Editor's Note

Hi friends,

This edition is a curtain raiser for the World Disability Day 2016 with the theme- Achieving the 17 sustainable development goals for the Future We Want. There are different perspectives on how to achieve this goal for people with disability and some are reflected herewith. Also featuring from this edition is the review column on the previous edition, identity vs individuality. I am also happy to inform you that taking forward the work on creating awareness on inclusion , Connect Special in partnership with Vidya Sagar and IIT Madras will be hosting talks by Ms Haben Girma, the first Deafblind person to graduate from Harvard Law School and an internationally acclaimed accessibility leader, on of 26th and 28th of November. I will be sending in personal invites to all of you and looking forward to see you at the events.

Happy reading,

Regards,

Bhavna Botta

Preface

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call for action to end poverty,protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The United Nations has published 17 Sustainable Development Goals to guide the role of public, non-profit, for-profit, and voluntary sectors in global development. This was ratified at the September,2015 at United Nations summit and countries have adopted it. SDGs have to be looked through the lens of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and plans made to achieve them thus ensuring inclusion and equality for persons with disabilities .It needs a concerted effort by all involved otherwise again injustice, discrimination would prevail.

https://disrupt-and-innovate.org/human-rights-persons-with-disabilities-implementing-the-sdgs/

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"Special" & "Different" are part of an Inclusive society-

Dr. Sudha Kaul

We live in a divisive world that is overwhelmed by problems and confusion. In a democracy like India we have, by the very nature of our large diverse communities, to recognize and celebrate differences, respect human rights, fundamental freedom and human diversity. And if we truly want to ensure that we are a vibrant democracy we need to create a society that provides both economic and social opportunities for ALL. Education is one of the KEY factors that show us a path towards an inclusive society.

Article 4 of SDG and Article 24 of CRPD on EDUCATION and Article 8 Awareness are key goals that need to be addressed to ensure that persons with disabilities are part of this debate. The SDG Goal 4 on QUALITY EDUCATION states "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for ALL". Article 24 of the CRPD also emphasises " an inclusive education system at all levels on the basis of equal opportunity and freedom from exclusion; persons with disabilities must have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training"

However in order to do this we must put into place an Awareness campaign that brings into focus on HOW we can support and achieve an Inclusive Society. ARTICLE 8 CRPD - AWARENESS RAISING gives clear-cut suggestions on how this could be done.

States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures to raise awareness throughout society, including at the family level, regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

Measures to this end include: Initiating and maintaining effective public awareness campaigns designed --

- To promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities;
- Promoting awareness-training
- Using all media platforms

I would like to suggest that Awareness Programmes should include ALL stakeholders from the Community. We need to plan Inclusive Awareness Campaigns to highlight the advantages of Inclusive Education that benefits ALL. Attitudes and perceptions about disability can only change if the young are brought up with the belief that we diversity and inclusive growth is all part of the same. Education can be the 'nursery' in which we begin.

Dr Sudha Kaul, pioneer in the education and rehabilitation of persons with disability, received the Padma Shri from the Government of India in 2010 in recognition of her contributions to the disability sector. She was the Founder Principal, Centre for Special Education and later, the Executive Director of IICP until her retirement in 2010; she continues to be the Vice Chair of the organisation. She has a PhD in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) from Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) and has authored several publications on AAC. She was the first Asian woman to head ISAAC - International Society for AAC, Canada. She was the Chair of the Committee formulated by the Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to draft a new law for disability and is a member of several committees related to disability at the Central and State level.

Data Collection and disaggregation—Meenakshi Balasubramaniam

The indicators to Goal 17 "Revitalize the Global Partnerships for Sustainable Development" include "Data, Monitoring and Accountability", which specifically mentions data on disability. The first point to this indicator specifically mentions the need for capacity building for development of high quality,timely and reliable data disaggregated based on income generation, gender,age, ethnicity,race, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristic relevant in national context"

What does the CRPD mandate?

Article 31 of CRPD mandates all states parties to collect appropriate data including research leading to formulate and implement policies leading to the implementation of the convention.

What are the efforts so far at the National Level?

We have 3 types of statistics and data in our country that includes a. census, b. through NSSO and c. administrative data.

