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Govt launches first-of-its-kind national initiative Breaking Barriers Fellowship 2026

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Nurturing young professionals, strengthening state capacity, and advancing disability empowerment

Young Leaders for Active Citizenship (YLAC), the Nipman Foundation and the India Autism Center, in collaboration with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Government of India, have formally launched the Breaking Barriers Fellowship 2026, with the support of the United Nations in India.

The Breaking Barriers Fellowship is a first-of-its-kind national initiative designed to bring exceptional young professionals into institutions under DEPwD to support policy processes and advance the implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016.

Speaking at the launch, Rohit Kumar, Co-founder, YLAC, highlighted the role of young people in strengthening public systems, noting that “When you give young people platforms, it breaks cynicism and helps them move into policy spaces and create change.”

As India continues to strengthen its disability rights and governance framework, there is growing emphasis on sustained policy support, research inputs, and coordination to complement the work of public institutions. The Fellowship has been designed to provide such support while also building a pipeline of young professionals with practical exposure to disability governance and public systems.

Placement institutions include the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), the Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), the National Trust, the Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya National Institute for Persons with Physical Disabilities (PDUNIPPD), the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), the Ali Yavar Jung National Institute of Speech and Hearing Disabilities (AYJNISHD), and the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID).