



Edition 34

Editor's Desk

Dear friends,

A new year brings new resolutions, new thinking caps for some of us. A Chinese proverb says -"*A journey of thousand miles must begin with a single step.*"

Wishing you all a Happy New Year and best wishes for that single step towards a new thinking !!

Happy Reading!!

Regards,

Bhavna Botta

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From The Heart

SRINIVASULU, founder member of Network of Persons with disabilities Organizations (NPDO), a two time recipient of National awards from the President of India , Convener: UNCRPD alliance of AP, Secretary: Confederation of Rural India (CNRI), a special invitee for the new law Draft committee , associated Member of Disabled People International, Founder- member, South Asia Disability Forum (SADF) ,India country representative for Asia Pacific Disabled People Organization (APDPO), Chief editor, Vikalangula Vaarthateja, First ever regional magazine for PWDs shares his inspiring journey with us.



Sir, such an impressive portfolio, please tell us about yourself

I was born into a family of disabled persons as my mother experienced fluorosis and four of my siblings were affected by the same congenital disability. I grew up in poverty which was compounded by disability and my parents had no choice but to put me in a welfare hostel at a very young age.

Due to abject economic pressures my parents exaggerated my actual age by two years in the hope that I will get into some job early. My journey in the hostel continued as an activist struggling against injustice within the hostel and outside.



So did your activism stop as soon as you stepped out of educational institutions.

As I left the hostel no job was at my doorstep. Hence I created a job for myself by setting up a monthly magazine for persons with disabilities namely, VarthaTeja. This was the first magazine of its kind way back in 1996. Apart from covering disability issues my focus as a young editor was to highlight issues concerning children particularly those from marginalised communities. As my magazine reached the nook and corner of the united Andhra Pradesh it attracted the attention of Action Aid International who sponsored me for training on Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR).

That's great ,your first technical training in rehab, what was your next step

My training on CBR prompted me to work more professionally on disabled children in terms of early identification, early intervention and rehabilitation aspects. I soon came in contact with a host of NGOs in Andhra Pradesh and other states for whom I provided my services in capacity building and documentation. Gradually I focussed my attention to my native district ,Nalgonda ,where I actively brought different development schemes together for 150 disabled children in the year 2000. I felt the need for the regional translation of the PWD Act 1995. I worked for the next 10 years in translating the contents of the Act into lay man's language across the state of Andhra Pradesh. This resulted in a special gazette issued by the Government of India on special provisions for children with disabilities.

Oh wow, that needs a lot of dedication. Did you see its impact.

I filed a writ petition in the High Court towards speedy implementation of these provisions. The government responded by issuing a GO to make these provision to every schoolteacher in the state.

Tell us about your work as coordinator of the participatory study on rural disability in 2002

My Nalgonda project paved the way for me to become for this collaborative study project of The World Bank and Government of Andhra Pradesh.

As part of this study I highlighted the plight of disabled children in the schools and outside the schools.

Consequently World Bank allotted Rs. 150 crores for disability component in its Velugu Programme. This emerged into a state wide CBR programme benefiting thousands of children with disabilities in corrective surgeries, physiotherapy and other therapeutic services.

I also organised training programmes by the world famous David Werner on indigenous techniques in rehabilitation and assistive devices.

What is your opinion on inclusion

My work soon diversified into paying attention to other vulnerable children in collaboration with organisations such as MV Foundation, AP Child Rights Alliance, Plan International and Aid et Action. I helped these organisations to address the concerns of disabled children. This experience led me to work on policy issues such as Right to Education Act and inclusiveness in NREGA so as to provide 150 days of employment for parents of disabled children.

I devised and implemented a 7 years project on children with support from a Dutch based agency. I also worked on United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) with a US based agency & SASAKAWA Japan etc and mainstreamed more than 3000 children directly in all aspects.

Tell us about your family, how supportive are they

My professional journey for above 25 years enlightened my personal and family life too.

