investment and infrastructure, and creating the governance systems needed for trust and scale. Together, these elements provide a pathway for moving from inclusion as intent to participation as a driver of economic growth.

4.1. National growth framework: From formation to scale

The integrated growth systems architecture of the purple economy is centred on expanded participation of persons with disabilities across markets, systems and sectors. This system is best understood as a self-reinforcing economic loop connecting supply expansion, demand growth and discovery, which is enabled and sustained by strong institutional systems.



Figure 12: National Growth Framework



2A. Demand

Demand

- Physical and digital consumption
- Institutional procurement
- Service and maintenance

2B. Supply

Supply

- Knowledge systems
- Production institutions
- Products and infrastructure innovations
- Human capital abundance and participation

2C. Discovery

Market access

- Distribution and access systems
- Transport and logistics
- Information and discovery
- Jobs and products marketplace

1. Market formation: Core of the framework

Market formation is at the heart of the growth framework and creates the conditions under which the three engines of demand, supply and discovery can work seamlessly.



Ariel, an artist, acquired a psychiatric disability and dropped out of school. His recovery and subsequent re-entry into education were delayed due to the unavailability of quality psychiatrists. He is unable to sustain any job at companies and has a relapse. Placement agents who can sensitise the company to the solutions it needs are 100 kms away, and its artwork needs a marketplace to earn.

Government-initiating transformative subsidised services for people like Ariel can turn such services into a necessity and boost demand in the medium term, and inclusive marketplaces could have helped him have an income.



May Lee uses a wheelchair and is the CHRO of a company. She travels frequently and faces unpredictable accessibility issues at airports, in cabs, in hotels and at concerts. Accessibility is seen as compliance rather than as a driver of market value. She rarely finds wheelchair maintenance services.

Market formation includes educating supply-side players on the market value and building a narrative around consumers like May Lee.



Kwame, a bright child with blindness and his family from a remote village had to migrate to the city for his education. This stretches the family financially and emotionally.

Market formation includes incentivising service providers, such as para-educators in rural areas, perhaps through government schemes, for consumers like Kwame.



Oksana never had access to storybooks growing up as a deaf child. Today, even with the availability of accessible books in sign language, neither she nor her deaf son seeks them out or uses them to build exposure and language skills, or to spark problem-solving and imagination.

Shifting consumer behaviour and generating demand among people like Oksana are part of market formation.

Market formation needs to be viewed through a systems lens, supported by narratives that build around people like Oksana, Kwame, Farooq and May Lee as consumers. The next step is to build a movement around the purple economy, which aligns and energises system actors and builds momentum.

2. The three engines of the Purple Economy

The Purple Economy can be understood through **three engines: demand, supply and discovery.** These should not be treated as abstract economic categories. They are practical ways of understanding what must be built.

2A. Demand: Recognising persons with disabilities as an economic constituency

Demand begins when the needs of persons with disabilities and their families are recognised as a serious economic constituency, needs that are not yet expressed because people may not know that a solution exists, cannot access it, cannot afford it or have never been served by the market before.

A person recovering from injury may not know that adaptive products or workplace redesign can reduce dependence. **Demand signalling** can come from **anticipating** the **needs** in the life stage of the person such as an adaptive product.

The Purple Economy makes such demand visible, legitimate and organised.

Families as a unit of demand: Many disability-linked decisions are made by individuals and families together. Families often purchase, coordinate, support, finance and evaluate services. A Purple Economy framework must recognise the household as an important unit of demand.

Trust as the backbone: In the Purple Economy, consumption is also shaped by trust. Persons with disabilities and their families will use a service repeatedly if it is reliable, respectful, affordable and dignified. This is why customer experience, staff readiness, service quality and feedback loops are economic issues.

Demand therefore includes:

i. **Physical and digital consumption:** A consumer with disability has needs for different physical spaces such as schools, hospitals, banks, hotels, public offices, workplaces, entertainment spaces, retail outlets and community infrastructure and needs digital spaces such as apps, platforms, websites, AI tools, learning systems, financial services, telemedicine, e-commerce and grievance systems.

ii. **Institutional procurement:** Demand can happen through institutions. For example, governments, schools and employers procure assistive devices, learning materials and infrastructure, hospitals procure assistive and diagnostic systems, and hotels procure accessibility upgrades.

Institutional procurement is one of the strongest ways to build the Purple Economy, as demand for persons with disabilities is met at scale. The government is one of the most powerful market-makers. When public procurement requires accessibility, buys assistive products, supports persons with disabilities-led enterprises, procures

inclusive digital systems, and funds support services, it creates demand and gives the market confidence.

iii. **Service and maintenance:** Demand in the Purple Economy does not end at the point of purchase or first use. It continues through service, maintenance, repair and ongoing support, ensuring that products and services remain usable, reliable and relevant over time.

Many assistive solutions, accessibility features and inclusive services fail not because they are poorly designed, but because they are not supported after deployment. Devices may break without repair options. Infrastructure may degrade without upkeep. Service and maintenance, therefore, play a critical role in sustaining demand.

2B. Supply: Building products, services, roles, enterprises and institutions

Supply must address the demand from different life stages and daily life participation, as shown in Figures 4 and 5, respectively. Once demand is visible, supply can respond.

> In some cases, supply also creates demand. When accessible products, services or platforms become visible, affordable and trusted, persons with disabilities and families may begin to imagine possibilities they had not previously considered.

Supply in the Purple Economy does not refer only to manufacturing products. It refers to the creation of everything required for the economy to function around persons with disabilities and their families. This includes knowledge, institutions, human capacity, services, infrastructure, products and technologies.

i. **Knowledge systems:** The Purple Economy requires research, data, lived-experience knowledge, sector studies, market intelligence, design standards and evidence. Without knowledge systems, markets do not know what to build, and governments do not know what to enable.

ii. **Production institutions:** These are the institutions that create, train, certify, incubate or deliver Purple Economy capacity. They may include universities, training centres, skilling and rehabilitation centres, assistive technology centres, design schools, civil society organisations and public agencies.

iii. **Product and infrastructure innovations:** Innovations will be needed to drive accessibility, which gets harder, especially when **retrofitting** existing products or physical structures. Products such as stair-climbing wheelchairs show how innovations can disrupt and enhance the supply side. Manufacturing innovations can help reduce costs, and product bundling can be an innovative strategy to help boost supply. In the Purple Economy, products and infrastructure innovations are not niche interventions but core economic assets that enable participation at scale.

i. **Human capital abundance and participation:** Supply includes people who can deliver support and enablement at scale: special educators, sign language interpreters, daily living advisors, counsellors, assistive technology consultants, inclusive service trainers, caregivers and disability-aware customer support professionals. These roles already exist in fragments. A Purple Economy framework can help formalise, professionalise, distribute and scale them.

2C. Discovery: Connecting people to solutions through information, logistics, platforms and last-mile systems

Joaquim has a locomotor disability and is from a small village. Till the age of 15, he did not have knowledge and access to crutches. His school was 100 m away and dogs would bite him when he crawled to school. He stopped his education and sat at home. For people like Joaquim producing crutches alone is not enough and **discovery** and delivery are central for people like Joaquim to go to school or have a better quality of life.

The Purple Economy fails when products, services and support systems exist but do not reach people. To close this gap, we must fundamentally redesign how these solutions connect with the individuals who need them most. This requires building robust systems for:

i. **Distribution and access:** In mainstream economics, distribution is about moving goods and services to the market. In the Purple Economy, the focus must be on discovery, trust, affordability, navigation and last-mile access.

ii. **Transport and logistics:** People, products and services must move. Delivery systems, logistics networks and last-mile support are necessary for assistive products, services, education, healthcare, work and commerce to reach people reliably.

iii. **Information and visibility:** One of the biggest gaps in the Purple Economy is not always the absence of solutions but the absence of discoverability. Families may not know where to find a service. Persons with disabilities may not know which products or supports exist. Businesses may not know where demand is. Service providers may not know how to reach users. Information itself is a distribution system.

iv. **Marketplaces and discovery platforms:** These platforms are the points where opportunities, goods and services meet people in a usable way. They must go beyond simple listings to ensure full accessibility across the journey – from discovery and application or purchase to continued use.

3. Enablers: Systems that create trust, access and scale

Building trust, access and scale in the Purple Economy requires a set of core enabling systems.

i. **Investment:** Many Purple Economy solutions need early-stage investment, patient capital, philanthropic capital or blended finance. Assistive technology, support services, inclusive platforms, accessibility startups, disability-led enterprises and market-building infrastructure may not scale without capital.

ii. **Incentives and subsidies:** Bridging affordability gaps in the Purple Economy may require targeted support such as subsidies, tax incentives, concessional finance, vouchers, outcome-linked funding and procurement backing. The intent is not long-term dependence, but to catalyse early market formation.

iii. **Digital Infrastructure:** Identity, payments, credentials, registries, discovery systems and interoperable platforms can help connect persons with disabilities, families, service providers, businesses and governments.

iv. **Financial inclusion:** Persons with disabilities, their families, service providers and persons with disabilities-led enterprises require access to banking, credit, insurance, savings instruments and financial guidance. These tools convert latent demand into purchasing power, enabling enterprises to grow and scale.

Together, these enablers create the conditions for markets to form, function efficiently and scale sustainably.



4. Governance

For the Purple Economy to transition from isolated initiatives into a reliable, integrated system, it must be underpinned by a robust governance architecture.

i. **Policy and standards:** Clear policy frameworks and accessibility standards create predictability. They tell businesses what to build, governments what to procure, service providers what to follow and consumers what to expect.

ii. **Accreditation and certification:** The Purple Economy needs trusted ways to recognise the quality of different products, providers, institutions and more. Without accreditation, trust remains informal.

iii. **Pricing and fee norms:** Some support services may become unaffordable if markets are thin or professionals are scarce. Pricing guidance, fee norms, public subsidies or transparent rate cards may be needed in certain service categories. This must be handled carefully, but the principle is important: markets cannot scale if essential services are either unaffordable for users or unsustainable for providers.

iv. **Labour norms:** As the support economy grows, the people providing services must also be protected. Caregivers, interpreters, trainers, support workers and accessibility professionals need fair pay, safe working conditions, career pathways and professional dignity.

v. **Consumer protection:** Persons with disabilities and families must be protected from poor-quality products, false accessibility claims, exploitative pricing, unsafe services and misuse of data.

vi. **Data dignity:** As the Purple Economy becomes more digital, privacy, consent, purpose limitation and user control must be central. A person should not have to disclose more than necessary to access a service.

4.2. The participation-to-scale frontiers model

While the growth engines explain how the Purple Economy expands at the system level, the participation-to-scale frontiers model illustrates how individuals, enterprises and markets move through this system – from initial inclusion to large-scale economic transformation.

The model provides a structured view of this progression, mapping how participation evolves across three interconnected frontiers: mainstream integration, system-level inclusion and future market creation.

Figure 13: Participation-to-scale frontiers model

	Frontier 1 Mainstream integration	**Frontier 2** Systemic inclusion for persons with disabilities	**Frontier 3** Future market creation
Products and services	**Purple aware products and services** Existing products and services made accessible and inclusive	**Specialised products and services discovery at scale** Disability specific products and services grow in quality and scale, supported by trusted information	**Solutions for unmet needs** New and innovative solutions emerge to address unmet needs, creating new categories and experiences
Jobs and enterprises	**Systemic Purple literacy** Institutions, markets and service providers integrate disability inclusion into their core functioning; mainstream jobs and opportunities	**Purple professions and support ecosystem** Specialised roles and support professionals grow in scale and become easier to find and access	**New jobs, enterprises and industries** Unmet needs drive innovation, creating new jobs, enterprises and entire industries that fuel economic growth

At its core, the model maps how inclusion transitions from isolated participation to system-wide economic impact through three interconnected frontiers: mainstream integration, disability-centred system design and future market creation.

Frontier 1: Mainstream integration — Entry into economic participation

This frontier focuses on integration into the mainstream economy by making existing products and services more Purple-aware and inclusive in their design and delivery. Here, the objective is not to redesign entire sectors, but to reduce resistance to participation by making mainstream systems more Purple-aware and easier to engage with.

This entails embedding disability inclusion into the entire lifecycle of products and services, from discovery and access to consumption and post-purchase support. Instead of treating inclusion as a collection of isolated, ad-hoc adjustments, this frontier requires businesses and institutions to design end-to-end user journeys that are inherently Purple-aware. The goal is to remove friction at every touchpoint, ensuring that participation is not an exception but a seamless, expected part of the mainstream experience.

This frontier is fundamentally about building systemic Purple literacy, ensuring that institutions, markets and service providers understand, recognise and respond to inclusion as a core part of how they operate.

Frontier 2: Systemic inclusion for persons with disabilities – Specialised ecosystems, discovery and scale

In this frontier, the focus shifts from adapting mainstream systems to building specialised ecosystems that respond directly to the needs of persons with disabilities. This frontier is characterised by the growth of dedicated products, services, institutions, professions and support systems designed around disability-linked participation.

Many disability-focused solutions already exist, but they are often fragmented, difficult to discover, unevenly distributed and limited in scale. Specialised service providers, assistive technology solutions, support professionals, skilling programmes, financial products and community resources frequently operate in isolation, making it difficult for individuals and families to navigate the ecosystem.

This frontier addresses that fragmentation through a pull-based model of market organisation. Information, services, opportunities and support are unbundled from individual institutions and made visible through shared platforms, registries, marketplaces and discovery systems. They are then rebundled around the individual's needs, creating integrated participation journeys that connect people to the right services, jobs, products, financing and support at the right time.

As a result, availability and discoverability improve. New services emerge, existing services become more professionalised, and dedicated Purple Economy roles begin to scale. Digital platforms, inclusive marketplaces, data systems and networks improve visibility, matching and coordination.

They reduce search costs, improve trust and verification, strengthen matching between demand and supply, increase visibility of opportunities and enable services to scale beyond local networks or individual organisations.

This frontier corresponds to the strengthening of market access and intermediation, where participation becomes more efficient, structured and economically impactful.

Frontier 3: Future market creation — Innovation driven by unmet needs

The final frontier transforms unmet needs into opportunities to design new products, services and market solutions that do not yet exist. Gaps in accessibility, products, services and infrastructure are no longer seen as constraints but as signals for innovation and opportunity. These unmet needs drive new job creation, enterprise development and entirely new market segments, positioning the Purple Economy as a forward-looking engine of growth rather than only a corrective mechanism.

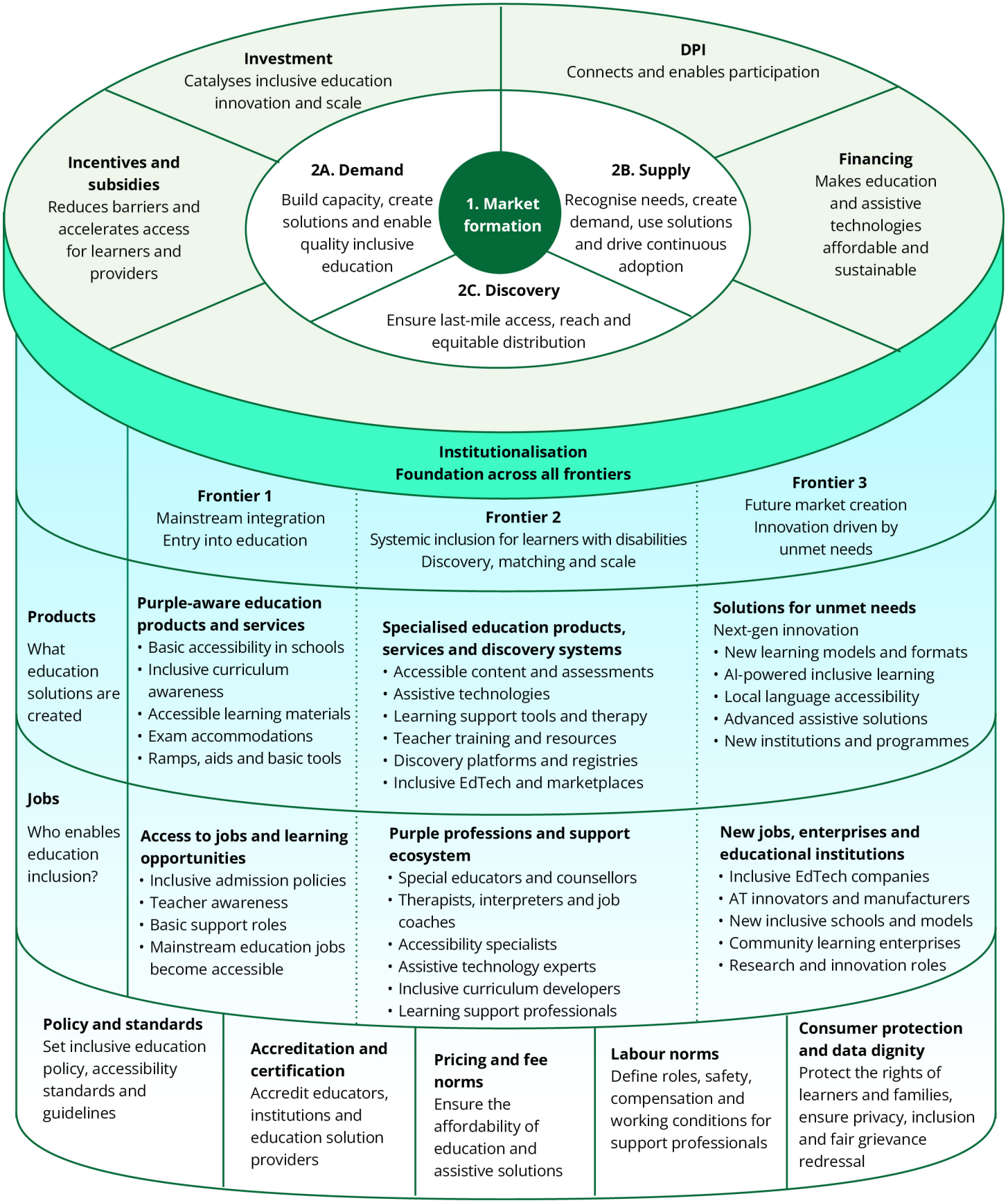
This frontier represents demand expansion in action, where rising participation and visibility, coupled with new innovations, generate new forms of consumption and investment.

4.3. Applying the framework: Education as an example

Education provides a useful illustration of how the Purple Economy framework can be applied to a specific sector. Rather than viewing education solely as an issue of rights, access, or accommodation, the framework examines it as an economic system that must create, distribute, enable and sustain meaningful learning opportunities for learners with disabilities. The question is not only whether a child can enter a classroom, but whether the broader ecosystem exists to support participation and outcomes at scale.

Viewed through this lens, demand begins with learners, families, schools and institutions that require accessible and effective educational experiences. Supply responds through the creation of accessible curriculum, learning tools, assistive technologies, trained teachers, special educators, counsellors and the institutions that produce this capacity, including universities, teacher training institutes, ed-tech companies, content creators and assessment bodies. Market access ensures these resources reach learners through schools, colleges, digital learning platforms, transport systems, public education delivery channels and information and discovery networks.

Figure 14: Applying the frameworks to education



For this ecosystem to scale, enabling and regulatory systems must evolve as well. Public procurement, scholarships, subsidies, DPI, accessible content systems and investment in inclusive ed-tech help create and sustain demand while supporting innovation and service delivery. At the same time, accreditation systems, content standards, pricing norms, labour standards for support professionals and consumer protections create trust and quality across the ecosystem. The education example demonstrates how the Purple Economy framework moves beyond access alone to examine the full set of conditions required for participation, outcomes and long-term market development.

4.4. Market network effects and economic scaling

The Purple Economy can scale through network effects when inclusive markets are deliberately built. As more persons with disabilities participate as consumers, workers, entrepreneurs, innovators and service users, demand becomes more visible, supply becomes more responsive, and institutions gain stronger incentives to invest in accessibility, service design and innovation. Every new participant strengthens the ecosystem by increasing demand, expanding supply, improving competition and driving innovation.

Demand creates incentives for supply: As consumers demand accessible products, services, experiences and environments, businesses are incentivised to respond. Once businesses recognise the purchasing power and long-term market potential of inclusive consumers, accessibility shifts from a compliance requirement to a growth opportunity.

Supply drives innovation and competition: As more businesses enter inclusive markets, competition increases and innovation accelerates. As markets expand, competition and investment drive better product design, improved affordability, faster technology adoption, expanded consumer choice and the emergence of new business models and accessibility solutions. Innovation within the Purple Economy often generates spillover benefits for the wider population, as accessibility-focused features increasingly become mainstream consumer conveniences.

Improved market access increases affordability: As markets expand and become more accessible, production costs decline, and technologies become more widely available. This creates a virtuous cycle: improved market access expands participation, participation increases demand, demand attracts investment, competition accelerates innovation, and innovation further improves affordability and access. Over time, inclusion becomes embedded within mainstream economic systems rather than dependent on isolated interventions.

In this way, the **Purple Economy benefits from a virtuous cycle** in which inclusion expands participation, participation deepens markets, markets stimulate innovation, and innovation enhances productivity, consumption and long-term economic growth.

5. Purple Economic Zones (PEZs): Bringing the growth framework to the ground



5.1. What is a Purple Economic Zone?

As countries begin operationalising the Purple Economy, it is important to introduce practical models that demonstrate how the National Systems Framework can be translated into measurable economic outcomes. **PEZs are one example** of how an inclusion-driven economic strategy can take shape on the ground.

A PEZ is a place-based economic ecosystem designed to bring disability inclusion into production, enterprise, services, skilling, infrastructure, innovation, finance and market access. It is not simply an accessible campus. It is not only an employment centre. It is not a welfare zone.

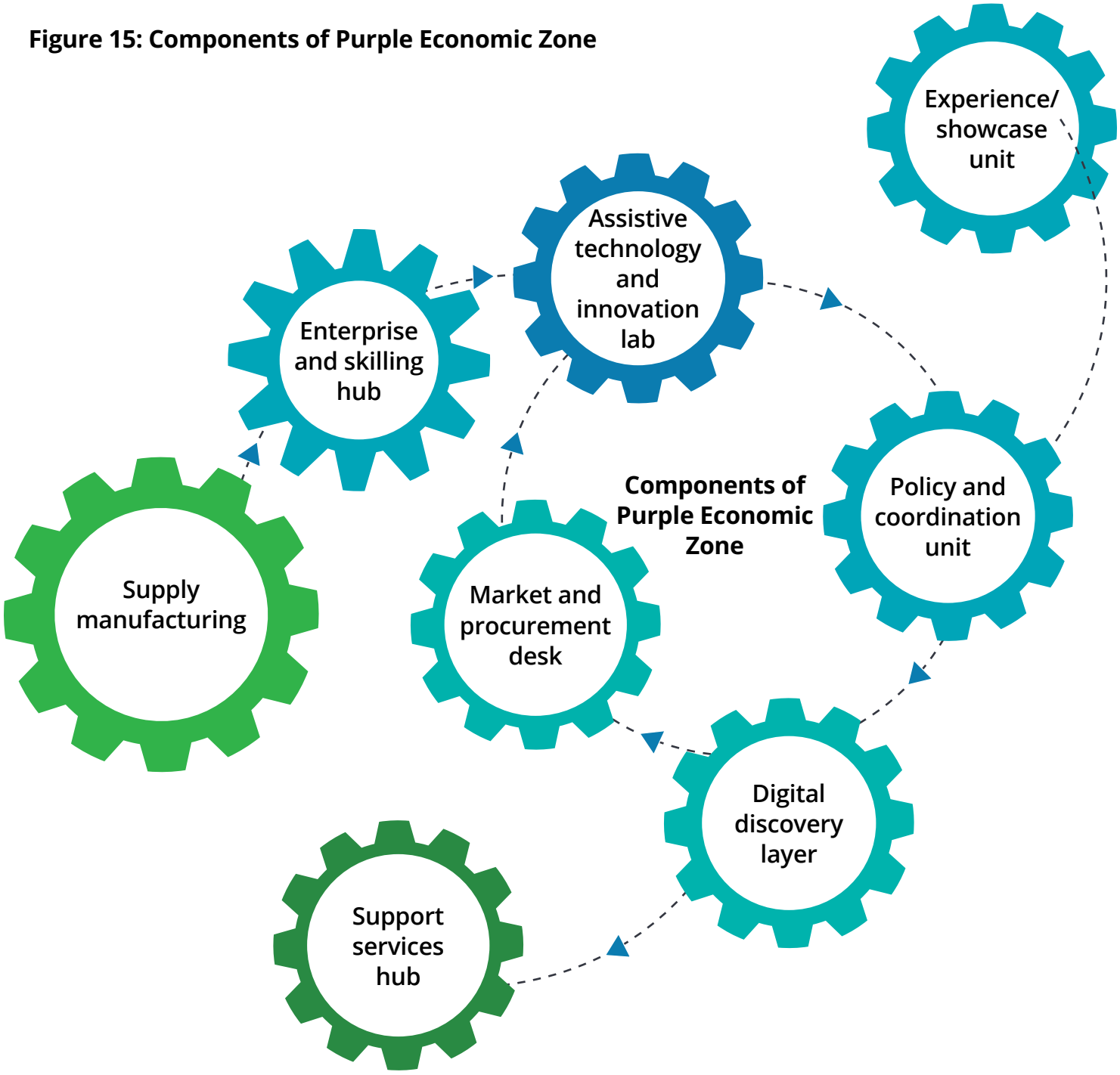
It is a concentrated demonstration of how the Purple Economy can work when systems of production, distribution and consumption, i.e., supply, market access and demand activation are designed around persons with disabilities and people as consumers, entrepreneurs, producers, service providers, innovators, workers and community members.



5.2. What can a PEZ include?

A PEZ can be designed to reflect the strengths of a state, city or region. However, a strong model may include the following components:

Figure 15: Components of Purple Economic Zone



1. **Supply manufacturing:** PEZ strengthens the productive capacity of the Purple Economy by creating and scaling the products, services, enterprises, skills and institutions required to support participation. This may include: Assistive technology solutions, accessible products and services, persons with disabilities-led enterprises, disability-inclusive businesses, trained support professionals, community-based service providers and local innovation addressing disability-linked needs.
2. **Enterprise and skilling hub:** Centre for skilling, incubation, business advisory, entrepreneurship support, digital commerce, creative industries, service enterprises and accessible manufacturing.
3. **Assistive technology and innovation lab:** A space where innovators, start-ups, researchers and persons with disabilities can co-create, test, validate and improve assistive and adaptive technologies in real-world environments.
4. **Market and procurement desk:** A mechanism that connects persons with disabilities-led enterprises and disability-inclusive businesses to government procurement systems, corporate supply chains, tourism markets, digital platforms and local buyers.
5. **Support services hub:** A coordinated network of interpreters, mobility trainers, counsellors, job coaches, caregivers, accessibility testers, assistive technology consultants and family support services.
6. **Digital discovery layer:** A digital interface or registry through which persons with disabilities, families, businesses, service providers and government agencies can discover services, products, opportunities and support systems. This layer reduces search costs and strengthens market visibility.
7. **Policy and coordination unit:** A governance mechanism that brings together state government, industry bodies, civil society, businesses, persons with disabilities, service providers and investors to coordinate action, test standards, build trust and solve ecosystem-level challenges.
8. **Experience/Showcase unit:** Demonstration spaces where visitors, consumers, businesses and policymakers can experience inclusive products, services, tourism, retail, culture and accessibility innovations firsthand.

5.3. Why PEZs matter to the Purple Economy?

PEZs matter because they make the Purple Economy visible by addressing the fragmentation that drives disability-linked exclusion.

A PEZ brings these disconnected elements into a coordinated ecosystem. It creates density of services, users, enterprises, infrastructure, skills, support systems, market linkages and institutional attention. This concentration enables effective testing, measurement, iteration and model replication.

By clustering participation, enterprise, services and infrastructure within a defined geography, PEZs tackle one of the central inefficiencies highlighted in the Purple Economy Framework: the underutilisation of the human capital, entrepreneurial potential, and consumer power of persons with disabilities.. In doing so, they unlock higher productivity, stronger demand, local economic dynamism and new avenues for innovation.

They demonstrate how unmet needs can become services, how services can become jobs, how jobs can become enterprises, and how enterprises can enter larger markets. They provide a practical environment to operationalise the national framework through supply creation, demand activation, enabling systems and effective governance. Within these environments, products can be tested, enterprises can scale, support systems can mature, and digital infrastructure can connect participants efficiently.

They also function as learning systems, generating data on participation, enterprise growth, service usage, consumer behaviour and market gaps. This evidence helps policymakers and ecosystem builders understand what works and how to replicate it.

Importantly, the value of PEZs is distributed across the ecosystem. Persons with disabilities gain improved access to jobs, enterprise opportunities, skilling, mobility, finance, assistive technologies, public services and markets. Families gain information, guidance, support services, reduced dependence and greater confidence in navigating everyday life. Businesses gain access to talent, suppliers, customers, innovation insights, inclusive products and new market opportunities. The government gains a coordinated model for translating disability inclusion into economic development, entrepreneurship, tourism, public service delivery and local growth. Start-ups and Innovators gain access to real users, testing environments, validation pathways, feedback loops and market channels. The local economy benefits from new enterprises, services, jobs, accessible tourism, increased consumer participation and stronger community-level economic activity.

Most importantly, PEZs shift the conversation from accessibility as an accommodation to accessibility as economic infrastructure, demonstrating how participation can drive productivity, innovation, entrepreneurship and local economic growth.

5.4. From demonstration to replication

The value of a PEZ extends beyond a single geography. A successful demonstration can serve as a blueprint for other states, cities, industrial clusters, university ecosystems, tourism hubs, technology parks and public infrastructure corridors.

The model is intentionally flexible rather than prescriptive. Different regions may adapt the framework according to their economic strengths and strategic priorities. For example, Goa may focus on tourism and hospitality; Bengaluru could explore a technology- and innovation-led model; industrial regions may anchor PEZs around manufacturing and supply chains; university ecosystems may emphasize education, skilling and research; while cultural districts may build around creative industries, media and entertainment.

What remains constant is not the sectoral focus but the underlying framework. Every PEZ brings together production, market access, demand activation, enabling systems and governance within a defined geography. In doing so, it demonstrates how the Purple Economy can move from policy aspiration to operational reality, creating a pathway from local proof points to broader economic transformation.



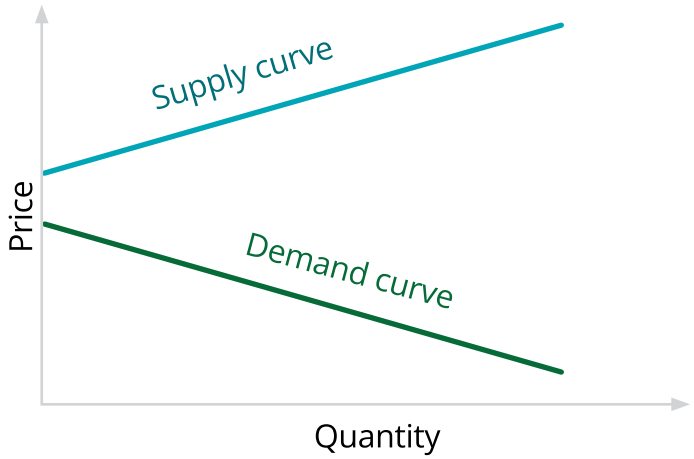
6. Foundational infrastructure for scale



The Purple Economy cannot reach its full potential if services, products and support systems remain undiscoverable. Today, many persons with disabilities, particularly from the onset of disability, do not know how to navigate their altered lives, who to approach or what pathways are available to them. Across different life stages and everyday needs, the available supply of products and services is often scarce, fragmented, difficult to discover, or takes years to find. As a result, many become dormant consumers with low expectations, eventually stopping their search. Meanwhile, the limited supply that does exist remains fragmented, largely invisible and often expensive. Businesses, start-ups and policymakers similarly lack visibility into consumers, their needs, capabilities and demand patterns, preventing markets from responding effectively.

For persons with disabilities and their families, fragmentation creates friction. A person may not know which service exists, which provider to trust, which product to buy, which employer is ready, which scheme applies, which platform is accessible, or which institution can support them. For businesses and governments, fragmentation creates uncertainty. They may not see demand clearly, may not know what standards to follow, may not know which partners to trust, or may not have reliable data to design better systems.

Figure 16: Supply–demand curve



Supply curve

Fragmented supply

- Providers operate on a small scale
- Limited discoverability
- Higher consumer acquisition costs
- Inability to achieve economies of scale
- Uneven distribution

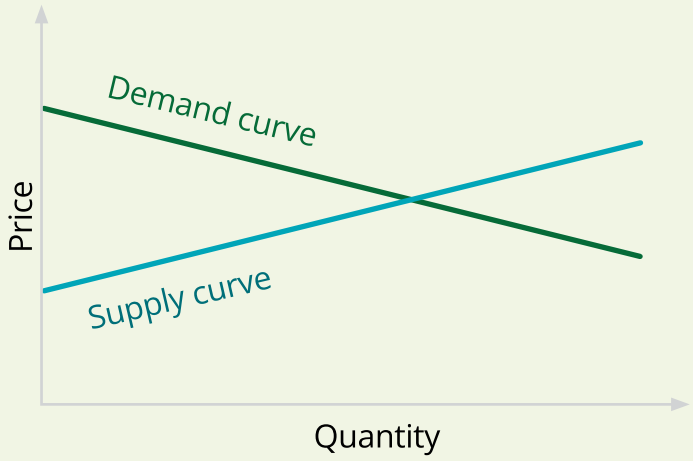
Demand curve

Latent demand

- Unmet needs remain invisible
- Limited awareness of available services
- Accessibility barriers restrict participation
- Trust and information gaps persist
- Demand remains fragmented

For the economics to work, the supply and demand curves should meet, and a foundational infrastructure is needed that can drastically change the scenario by enhancing discoverability, thereby lowering transaction costs and production costs and providing built-in incentives and inclusion.

Figure 17: Making the supply demand curves meet



Demand curve

Shift in demand

- Better discovery of services
- Greater trust and verification
- Reduced barriers
- More user participation
- Latent demands become visible

Supply curve

Shift in supply

- Economies of scale
- Lower distribution cost
- More providers enter
- Better market visibility
- Greater innovation and competition

DPI as the execution layer

- **Discovery**
- **Registries**
- **Credentials**
- **Open networks**
- **Interoperability**
- **Trusted exchange**

Reduces search costs, transaction costs and information asymmetries

Activates demand + Expands supply

The Purple Economy, therefore, needs foundational infrastructure that can make two things easier:

- **Discovery:** People should be able to find products, services, opportunities and support systems.
- **Trust:** Users, providers, employers, funders and governments should be able to trust what is discovered.

6.1. DPI as the execution lever of inclusion

DPI can become a powerful execution layer for the Purple Economy. As economies become increasingly digital, this infrastructure determines who can access services, markets, opportunities and rights. For the Purple Economy to scale, inclusion must be embedded into this foundational layer itself through shared protocols, interoperable registries and systems that make accessibility the default across economic activity. This requires moving beyond disconnected applications and platform-centric silos towards a protocol-led ecosystem that addresses structural gaps in discoverability, trust and participation. Additionally, since disability-related information is sensitive, the infrastructure must account for consent, privacy, dignity and user control, ensuring that individuals decide what information is shared, with whom and for what purpose.

The opportunity is significant. If designed well, DPI can reduce search costs, improve discoverability, strengthen trust, enable service delivery and help public and private systems respond faster to disability-linked needs. But on the other hand, if DPI is not accessible by design, exclusion can be embedded at the population scale. An inaccessible public-service platform can block access to entitlements. A digital payment journey that fails with screen readers can limit financial independence. A grievance system that persons with disabilities cannot use can make civic issues invisible. A digital identity or authentication system that does not recognise diverse ways of interacting can exclude the very people it is meant to serve.

Inclusion in the digital authentication system

In India, electronic KYC (e-KYC) processes require customers to blink their eyes during a live photo capture to verify liveness. This technology created severe, discriminatory barriers for acid attack survivors and individuals with eye damage, preventing them from independently opening bank accounts, accessing financial services or purchasing SIM cards. This has been rectified after the landmark judgement in Pragya Prasun v. Union of India case,[13] with the Supreme Court of India declaring that digital access is a fundamental right under Article 21 and mandated that financial and telecom institutions make KYC processes accessible to acid attack survivors and visually impaired individuals

[13] Case Citation: 2025 INSC 599 / 2025 SCC OnLine SC 993 https://indiankanoon.org/doc/68332080/

6.1.1. The credentialing backbone: Trust at scale

Digitally Verifiable Credentials (VCs) are central to DPI. Currently, the Purple Consumer is burdened by the repetitive need to prove their functional needs or skill sets through paper-based, often unverified documents. Digitally Verifiable Credentials replace this friction with a triad of trust based on W3C standards:

1. **Issuers (Anchors of Trust):** Trusted entities such as hospitals, vocational centres and NGOs issue tamper-proof digital attestations of a person's disability status, specialised skills or specific accommodation requirements.
2. **Holders (Dignity and sovereignty):** Persons with disabilities hold these credentials in their own secure digital wallets. They maintain absolute control over their data, sharing only what is necessary with service providers, such as "I need a ramp" rather than sharing their full medical history.
3. **Verifiers (Market efficiency):** Employers, retailers or transport providers can instantly verify these credentials via a QR code, ensuring Day 1 readiness for inclusive service delivery or employment.

6.1.2. Decentralised purple registries: The market navigator

If VCs are the building blocks of trust, decentralised registries are the market navigators. They establish shared, searchable directories that enable supply and demand to find each other without the high search costs that plague the current market:

- **Registry of individuals:** A consent-led directory where persons with disabilities can signal their presence and needs to the network. This allows innovators to see a heat map of latent demand for specific assistive technologies in a particular geography.
- **Registry of offerings:** A standardised way for businesses and start-ups to publish their Purple-Ready products and services. Whether it is an inclusive cab service or an accessible edtech course, these offerings become discoverable to any app or gateway on the network.
- **Registry of trust anchors:** A verified list of institutions, such as NGOs, training centres, rehab clinics, whose credentials the network trusts, ensuring that quality standards are maintained at scale.

6.1.3. The discovery and matching layer: Connecting supply and demand

If VCs establish trust and decentralised registries make information visible, the discovery and matching layer brings the Purple Economy to life by connecting supply with demand. It enables persons with disabilities, families, businesses, employers, service providers, governments and community organisations to discover one another, reducing search costs and improving market efficiency. By using trusted credentials, interoperable registries, user preferences, skills, accessibility requirements and location, it facilitates personalised, consent-based matching across the ecosystem.

The discovery and matching layer can enable:

Figure 18: Renu's Journey with and without DPI

Renu's Journey: Two Paths. Two Futures.

How Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) transforms barriers into opportunities.

Without DPI

Barriers block access. Potential remains unrealised.



1

Life changes at 12
Renu loses her leg in an accident.



2

Education stop
Lack of accessible support and resources. Studies only up to Class 10.



3

Limited opportunities
No information on skills, jobs or schemes. Isolation and low confidence.



4

Potential Lost
Talents remain hidden. Dreams left unfulfilled.

With DPI

DPI opens doors at every step. Renu thrives and leads the way.



1

Life changes at 12
Accident happens, but DPI connects her to the right support early.



2

Rehabilitation and assistive care
Finds nearby rehab centres, assistive devices and therapy services.



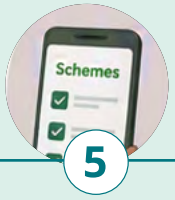
3

Continuing education
Accesses scholarships, accessible learning resources and inclusive education.



4

Skills and mentorship
Connects with mentors, learns ADL skills and gets trained for work.



5

Accesses government schemes
Discovers relevant schemes, checks eligibility and applies online.



6

Mobility and independence
Uses accessible transport and mobility services to travel independently.



7

Legal help and rights
Gets legal assistance for rights, benefits and protection from discrimination.



8

Livelihood and financial inclusion
Finds a job/starts her enterprise. Accesses banking, loans and insurance.



9

Community and leadership
Joins communities, mentors others and becomes an inspiration.



10

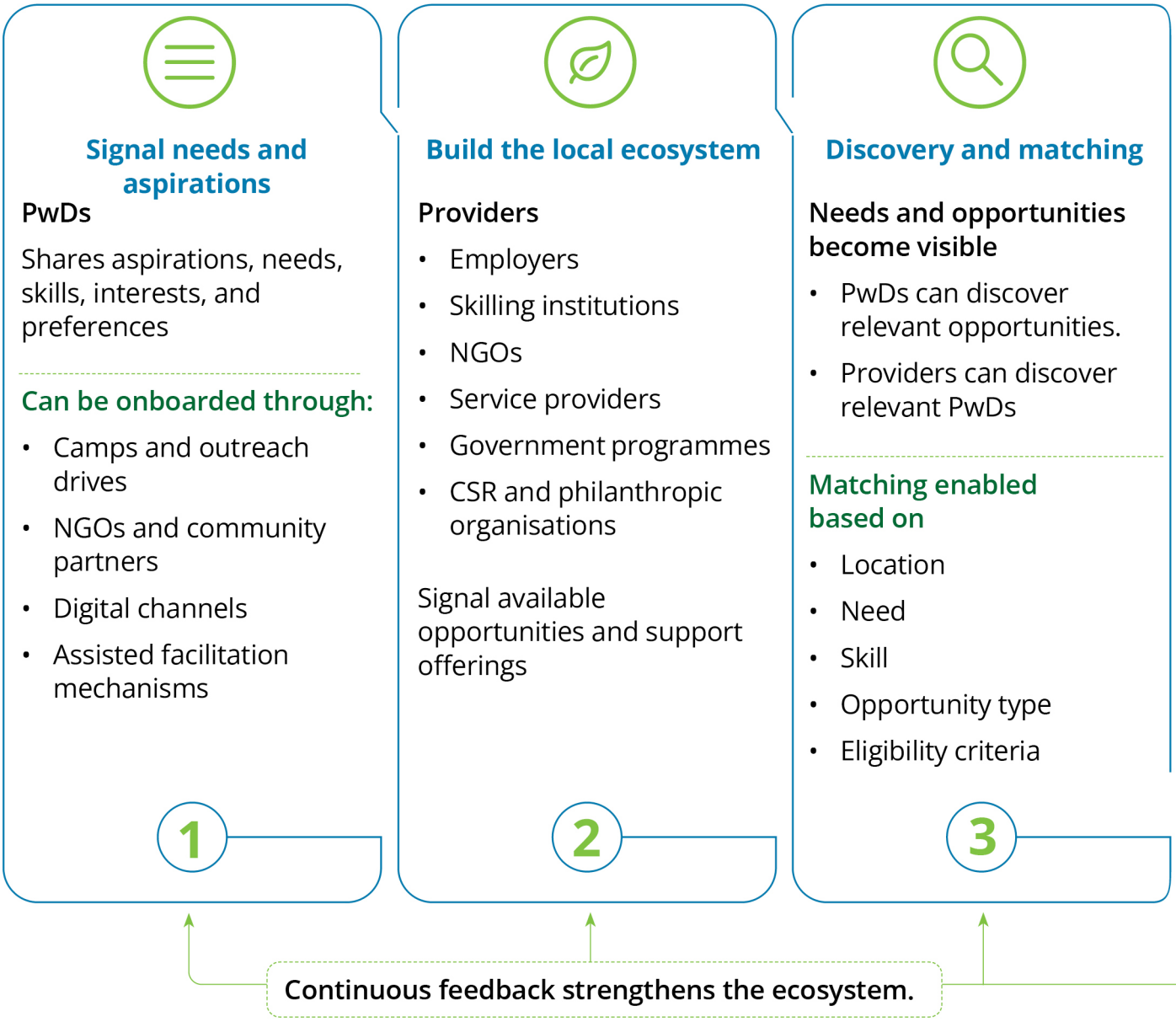
Dreams without limits
Travels, learns, leads and builds her dream life.

Discovery of opportunities: Helping persons with disabilities identify relevant jobs, education, healthcare, assistive technology, finance, government schemes, mobility options and community services.

- **Discovery of markets:** Enabling businesses, start-ups, service providers and persons with disabilities-led enterprises to reach consumers, identify demand patterns and access new market opportunities.
- **Intelligent matching:** Connecting people to opportunities based on skills, needs, preferences, credentials and proximity.
- **Reduced search costs:** Making products, services, providers and opportunities easier to find and access.
- **Improved market visibility:** Providing policymakers, businesses and ecosystem actors with better insights into demand, supply, utilisation and service gaps.
- **Greater market participation:** Transforming fragmented information into coordinated pathways that activate dormant demand, improve supply utilisation and enable markets to scale.



Figure 19: The DPI journey



Facilitate connections

Connection between demand and supply

Examples

- PwDs ↔ Employer
- PwDs ↔ Training provider
- PwDs ↔ NGO
- PwDs ↔ Government service

District-level ecosystem actors support the connection process.

4

Track outcomes

Capture connection outcomes

Track

- Connections facilitated
- Services accessed
- Livelihood opportunities enabled
- Training enrollments
- Employment placements

5

Learn and improve

Continuous feedback loop

- Feedback from PwDs and providers
- Identify service gaps and unmet needs
- Improve district implementation models
- Inform scale-up strategy

6

Continuous feedback strengthens the ecosystem.

Outcome

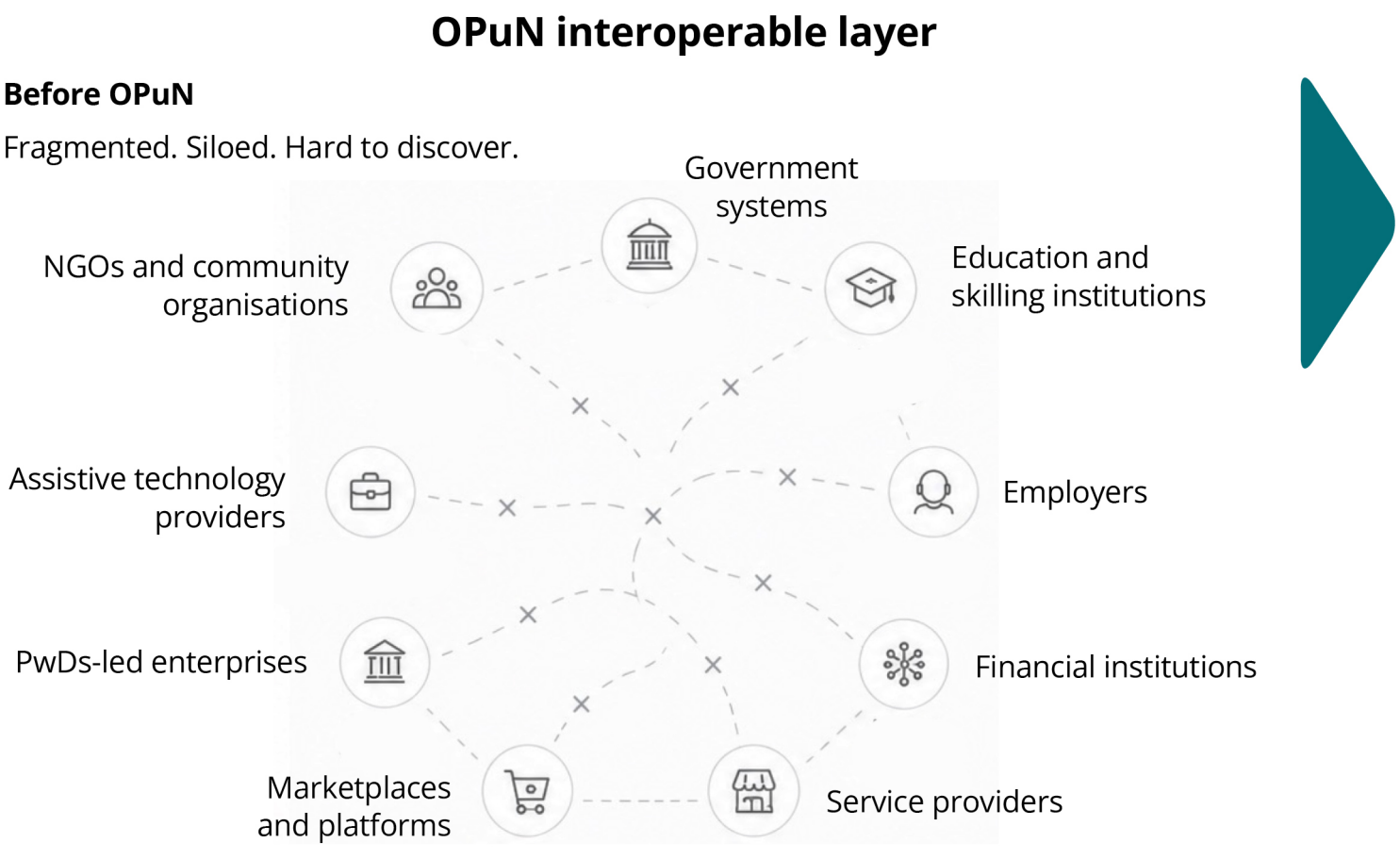
- Inclusive access to opportunities and services
- Skilling and capacity building
- Livelihood and employment enablement
- Stronger support ecosystems at the district level
- Data-driven insights for better policies and scale

6.2. Open Purple Network (OPuN): Translating DPI into practice in the Purple Economy

To unlock the Purple Economy at scale, its participants must be able to discover, trust and interact with one another across organisational and platform boundaries. OPuN is an interoperable digital network that enables this exchange. Rather than functioning as a single application or centralised platform, it provides a common set of open protocols that allow governments, businesses, start-ups, NGOs, service providers, employers, marketplaces and community organisations to seamlessly exchange information and connect with one another.

The network is built on a fundamental principle of unbundling, i.e., separating user-facing applications from the underlying digital infrastructure of credentials, registries and discovery services. Just as UPI enables banks and payment applications to interoperate, and ONDC enables buyers and sellers to transact across different commerce platforms, OPuN enables Purple Economy participants to discover services, verify credentials, publish offerings and exchange trusted information irrespective of the application they use.

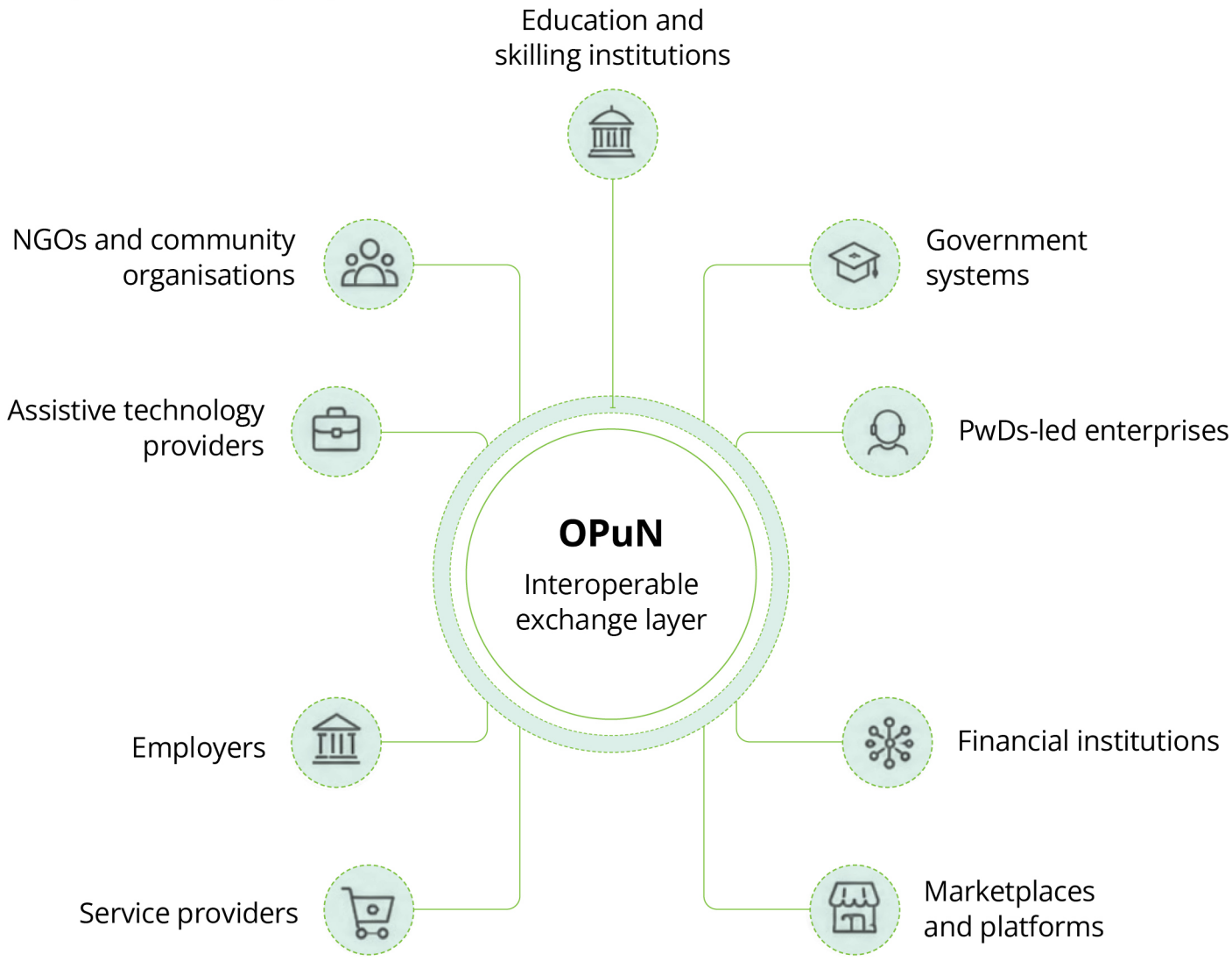
Figure 20: Open Purple Network



OPuN interoperable layer

WITH OPuN

Interoperable exchange layer



Information flows with consent. Systems interoperate. Opportunities are visible. Participation scales.

By adopting open standards for discovery and W3C Verifiable Credentials for trust, OPuN transforms fragmented information into a shared, interoperable ecosystem. Accessibility services, assistive technology providers, jobs, training programmes, financial products, government schemes and inclusive businesses become discoverable across the network rather than remaining confined within individual organisations or proprietary platforms. In doing so, OPuN acts as the digital connective tissue of the Purple Economy, enabling coordinated participation, reducing search costs and allowing demand and supply to scale.

6.3. AI: The adaptive access layer

AI deserves a dedicated place within the Purple Economy because it can become one of the most powerful adaptive layers of DPI. If DPI provides the rails, AI personalises how people interact with those rails. Its value lies not only in automation but also in adaptation, enabling systems to respond to the person rather than expecting the person to adapt to the system.

AI can reduce friction across education, healthcare, work, communication, mobility, public services and independent living by enabling:

- **Early identification and intervention:** Detecting patterns that may otherwise remain unnoticed, including developmental delays, neurological conditions, mental health indicators and functional changes, allowing earlier support and intervention.
- **Personalised education and learning support:** Adapting content, pace, format, assessments and learning pathways while supporting captioning, text simplification, alternative formats and reading assistance.
- **Communication and interaction:** Enabling speech-to-text, text-to-speech, image description, translation, sign-language support, Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), and conversational interfaces.
- **Mobility and navigation:** Supporting wayfinding, obstacle detection, public transport navigation, travel planning, indoor navigation and real-time accessibility information.
- **Work and productivity:** Providing task management, summarisation, workplace accommodations, cognitive support, communication assistance and productivity tools for persons with different disabilities and neurodivergent users.
- **Public services and grievance redressal:** Helping individuals understand eligibility, navigate schemes, file grievances, track responses and access information in preferred and accessible formats.
- **Caregiver and family support:** Guiding families towards relevant services, interventions, products, and support pathways, particularly where professional support is scarce or difficult to discover.

However, AI also carries significant risks. If disability is absent from data, design, testing and governance, AI can automate exclusion. Systems may fail to recognise diverse speech, movement, cognition, communication or interaction patterns, creating barriers across employment, education, finance, healthcare, identity verification, public services and customer support.

AI in the Purple Economy must therefore follow one fundamental principle: build with persons with disabilities, not only for them. Persons with disabilities should participate as co-designers, testers, advisors, data stewards and governance partners. Only then can AI become a true force multiplier for independence, productivity, access and economic participation.



7. The Purple Economy movement: From narratives to systems change



The Purple Economy movement, anchored by EnAble India, was initiated in March 2025 to move the Purple Economy from idea to systems change.

The movement recognises that disability inclusion cannot be built through isolated programmes alone. It requires businesses, governments, public institutions, technology actors, civil society and persons with disabilities to connect their efforts and redesign the systems that shape participation.

The movement works through five connected levers: community-driven insight, narrative building, institutional commitment, proof through action and stewardship by persons with disabilities. Together, these levers create the momentum needed to move from awareness to ownership, and from isolated action to scalable systems.

7.1. Movement architecture: Community-driven narrative building

The movement is built around two reinforcing forces: Community-driven insight and narrative building. Community experience shows where systems break. Persons with disabilities, families, caregivers, civil society organisations and frontline practitioners understand the gaps that are often invisible to markets and institutions. Narrative building helps institutions understand the economic meaning of these gaps. When leaders begin to see disability-linked needs as signals for design, service improvement, market creation and institutional responsibility, the conversation shifts.

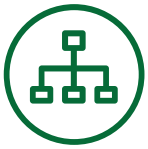
7.2. Purple Economy dialogues: Convening samaj, sarkar, bazaar

Purple Economy dialogues are strategic convening platforms that bring together leaders from business, government, technology, philanthropy, academia, media, civil society and the disability ecosystem. They are designed to create the moment where leaders begin to see disability differently – as a question of customers, markets, products, innovation, infrastructure, workforce participation and systems design. In many cases, these conversations mark the first step towards leaders moving from curiosity to ownership.

Once leaders see disability as a market and design signal, they cannot unsee it.

Figure 21: Purple economy dialogues

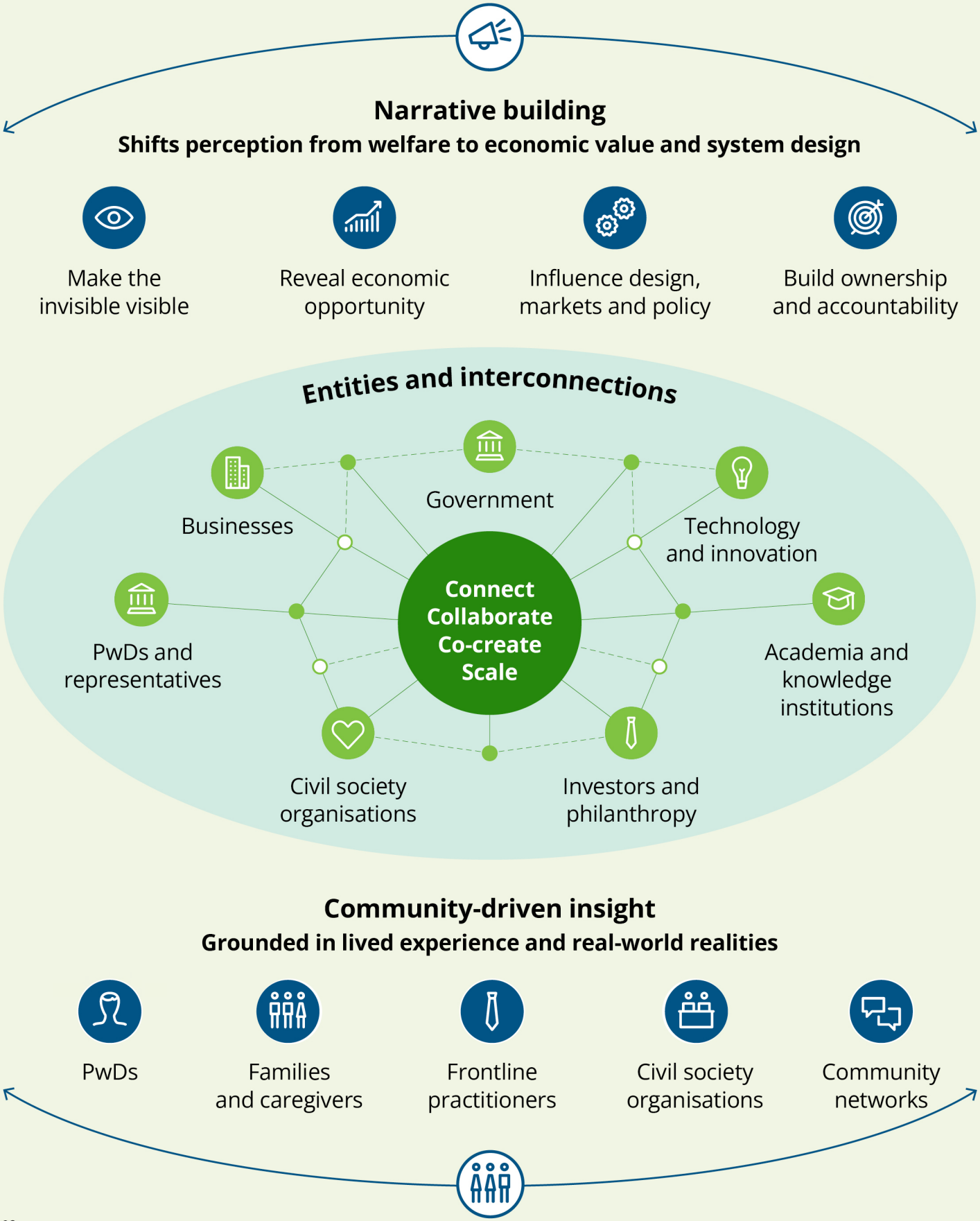
Domain	Dialogue collaborator	What changed through the dialogue?
Academics	Leading management institute (India)	Helped establish the Purple Economy as an economic and systems conversation rather than a disability or welfare discussion. By bringing together academia, industry, policymakers and practitioners, the dialogue created a shared language around participation, markets and growth, laying the foundation for future research, policy thinking and ecosystem development.
Government	Middle East public sector ecosystem	Expanded the Purple Economy beyond the Indian context and positioned it within broader conversations on workforce participation, economic diversification and inclusive growth. The dialogue opened opportunities for international collaboration, cross-border learning and the exploration of disability as an economic agenda within emerging markets.
Business	Global technology services organisation	Explored how AI, enterprise technology and digital innovation can accelerate participation at scale. The discussion highlighted accessibility not merely as a compliance requirement, but as a source of product innovation, better user experiences and new market opportunities, bringing the Purple Economy into mainstream technology and business strategy conversations.

Domain	Dialogue collaborator	What changed through the dialogue?
Social 	Public digital governance ecosystem	Examined how public digital systems can improve access to services, grievance redressal and citizen participation. The dialogue highlighted the role of Digital Public Infrastructure in reducing barriers, improving discoverability and embedding accessibility into the design of government platforms and public service delivery.
Self insurance 	Financial services institution	Demonstrated how the Purple Economy can move from a broad framework to a sector-specific opportunity. By focusing on insurance and financial protection, the dialogue highlighted unmet demand, identified product gaps and initiated conversations around solutions tailored to the needs and realities of persons with disabilities..
Event 	Global multi-stakeholder platform	Convened international organisations, including UN India, governments, businesses and civil society around the Purple Economy movement. The event helped translate awareness into action, with early commitments evolving into initiatives across multiple sectors and strengthening momentum for participation-driven systemic change.

7.3. Connecting entities into systems

The movement connects entities that may otherwise act in isolation – businesses, governments, civil society, technology actors, institutions and persons with disabilities. Community experience identifies where systems break. Narrative building helps institutions see the economic meaning of those breaks. Together, these create interconnections that move isolated initiatives towards systems.

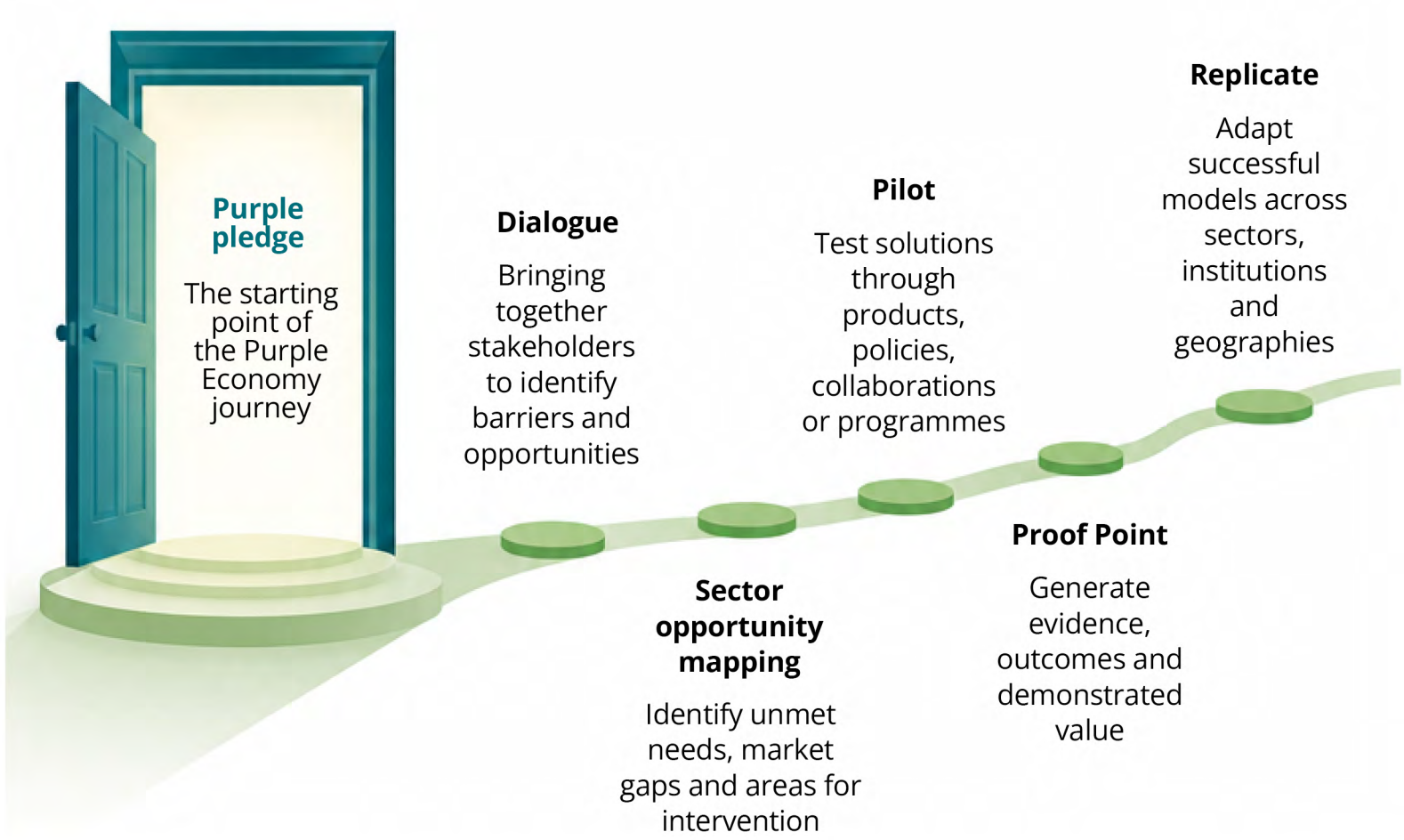
Figure 22: Entities + Interconnections = Systems



7.3.1. The Purple Pledge: From commitment to pathways

The Purple Pledge is the movement's entry point. It allows individuals, organisations and institutions to publicly recognise the Purple Economy and signal their intent to be part of building it. The pledge converts inclusion from a private belief into a visible commitment. The movement's larger goal is to ensure that every pledge becomes a pathway: to a dialogue, an initiative, a pilot, a product redesign, a policy shift, a sector model, a research collaboration or a new institutional commitment.