The questionnaire to the census 2011 captures data on 7 constituencies of persons with disability with a scope includes any other conditions as the 8th category. The data provides details on the number of persons with disability live in this country,further disaggregated based on sex, geographical location, caste (SC/ST). Data could also be captured on worker and non worker population, educational status for all the above mentioned disaggregation.

The administrative data includes the target and coverage of persons with disability within a particular programme or scheme. Persons with disability specific programmes and few other general programmes such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), NREGA provides administrative data on the number of persons with disability covered under the respective programmes.

So, where are the gaps?

There is a huge gap on disaggregation across all geographical location under census 2011 apart from lack of availability of data on house hold survey and disability disaggregated data within that. NSSO has not engaged in any specific data building for further planning and policy development on specific aspects of restrictions experienced by persons with disability. The last data produced by NSSO was just after census 2001.

On the administrative data there is a lack of mandate to disaggregate data across all policy and programmes across all social and development sectors across all levels of governance. Even on programmes and policies that are specific to persons with disabilities the data is not disaggregated based on gender an across constituencies of persons with disability.

How does lack of data impact development?

Lack of data indicates lack of accountability towards inclusive spending. This will also have a direct impact on planning and evolution of policies to effectively include diverse groups including persons with disability. Lack of data also creates invisibleness of the impact (positive or negative) of the development programmes and policies on the marginalized group whose data is not captured.

What is the way forward?

Specific statistics and data collection of specific services for persons with disability.

Disaggregation of administrative data based on constituencies of impairment and gender.

Redefine policies and programmes to mandate data on persons with disability.

Meenakshi , Board of Trustee, Equals, Centre for Promotion Of Social Justice, a Chennai-based organization that works for the rights of disabled people among other issues .

Poverty eradication –Rajiv Rajan

The world's poor are significantly more likely to have or incur a disability within their lifetime compared to more financially privileged populations. The rate of disability within impoverished nations is notably higher than that found in more developed countries. Though no one explanation entirely accounts for this connection, recently there has been a substantial amount of research illustrating the cycle by which poverty and disability are mutually reinforcing. Physical, cognitive, mental, emotional, sensory, or developmental impairments independently or in tandem with one another may increase one's likelihood of becoming impoverished, while living in poverty may increase one's potential of having or acquiring special needs in some capacity.

According to the World Bank, "Persons with disabilities on average as a group experience worse socioeconomic outcomes than persons without disabilities, such as less education, worse health outcomes, less employment, and higher poverty rates". Researchers have demonstrated that these reduced outcomes may be attributed to a myriad of institutional barriers and other factors. Furthermore, the prevalence of disabilities in impoverished populations has been predicted to follow a cyclical pattern by which those who live in poverty are more likely to acquire a disability and those who have a disability are more likely to become impoverished.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in a report in 2011 estimated that 15.3% of the world's population deals with disability of one kind or the other. The 2011 census puts India's disabled at 2.21% of the population. This shows that there is a lack of proper process data collection in India. What eradication of poverty are we talking about when we don't even have the required data on the most marginalized group of the population??

Poverty eradication is not possible leaving behind almost 1/ 6th of the population--**The persons with disabilities.**There are 3 important aspects to eradication of poverty- Education, Employment And social security.

Education plays a very important role in eradication of poverty. A barrier in getting to education means that a person with disability will largely remain poor. How large a population can NGOs through special schools reach out to? They can't surely reach out to 15% of any given population. Special schools also don't prepare children/young adults to face real time world of competition. **Inclusive education is the only way forward**. This will not only help persons with disabilities but also help the potential employer to understand the talent pool that exist in persons with disabilities by letting persons with and without disabilities to mingle with each other. This in turn would help in eradicating prejudice that persons with disabilities can work and earn their livelihood.

Employment is another aspect that plays a key role in eradication of poverty. Now that the government is focusing on privatization of all sectors there needs to be concerted effort to encourage private sector to employ persons with disabilities. This can be done by awarding the private sector with the likes of tax exemptions for employing persons with disabilities. The corporate house which cannot employ persons with disabilities for whatever reasons must contribute to persons with disabilities employment fund to be created under a society to be governed by a board which has equal representation of all the stake holders. This fund must be used for interest free loans for self employment of persons with disabilities.