My better half (who also happens to be a disabled person) joined my journey at the Asia Social Forum in 2003. My son Teja arrived in 2004 with congenital disability. Thanks to my profession I was able to act early and effectively.

Today I am happy running two schools – one for children with intellectual disability in Mancherial and another children with hearing impairment in Hyderabad.

What has influenced you do create such opportunities.

I strongly believe my experience, exposure and expertise with eminent civil servants, National & International Rights based organizations has added advantage in addressing the Child Rights issues & their empowerment. One of my greatest influence has been Late Mr. JAVED ABIDI.

What are your future plans

We plan to Focus work on RPD Act provisions and effective implementation of 5% reservation in education in all courses and All welfare, developmental Schemes , Reservation of 4% in employment, accessibility at grass root level and semi urban areas like districts/ municipalities , access to Justice in district courts, focus on issues of inclusive education children, marital relations of woman and care and protection issues of people with profound disability .

What is the status of implementation of the act

Acts and provisions and policies are strong but unfortunately implementation is very weak. We plan to work on effectiveness with involvement of community and the political system. We believe and are advocating the importance of our vote bank

In Telangana state the exact count/data of disabled voters is not available. It is complete non visibility of a community or a sector in the society . As per our estimation under new act, with 21types of disabilities included there should be 12 lakh disabled voters. But the figures of ECI are not matching, so we are opposing it. We are demanding the State to conduct door to door survey , campaign and create awareness and identify all 21disabilities.It is crucial as this will impact policy making and governance

DIY-(Do it Yourself)-

Inclusive and accessible books

How to make text books accessible-

step 1- download and install any free text to speech softwares like

<https://www.naturalreaders.com/software.html>

<https://readplease.en.softonic.com/download>

step 2

download e books from websites like

<http://www.textbookcorp.tn.gov.in>

step 3

Start text to speech and follow directions like open the document etc-check the speed ,accent to suit.

News to follow-

Indo Australian MOU -

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed on 22nd November 2018, between India and Australia for Cooperation in the Disability Sector. This move is to look at providing joint initiatives in the disability sector to improve rehabilitation of persons with disabilities especially for persons with intellectual disability and mental illness in both the countries

Start ups with a difference

Ebullience Advisors and Inclusion Infinite Foundation, uniquely different start ups with a mission to create inclusive community .Being activists for a long and sharing a common vision Jeeja Ghosh, Sayomdeb Mukherjee and Chandra Sen Gupta took the step to make disability -right based action ,a reality. The work at Ebullience Advisors involves mentoring and advising anyone interested in creating a disability-friendly environment .While Inclusion Infinite Foundation is hands on work with people with disabilities.

Tech corner

Intel's AI wheelchair can be controlled by facial expressions

Originally featured at Access and inclusion through Technology
<https://www.engadget.com/2018/12/04/intels-ai-wheelchair-can-be-controlled-by-facial-expressions/>

The Wheelie 7 makes the majority of motorized wheelchairs even more accessible. Motorized wheelchairs are traditionally controlled by a joystick or sensors attached to

the user's body, but now innovation in artificial intelligence is helping severely disabled people drive their chairs with their facial expressions.

Working in partnership with Intel, Brazil-based Hoobox Robotics has created the Wheelie 7, a piece of AI-leveraging kit that allows disabled people to control a motorized wheelchair through 10 facial expressions, from raising eyebrows to sticking out tongues.

The tech learns about the user's gestures automatically and takes just seven minutes to install (hence the name "Wheelie 7"). Using an app, the user -- with assistance from a caregiver -- can assign which expressions are linked to the chair's movements. Through a combination of facial recognition software, sensors, robotics and an Intel 3D RealSense Depth Camera that's been mounted on the wheelchair, Wheelie captures a 3D map of the face and uses AI algorithms to process data in real time to direct the wheelchair. The kit works in both sunlight and dim light, and is compatible with 95 percent of motorized wheelchairs currently in the market.

<https://youtu.be/okr-JY98iec>

For sending feedback and free subscription -

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For sharing

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