Figure 23: Purple pledge pathway



Leading organisations are already stepping forward, for instance, **Deloitte, under the leadership of Romal Shetty, CEO, Deloitte South Asia**,[14] has taken the Purple Pledge, reinforcing its commitment to advancing inclusion and accessibility as a core business priority.

[14] Pledgees – Purple economy. (n.d.). https://www.purpleeconomy.org/pledgee/

7.3.2. Proof points and demonstration effects

For systems change to scale, institutions need proof. Proof reduces hesitation. When companies, governments, and public institutions see real examples that generate customer access, service improvements, participation, trust, innovation or economic value, replication becomes easier. This is why exemplars and demonstration effects are central to the Purple Economy Movement. A successful accessible ride does not remain only a transport story. It becomes evident that mobility can unlock access to work, education, healthcare and participation. An accessible airport journey demonstrates that infrastructure can connect people with disabilities to travel, business and opportunity.

Project Prernaya is a transformative initiative powered by Deloitte to create equitable pathways for women with disabilities through skilling, employment, mentorship, community engagement, and independent living. Anchored in the belief that economic participation is a catalyst for empowerment, the initiative seeks to accelerate the integration of women with disabilities into the workforce while strengthening their confidence, agency, leadership potential, and long-term career prospects. Beyond individual outcomes, Prernaya aims to build momentum for a more inclusive workforce ecosystem by demonstrating scalable models of participation and enabling greater collaboration between employers, professionals, community networks, and institutions. Beginning with a focused pilot cohort and a broader outreach network, the initiative is designed to evolve into a scalable platform that reaches over 1,000 women with disabilities by 2027 and creates lasting pathways for workforce participation and economic empowerment.

The programme adopts a holistic lifecycle approach through five interconnected pillars: Skill-led, Career-led, Mentor-led, Internship-led, and Community-led interventions. Together, these pillars provide beneficiaries with industry-relevant skills, career advancement opportunities, professional mentorship, workplace exposure, and access to supportive peer networks. By convening a broader ecosystem of corporates, mentors, training providers, and community partners, Project Prernaya seeks to create sustainable pathways to employment, leadership, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion, while establishing a replicable model for advancing the economic participation of women with disabilities.

7.3.3. Community ownership and stewardship

Community ownership ensures that the movement remains grounded in lived experience. Persons with disabilities help identify where systems break, what solutions are usable, what remains inaccessible, what creates dignity and what needs to change. This role is not limited to consultation. Persons with disabilities must shape the Purple Economy as customers, workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, designers, researchers, accessibility testers, trainers, leaders and public voices. Community stewardship also helps the ecosystem interpret what is emerging.

The **goal** is to build a **global movement** and to enable **exemplars** that excite and **usher** in the Purple Economy.

Intent becomes proof. Proof becomes standard. Standard becomes scale.

7.4. What early signals tell us

The Purple Economy is moving from concept to early reality. Across sectors, there are already signals that disability-linked unmet needs can become products, services, jobs, customer journeys, platforms and business models.

These signals matter because they show that inclusion is not only a moral goal. It can generate participation, revenue, trust, productivity, innovation and market expansion. They also show that the Purple Economy already exists in fragments. The task now is to connect, strengthen and scale it.

7.5. Why these signals matter

Taken individually, these examples may appear incremental. Taken together, they reveal the early architecture of a broader economic transition.

First, they make unmet demand visible. They show that persons with disabilities and difficulties are already customers, commuters, travellers, viewers, learners, entrepreneurs, workers and citizens waiting for systems to serve them better.

Second, they reduce perceived risk. Once organisations see working examples that generate participation, customer engagement, workforce outcomes, revenue or trust, replication becomes easier across sectors.

Third, they show that jobs and businesses can emerge around inclusion. Service providers, trainers, accessibility consultants, assistive technology companies, platform designers, interpreters, hospitality staff, product researchers, supply-chain actors and many others become part of the Purple Economy.

Fourth, they help normalise disability-linked design within mainstream economic systems. What begins as a special intervention can become an expected part of customer experience, product design, infrastructure, technology and service delivery.

Finally, these signals create network effects. Every successful example increases ecosystem confidence, attracts partners, encourages investment and accelerates experimentation. The Purple Economy is therefore no longer only a future possibility. Its early foundations are visible. The next task is to institutionalise, standardise and scale them.

8. Call to action

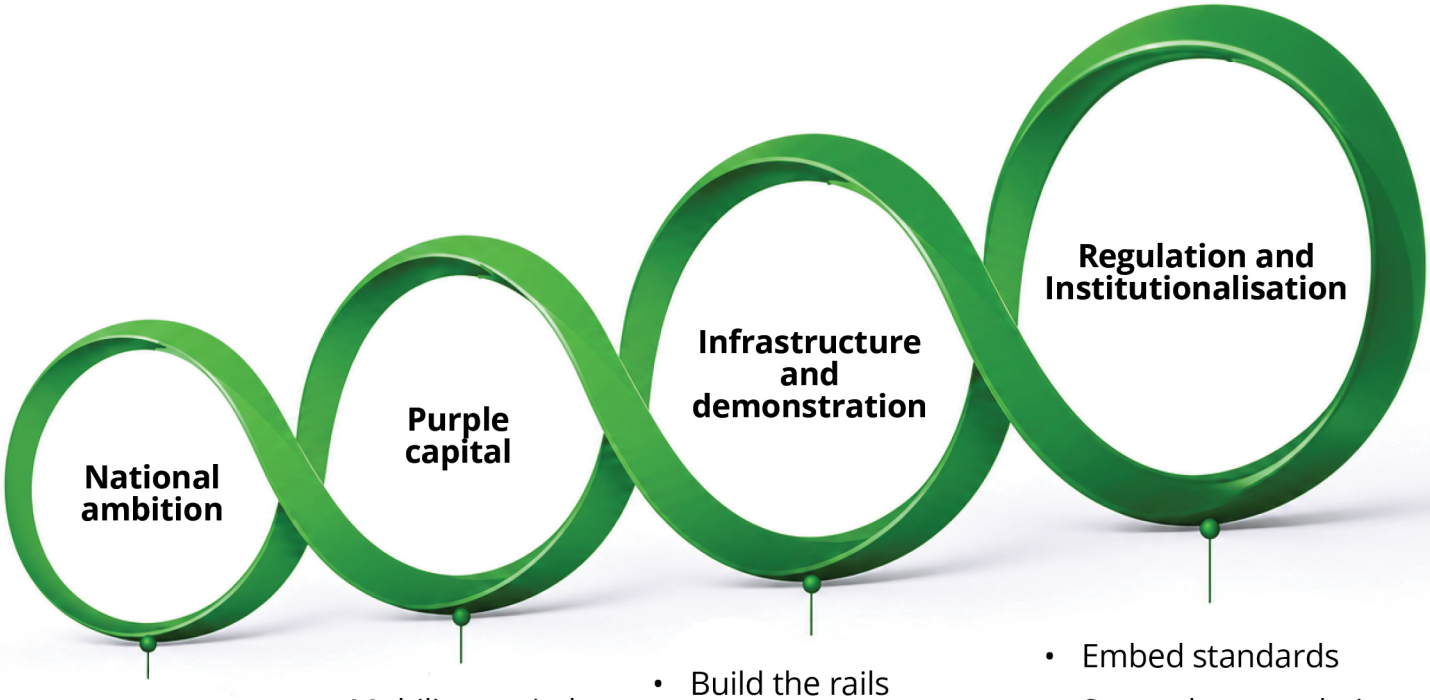


The transition to a Purple Economy is a systemic shift that requires the alignment of multiple actors across the economy. Markets do not emerge through policy alone, nor through private innovation in isolation. The interactions among policymakers, policy shapers, businesses, institutions and individuals shape them.

Policy makers, such as governments, establish rules, incentives, and public infrastructure that determine how the market functions. Policy shapers, including think tanks, research institutions and civil society organisations, help define priorities, generate evidence, build trust and influence public policy and business behaviour. Businesses convert unmet needs into products, services, jobs and investment opportunities, while individuals signal demand through their participation and market choices.

The Purple Economy is built through coordinated action, which reduces market frictions, improves discoverability and trust, expands participation and strengthens the conditions for innovations and investment. This Call to Action specifies four reinforcing cycles: establishing ambition and ownership; mobilising capital and enabling infrastructure; demonstrating viable models and pathways to scale; and ultimately institutionalising participation through standards, regulation and governance.

Figure 24: Call to action



Cycle 1: Establishing national ambition and institutional ownership

The first cycle focuses on defining the Purple Economy as a national economic opportunity and establishing the institutional structures required to advance it. This begins with a clear assessment of the size of the opportunity, participation gaps, priority sectors and the potential contribution of expanded participation to economic growth, employment, entrepreneurship and innovation. The outcome is a shared understanding of the opportunity and a set of measurable economic targets that guide public and private action.

Leadership and ownership sit at the centre of this cycle. Governments, supported by academia, research institutions, civil society organisations and industry bodies, generate the evidence base, shape national priorities and align stakeholders around a common agenda. High-level coordinating mechanisms bring together public institutions, businesses, investors and community organisations to drive execution. The focus is not on creating a standalone disability initiative, but on positioning participation as a mainstream economic priority and creating the foundation for subsequent cycles of investment, market development and institutionalisation.

Cycle 2: Mobilising Purple capital

The second cycle focuses on mobilising the financial resources required to accelerate participation and market development. The growth of the Purple Economy depends on sustained investment in disability-focused markets and the accessibility transformation of mainstream markets. Public finance, philanthropy, development finance institutions, impact investors, corporations and financial institutions play a role in directing capital towards opportunities that expand participation and unlock new forms of economic value.

Investment in this cycle supports two parallel objectives. The first is the development of Purple Economy markets, including assistive technology, support services, accessibility solutions, Purple enterprises, skilling ecosystems and emerging professions. The second is enabling mainstream businesses and institutions to become more accessible through investments in products, services, infrastructure, technology, customer experiences and workforce participation. Together, these investments help create demand, strengthen supply, reduce market risk and accelerate the growth of inclusive markets.

Cycle 3: Building foundational infrastructure and demonstrating models

The third cycle focuses on creating the enabling infrastructure that enables efficient, scalable participation. Markets function best when people, services, opportunities and institutions can discover, trust and transact with one another. DPI, discovery systems, registries, credentialing mechanisms, accessibility verification frameworks and ecosystem coordination platforms reduce market frictions and strengthen the conditions for participation. Governments, technology providers, businesses, civil society organisations and community networks can contribute to these developments.

Alongside these foundational systems, demonstration models help translate strategy into implementation. Purple Economic Zones, sector-focused pilots, innovation

clusters and place-based initiatives provide environments where new approaches can be tested, refined and scaled. These initiatives generate evidence, strengthen ecosystem coordination and create visible examples of how participation can be integrated into local economies, industries and public systems.

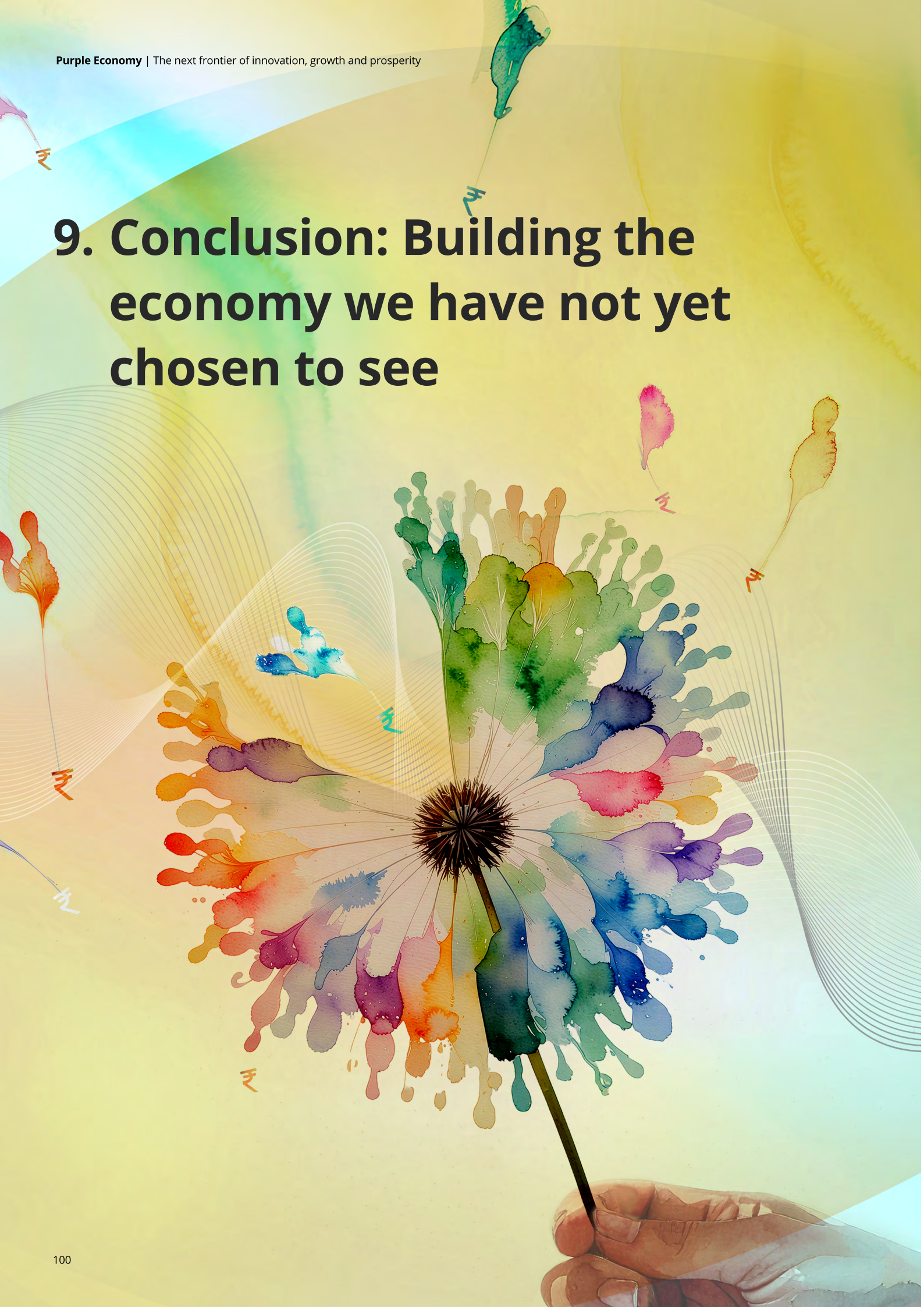
Cycle 4: Regulation and institutionalisation

The fourth cycle focuses on embedding participation within mainstream economic and institutional systems. Long-term success depends not on individual projects, but on the extent to which accessibility, participation and inclusion become part of how markets, industries and public institutions operate. Institutionalisation creates predictability, reduces uncertainty and ensures that progress continues beyond individual programmes or leadership cycles.