Social protection is another area needs to be done. Personal assistance have to be available at affordable or no cost whichever is applicable. Insurance both medical and life have to be made available to persons with disabilities at the premium like others. Whatever social protection schemes announced must have to be made accessible and available for persons with disabilities. As this will reduce dependency on others in terms medical expenses and can get best treatment be made available.

Another aspect that needs to be worked on is inheritance of family property by persons with disabilities. There are attitudinal and legal barriers in this. As result of this even if the family of the person with disability is rich the person with disability ends up being poor. Persons with disabilities must be able to get their share of property. First of this the legal barriers must be removed with required multiple levels support systems in place. There is a need to work with community to raise awareness about this aspect.

These three aspects plays major role in eradication of poverty and right to quality life.

From The Heart

-Deepa Vijay

One of the 17 SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) is that of Sustainable cities and communities. It is the right of every individual with special needs to have access to the same quality of education, standard of living, accessibility to places and avenues of employment as another NT individual.

However, the sad truth is that all of this lacking in the society we live in. Inclusive schools and colleges do not have the facilities to handle persons with special needs or understand their unique needs, apartment complexes and infrastructure are not designed with persons having challenges in mind and finding jobs is very difficult in spite of having requisite qualifications.

While change is not going to happen overnight, let us start today in creating awareness, making society accept people with challenges and accord them the same respect as any other person. Creating awareness on the importance of accessible places, accessible transport and accessible infrastructure so what is a dream today is transformed into a reality tomorrow. Let us all join hands in creating a totally inclusive society in the near future.

Rajiv Rajan

Director ,Human Rights Law Network

Executive Director,Ektha

Volunteer Vidya Sagar

Deepa Vijay,a chartered accountant by profession and a parent of a person with disability

Newsletter
November 2016

Decent work and economic growth

-P.Rajasekharan

As Co-founder of V-Shesh, I would like to specifically draw the attention of Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth - which is also covered under Article 27 of CRPD.

Employment is a litmus test of inclusion. By working on both ends that is Person with disability and potential employers is how we see Goal8 of not just decent work but quality career opportunity being met for Persons with disabilities, ultimately resulting in societal inclusion

This needs focused initiatives on both job-seeker end and employer end. On the job-seeker end, recognition of the employability gap mainly in basic communication and other soft skills required to sustain a corporate job.

Extensive training sessions, like the ones conducted by V-Shesh to simulate a work environment for trainees to practice team-work, coordination and communication equipping them to relate to the demands of workplace has to be conducted .The trainers should be sensitive to the learning needs but do not compromise on performance requirements required .
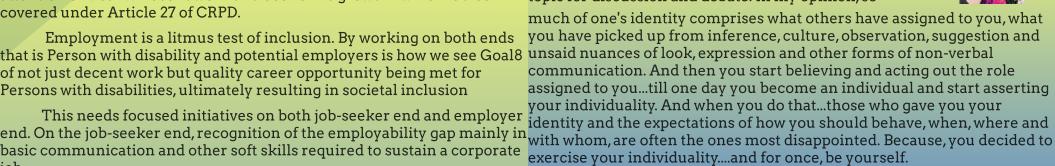
Also when it comes to disability hiring, for the employers it is not just induction of the person with disability but the induction of the entire operating team at workplace. So simultaneously working with the employer's ecosystem and deploy a package of services – disability sensitization, job coach services, sign language training etc., preparing the workplace to be disability inclusive.

Rajasekharan , Co founder,V-Shesh,an impact enterprise connecting job-seekers with disabilities to jobs matching talent,

Review -Identity vs Individuality

Thank you for placing this extremely important topic for discussion and debate. In my opinion, so much of one's identity comprises what others have assigned to you, what you have picked up from inference, culture, observation, suggestion and unsaid nuances of look, expression and other forms of non-verbal communication. And then you start believing and acting out the role assigned to you...till one day you become an individual and start asserting your individuality. And when you do that...those who gave you your identity and the expectations of how you should behave, when, where and with whom, are often the ones most disappointed. Because, you decided to exercise your individuality....and for once, be yourself.

Dr . Reena Sen
Executive Director
Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy
Kolkatta

DrumPants TAPS: Wearable Assistant

gives a voice to people who have limited mobility or difficulty speaking.The user can simply tap wearable Bluetooth triggers to speak customizable phrases through an app on their phone.

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