Governments, regulators, industry bodies, academia, civil society organisations and community representatives contribute to this process through the development of standards, accreditation frameworks, procurement systems, governance mechanisms and accountability structures. Representation of persons with disabilities and ecosystem stakeholders within decision-making bodies further strengthens the system. The outcome is a Purple Economy that is no longer dependent on special initiatives, but is embedded within the foundations of economic development itself.



9. Conclusion: Building the economy we have not yet chosen to see



At its core, the Purple Economy advances a simple proposition: disability is not only a social issue. It is also an economic one.

Across economies, millions of persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in education, employment, mobility, healthcare, finance, technology, entrepreneurship and public life. These barriers are often viewed as individual challenges or service gaps. The Purple Economy offers a different perspective. It argues that such barriers signal unmet demand, unrealised productivity, underdeveloped markets and missed opportunities for innovation and growth.

The Purple Delta represents the gap between the value currently captured by the economy and the much larger value that could be unlocked when disability-linked needs are recognised and systematically addressed. Closing this gap is not simply a matter of expanding access. It requires building systems that enable participation to translate into economic activity, enterprise creation, market development and long-term value creation.

This requires moving beyond isolated interventions towards a more coordinated approach to market formation. Demand must become visible. Supply must be strengthened. Discovery must become easier. Finance, digital infrastructure, standards and governance must evolve alongside participation. When these elements reinforce one another, participation ceases to be an outcome of development and becomes a driver of development itself.

The opportunity is therefore larger than disability inclusion alone. It is about building economies that recognise a wider range of human needs, capabilities and contributions. As populations age, technologies evolve, and expectations around accessibility continue to rise, the ability to design systems for participation will increasingly become a source of economic resilience and competitive advantage.

The path forward is clear. Ambition must be matched by ownership. Capital must flow towards markets in formation. Enabling infrastructure must reduce friction and expand access. Successful models must be tested, refined and scaled. Over time, participation must become embedded within standards, governance frameworks, institutions and everyday market practices.

The Purple Economy is not separate. It is a more complete view of the economy, one that recognises persons with disabilities not only as beneficiaries of support but also as consumers, workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, creators, and decision-makers. The challenge ahead is not whether this opportunity exists, but whether governments, businesses, investors and institutions choose to recognise it, invest in it and build for it.

The economies that do so successfully will not simply become more inclusive. They will become more innovative, more productive, more resilient and better equipped for long-term growth.

Appendices

Appendix A - Approach to TAM calculation

Step 1: Estimating the persons with disabilities population of India

- We took a look at multiple sources, like the Census 2011, the World Bank report 2009, and the Global WHO estimates of 15 percent
- A wide range of 26.8 million to <200 million was seen across these reports
- We also did a bottom-up calculation, going by each disability type, which led to a significantly high number of 250 million; this also provided us with a breakup of the number by disability type
- We kept a conservative estimate of 100 million for TAM calculation, closer to the World Bank 2009 report (55–90 million, keeping some room for an increase over the last 16 years)
- We also bucketed the 21 disabilities from the RPWD Act of 2016 into 10 groups and estimated the proportion of the persons with disabilities population in each of those groups

Step 2: Arriving at the broad disability related expense heads

- Based on our understanding and multiple persons with disabilities interviews, we arrived at disability related expense heads
- These were five macro heads with a total of 17 sub-categories:
  - Healthcare and Rehabilitation (Rehab, Mental health, Medical procedures, Medicines and Regular diagnostics)
  - Educational and Vocational Training (Special Educators, School infra, Vocational prep, Tutors/Edtech/ Remedial intervention)
  - Assistive technology and devices (Assistive tech, Assistive software, Medical aids)
  - Activities of Daily Living (Attendants/ Interpreters/Caregivers, Mobility, Adaptive fashion, home modifications)
  - Financial Support (Loans, Insurance)
- Note that only disability related expenses were considered. For example, a home loan or a rental expense is not considered, but any home modification, like ramps, would be considered

Step 3: Estimating the costs by expense heads and by disability group

- We proceeded to estimate the potential spend under each expense head by each disability group (so 10 rows and 17 columns!)

- For the estimation, we took a dual approach: reports and interviews with persons with disabilities with lived experience
- We looked at multiple reports in the domain which talk about the costs incurred by persons with disabilities and synthesised them into the above table
- We also did interviews with persons with disabilities across all disability groups and discussed their actual or potential expenses across all expense heads to populate another copy of the above table
- We then combined the above two into a single master table, while being most conservative in our estimates
- This allowed us a granularity to be able to estimate TAM at a disability group and sector level

Step 4: Final calculations and assumptions

- We took some reasonable assumptions for the purpose of our estimation:
  - Average life expectancy in India (68 years) and that for persons with disabilities (50 years - estimate for low and middle income countries)
  - Proportion of children taken as ~30 percent
  - Proportion of persons with disabilities by birth as 30 percent and the weighted average years with disability as 30 years
  - Counselling costs taken as 1000 per session
  - Speech therapy/Occupational therapy/ Physiotherapy duration taken as 2 years
  - 15 lakh schools needing 3.75 lakh special educators with a salary of INR20,000 per month
- This gave us a TUM (Total Unrestrained Market of ~US$500 billion) - TUM assumes a perfect world where all persons with disabilities can pay for the services they need
- We put a filter of ability to pay on top of TUM to arrive at a reasonable TAM (Total Addressable Market)
  - For this, we included only the “Rich” and “Middle Class” population of India, which is approximately 35 percent and excluded the “Aspires” and “Destitutes” categories, which are approximately 65 percent
  - Source: People Research on India’s Consumer Economy (PRICE)
- **The final TAM number for Purple Economy was estimated to be ~US$150 billion, with breakups available by disability group and expense heads**

Appendix B – The future unfolded: Reimagining sectors

B.1. Education and skilling: From exclusion to absolute inclusion

Imagine a classroom where learning has no barriers: a student with a hearing impairment follows lectures through real-time captions, a child with dyslexia excels using AI-powered reading tools, and a visually impaired coder completes advanced programming through adaptive technology and screen readers. Beyond learners, teachers upskill, edtech companies innovate and accessibility specialists shape the future of learning. In the Purple Economy, knowledge is accessible, opportunity is limitless and no talent is left behind.

Purple Economy is a rights-based, market-driven ecosystem where no mind is wasted. This requires reimagining the educational journey through several key ideas:

- Education agents: Every district can deploy inclusion agents who map persons with disabilities students, understand their needs and ensure access to schools and learning systems. This creates a new category of purposeful jobs that bridge policy and practice.
- Economies of scale through Digital classrooms: EdTech platforms can build specialised digital classrooms for different accessibility needs. Digital scale makes it economically viable to provide high-quality sign-language instruction, tactile learning design and adaptive educational tools at scale.
- Peer-led vocational learning: Skilling ecosystems can use the lived experience of successful persons with disabilities professionals to set up skilling hubs of "Purple Excellence" where high-performance vocational pathways are tailored to different functional strengths.
- Portable digital learning passports: Through interoperable digital credentials, students can carry records of accommodations, assistive technology usage and learning support seamlessly from school to higher education and employment.

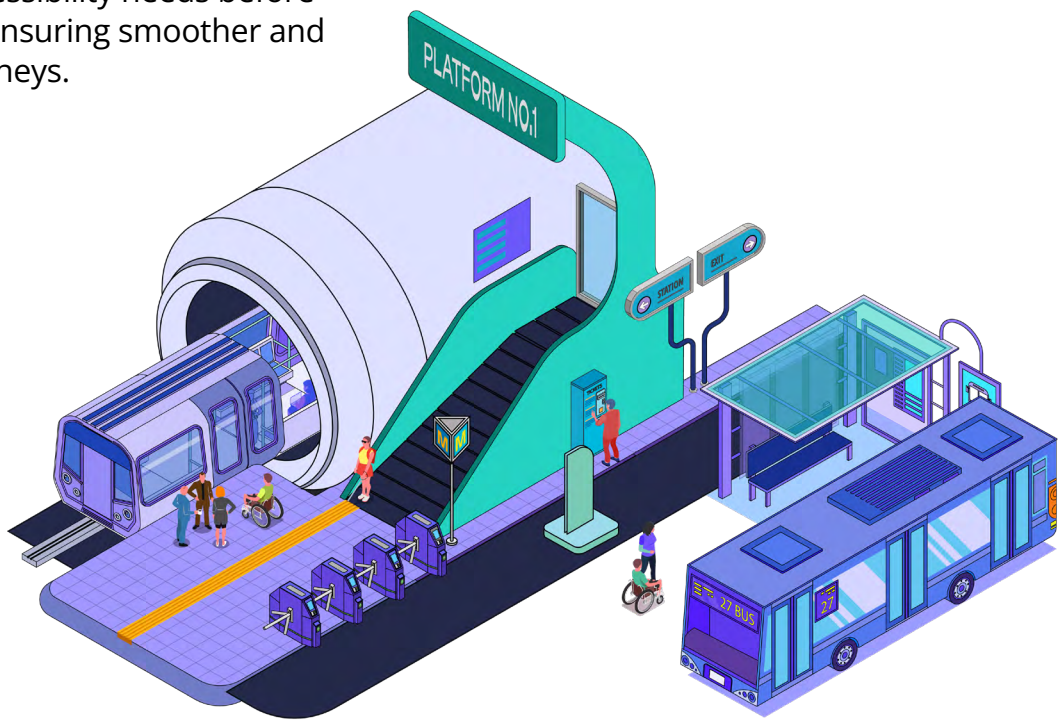


B.2. Transportation and mobility: The seamless chain of dignity

A corporate executive using a wheelchair exits an accessible cab at a bustling metro station. A Purple Economy Assister welcomes him, ensuring a seamless journey to the platform. His real-time accessibility app directs him to the least crowded metro car, making travel effortless. Around him, trained navigators assist passengers, adaptive taxi services thrive and metro stations employ inclusion officers. Accessibility is more than just convenience; it is an economic force that unlocks jobs and drives industries forward.

This scene is not a distant utopia; it is the economic manifestation of the Seamless Chain of Dignity. Currently, mobility for persons with disabilities is fraught with "frictions" that discourage participation and depress market demand. Reimagining this sector turns these frictions into opportunities across the board:

- Universal signalling protocols: Travellers can use standardised digital signals to communicate accessibility needs before a vehicle arrives, ensuring smoother and more reliable journeys.
- Integrated travel hubs: Transit hubs can evolve into inclusive mobility ecosystems with accessible navigation, adaptive routing using personalised digital twins, assistive kiosks and personalised travel support integrated into the passenger journey.
- First and last-mile accessibility: Accessible micro-mobility, including adaptive scooters, electric wheelchairs, and neighbourhood shuttle systems, can connect people seamlessly from their doorstep to the wider transport grid.
- The mobility gig economy: A new workforce of trained "Purple Guides" or "Transit Assistants" can provide navigational and physical support through app-based platforms, creating employment while improving independent mobility for people with functional difficulties.

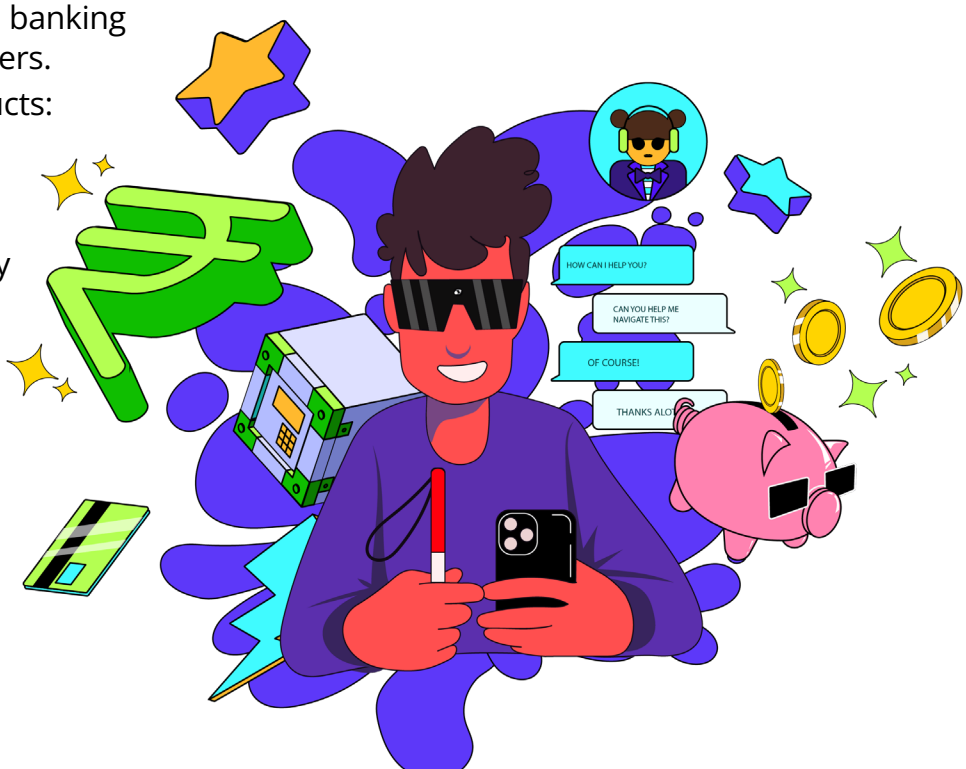


B.3. Financing and banking

Picture a world where everyone has seamless access to financial services. A visually impaired entrepreneur applies for a business loan with ease through voice-assisted banking, and an AI-driven financial advisor helps with investment planning. At the bank, a Purple Economy Financial Officer assists customers with diverse abilities; ATMs offer voice navigation, and digital wallets automatically recognise accessibility preferences. Inclusive finance is not only ethical but also profitable by unlocking millions of new customers and fuelling financial independence.

In a Purple Economy, financial systems evolve to include a systematically underpriced segment that they have previously failed to understand. This requires reimagining finance through the following ideas:

- Accessible by default banking: The most immediate opportunity lies in redesigning how banking is experienced. Interventions include talking ATMs, Braille debit cards, screen-reader-compatible internet banking and voice-command banking for hearing-impaired customers.
- Purpose-built financial products: The Purple Economy creates opportunities for disability-linked financial products, including assistive technology loans, adaptive insurance, disability-income-linked credit products and savings systems that integrate with social protection frameworks.
- AI and alternative credit scoring: AI-driven credit systems can use alternative indicators such as gig income, government transfers and assistive technology ownership to expand formal credit access for people excluded from traditional financial scoring systems.
- Trusted third-party models and guardianship finance: Financial systems can enable trusted family members, caregivers or professionals to support individuals with cognitive or intellectual disabilities in managing day-to-day transactions. These models combine financial independence with appropriate safeguards, creating systems of supported autonomy rather than restricting participation altogether.

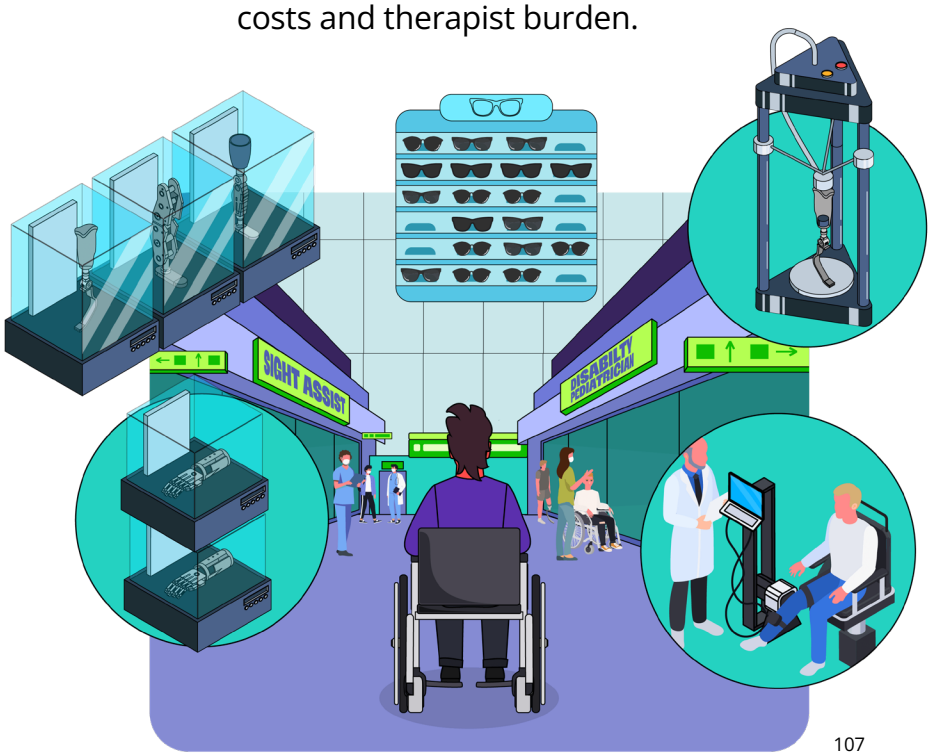


B.4. Healthcare and rehabilitation

Step into a hospital where care is designed for all. A Purple Care Unit ensures accessibility is standard in treatment; Purple Counsellors guide patients through care journeys; and a Purple Pharmacy stocks assistive tech, sensory-friendly medications and adaptive tools. Nearby, a Purple Shop offers prosthetics, adaptive clothing, and daily living aids. Across the system, AI-powered assistants translate medical information into Braille, sign language or voice formats, making healthcare seamless.

The following are some of the key concepts shaping healthcare within the Purple Economy:

- Telehealth revolution: Healthcare is shifting from episodic, facility-based care to continuous, home-centred health management. Accessible telehealth platforms, wearable technologies, and virtual rehabilitation programmes allow patients to receive consultations, monitor their recovery, and follow therapy remotely.
- The Assistive Technology (AT) market: The global AT market is projected to cross US$30 billion by 2035.[15] Yet the WHO estimates that only 1 in 10 people who require assistive technologies currently have access to them.[16] The opportunity is to treat assistive technology as infrastructure embedded in government health coverage, prescribed by trained professionals and distributed through existing public health networks.
- AI-powered personalised diagnostics and rehabilitation: AI is transforming rehabilitation from standardised treatment towards adaptive, personalised care. AI-powered exoskeletons, wearable rehabilitation robots, smart navigation systems and brain-computer interfaces are improving mobility, communication and recovery outcomes. Technologies such as AI-guided gait analysis and predictive rehabilitation systems are showing early promise in improving personalised therapy outcomes while reducing long-term care costs and therapist burden.



[15] How sovereign funds could empower the future of assistive technology and disability AI. (2023). World Economic Forum. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/08/sovereign-funds-future-assistive-technology-disability-ai/

[16] Desmond, D., et al. (2018). Assistive technology and people: a position paper from the first global research, innovation and education on assistive technology (GREAT) summit. Disability and rehabilitation. Assistive technology, 13(5), 437–444. https://doi.org/10.1080/17483107.2018.1471169

B.5. Retail and E-commerce

Imagine a world where shopping is seamless for everyone. A wheelchair user moves easily through spacious aisles, with accessible trial rooms and trained staff, while a visually impaired customer shops online through voice navigation and screen-reader-compatible platforms. Adaptive fashion, accessible storefronts and inclusive customer experience become mainstream, creating new jobs from accessibility consultants to UX designers.

This requires reimagining retail and e-commerce through the following ideas:

- Adaptive fashion: The global adaptive clothing market is projected to grow from US$18.93 billion in 2025 to ~US$30.31 billion by 2034,[17] driven by the commercial recognition that a large, underserved consumer segment has been buying ill-fitting, unsuitable clothing. The growing adoption of adaptive fashion lines across the retail sector underscores a broader shift towards inclusive design in the mainstream economy.
- Digital retail and accessible e-commerce: The opportunity lies in redesigning digital shopping experiences through voice navigation, screen-reader compatibility, AI-powered virtual fitting rooms and simplified checkout systems. Accessibility-led retail initiatives highlight how inclusive ecosystems can drive customer loyalty and scalable growth.
- In-store assistance technology: Services such as Aira already enable blind and low-vision customers to navigate stores through remote visual assistance. Over time, AI-powered retail environments detect the presence of a mobility aid and automatically reconfigure navigation cues or offer real-time audio descriptions of product shelves to blind shoppers without requiring them to request assistance.



[17] Adaptive Clothing Market Size, Share. (2026) Fortune Business Insights Report. https://www.fortunebusinessinsights.com/adaptive-clothing-market-112248

B.6. Sports and entertainment

Picture a stadium where everyone is part of the action. A deaf fan feels the crowd's energy vibrating the seats, while a visually impaired spectator follows the match through live audio descriptions. Adaptive gaming arenas host esports tournaments where players of all abilities compete at the highest level. In film and music, accessible streaming platforms, sign language interpretation at concerts, and inclusive content creation redefine entertainment. Additionally, new jobs emerge, including adaptive sports trainers, media accessibility consultants and tech innovators shaping immersive experiences for all.

Several emerging trends are beginning to redefine this sector:

Adaptive Esports: Esports is emerging as one of the most disability-inclusive competitive arenas because it removes many traditional physical barriers to participation. Initiatives led by major industry stakeholders are accelerating the development of adaptive gaming ecosystems, while para esports tournaments are expanding globally. As the global esports market surpasses US$2 billion,[18] adaptive gaming represents a rapidly growing inclusion and consumer opportunity.

Accessible venues and the stadium of the future: The next generation of stadiums, cinemas, and concert halls is increasingly integrating accessibility into core design through vibrating seats, live audio description, real-time captions, sensory rooms and accessible viewing platforms. These innovations expand audience participation while improving the overall event experience.

Entertainment media and accessible content: Accessibility features such as subtitles, audio descriptions and sign-language overlays are becoming mainstream across media and streaming platforms. At the same time, greater representation of persons with disabilities in fashion, film and entertainment reflects growing recognition that inclusive storytelling expands viewership, engagement and cultural relevance.



[18] Esports market revenue worldwide from 2017 to 2030. Statista, 2026, www.statista.com/forecasts/490522/global-esports-market-revenue/

B.7. Technology and innovation

Imagine a world where technology adapts to people. A blind software developer codes using AI-powered screen readers, while a neurodivergent designer creates breakthrough solutions in customised work environments. Smart homes, workplaces, and public spaces integrate accessibility by default, and inclusive design drives new markets, assistive technologies and innovation. Technology is not just cutting-edge; it is adaptive, inclusive and built to expand participation for everyone.

Several emerging trends are beginning to redefine the sector:

- AI as the great accessibility amplifier: AI is rapidly reducing the cost and complexity of delivering personalised accessibility at scale. From real-time communication tools and cognitive support systems to robot-assisted autism therapy and AI-powered Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) technologies, AI is expanding independence and participation across education, work and daily life. The critical challenge will be ensuring these systems are trained inclusively so they reduce rather than replicate existing biases.
- Exoskeletons and wearable robotics: Advances in wearable technologies, neural sensing and smart mobility systems are creating more adaptive forms of physical support. While medical-grade rehabilitation devices continue to evolve, the larger long-term opportunity lies in lighter, consumer-oriented mobility technologies for ageing populations and people with moderate functional difficulties, positioning assistive mobility as a future mass-market category.
- The “Accessible by Default” product standard: The technology sector is increasingly shifting from accessibility as an add-on towards accessibility as a core design standard. Regulations such as the EU Accessibility Act are accelerating this transition. At the same time, companies that embed accessibility into their core architecture incur lower retrofit costs, gain broader market access and foster stronger universal design innovation.



About EnAble India

EnAble India works to unlock the economic power, dignity and participation of persons with disabilities.

For over 25 years, it has built pathways for persons with disabilities to enter livelihoods, employment, entrepreneurship, digital access and community life. Its work has helped transform how disability is understood — from a lens of limitation and support to one of capability, productivity, aspiration and nation-building.

Founded in 1999 and headquartered in Bengaluru, EnAble India is a registered not-for-profit organisation that has impacted livelihoods across 21 disability types, enabled open labour market employment across 34 sectors, and built scalable models, frameworks, products and platforms for businesses, governments and ecosystem partners. Its programmes across livelihoods, platforms, collectives and systems have reached over 700,000 persons with disabilities across 30+ Indian states and union territories and 56 countries.

EnAble India's insights on new work models, neurodiversity and the Purple Economy has been presented at global platforms such as the World Economic Forum, positioning the organisation as a pioneer in reframing disability inclusion as an economic and systems opportunity.

The organisation is now working towards population-scale systems change through Digital Public Infrastructure, open networks and the Purple Economy — an economic framework that recognises persons with disabilities as customers, workers, entrepreneurs, innovators and contributors to growth.

The Purple Economy Movement, initiated by EnAble India, envisions a world where accessibility and inclusion drive innovation, market creation, job creation and shared prosperity.

Key contacts and contributors

Shanti Raghavan
Founder and Managing Trustee
EnAble India
shanti@enableindia.org

Dipesh Sutariya
Co-Founder, Trustee,
Chairman and Managing Director
EnAble India
dipesh@enableindia.org

Saraswathi Kasturirangan,
Chief Happiness Officer
Deloitte South Asia
skasturirangan@deloitte.com

Viswanathan Ravichandran
Partner
Deloitte India
viswanathanr@deloitte.com

Contributors (EnAble India)
Neeraj Krishnan
Anand Gautam

Contributors (Deloitte)
NSN Murty
Deepa Narasimhan
Rushia Aulakh
Ananya Anand

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This white paper draws upon years of field experience, community knowledge, research and institutional learning at EnAble India.

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We also acknowledge the broader global discourse on disability inclusion advanced by the United Nations and other international platforms, including earlier work that connected the Purple Economy to care, inclusion and social participation. This white paper builds on that foundation and further develops the Purple Economy as a systems, market and national growth framework by recognising persons with disabilities as recipients of care and also as customers, workers, entrepreneurs, innovators, suppliers, creators, citizens, investors and decision-makers.

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