

## **SUPPORTING THE DISABLED: THE LEADING ROLE OF NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN INDIA**

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### **Abstract**

The care and protection of people with disabilities are handled by various governmental and non-governmental organizations. In this paper, the authors have illustrated some of the innovative practices and programmes that would be beneficial for the disabled categories. Though the paper is a conceptual one, the content such as the various practices and programmes have clearly on empirical aspects. The community assessment, communitybased rehabilitation, self-employment and microfinance, vocational rehabilitation and training, assistive devices with technologies etc are discussed in this paper. It is evident that various non-governmental organizations have effectively contributed for the care and protection of the disabled people. The paper focused on the present situation of disabled people in India, especially the state of Kerala. The implication and discussion part has extensively discussed the various practices and programmes run by the non-governmental organization.

*Keywords: Non-governmental organizations, disability, Innovative practices*

### **Introduction**

Disability is considered as the physical, cognitive and sensory impairment of an individual's day to day activities. The phenomenon of disability should not be treated as a medical problem, but also as a developmental and human rights issue. It is estimated that more than a billion people are living with any one of the disability all over the world and it estimates

about 15 percent of the world's population (World Health Organization, 2011). Among the states in India, Kerala has marked as a tremendous development in the welfare of common people. It is effectively co-ordinated by the Department of Social Justice and the department is entrusted to provide social welfare measures for the people with disabilities. The department has taken an important step by providing Identity Cards to the disabled persons. This ID cards enables them to claim various benefits from different institutions. For the effective implementation of the welfare activities, the department has started Kerala Social Security Mission. It is first in India to provide social security needs of the weaker sections. The institutions such as *Commissionerate for Persons with Disabilities*, *Kerala State Physically Handicapped Persons Welfare Corporation*, *National Institute of Speech and Hearing* and *Centre for Disability Studies* are supplementing a lot for the development of disabled people. There are 18 institutions all over the state working under the Social Justice Department for the rehabilitation of disabled and differentially abled people (Economic Review, 2012). A subsidy of ten thousand rupees have been ensured for purchasing the Motor-powered Tricycle to the self-employed and students under the disabled category. The Kerala State Handicapped Persons Welfare Corporation provides various monetary assistance such as fixed deposit scheme for severely disabled girl child, setting up of coffee vending machines and economic support to the disabled lottery agents. The corporation also support to get assistance from National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporations by providing loan to the disabled persons for self employment.

### **Review of literature**

The United Nations General Assembly says that 80 percent of people with disability exists in developing countries. It is evident that, the number and share of disabled category are significantly high in India. The Table 1 and Table 2 depict the current position of disabled population in India.

Table-1 Disabled Population by Sex & Residence, 2011				Table-2 Percentage of Disabled to total population India, 2011			
Residence	Persons	Males	Females	Residence	Persons	Males	Females
Total	26,810,557	14,986,202	11,824,355	Total	2.21	2.41	2.01
Rural	18,631,921	10,408,168	8,223,753	Rural	2.24	2.43	2.03
Urban	8,178,636	4,578,034	3,600,602	Urban	2.17	2.34	1.98

Source: Census of India 2011 & Office of Registrar General 2011

The tables highlights that 2.6 crores of Indian population are disabled. The males are more disabled (2.41 percent) than females (2.01 percent). The table also reveals that disability in rural areas (2.24 percent) is higher when compared to urban population (2.17 percent). In Kerala 2.7 per cent are disabled and the proportion of disabled women are high when compared to male. Out of a total of 8, 66,598 disabled, 4, 45,511 are females and 4, 21,088 are males (The Hindu, 2006). India has enacted legislations for the welfare of disabled categories. The *Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995* guarantees equal opportunities for the disables and ensure equal participation in the development of country. The *National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disability Act, 1999* has given the opportunity of legal guardianship and possibility of independent living of the disabled people. The *Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992* discuss the rehabilitation of disabled categories by ensuring more manpower services for rehabilitative efforts. In addition to the legal framework certain policies and programmes where enacted for the disabled people. In addition to that a *National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2006* was framed and envisage to develop a situation with equal opportunities, protection of rights and ultimate participation of disabled persons. Now a days more number of institutions and rehabilitation centres are functioning for the development and rehabilitations of disabled categories.

Jessica etal (2019) conducted a study on exclusion of disabled people by NGOs have revealed four major areas. The lack of awareness system, belief systems, assumptions of expense and ensuring access and sccomodation. The study clearly states that inclusion cannot be an execption. The study conducted by Thomas and Nagar (2011) states that more number of people with intellectual disabilities were diagnosed at camps organised by NGOs. Prasant Varma

(2020), the general secretary of National Association for the Blind revealed that several NGOs for the protection and care of disabled people are facing with severe financial crisis. In the present scenario, Rajeev Palluruthy (2020) the secretary of All Kerala Wheelchair Rights Federation expressed his concern over the less disabled friendly environment during the period of COVID-19 and requested the authorities to provide disabled friendly Covid-19 care centers in the state.

### **Role of Non-Governmental Organizations : Implications and discussions**

The lack of necessary support service systems leads the disabled people overly dependent on family members. Support services are the channelising agent for proper care and welfare of disabled. The institutional cares offered by the government systems is gradually diminishing in these sectors and these services are outsourced to a capable authority. In this context, the role of Non-Governmental Organizations are very much important for the welfare of disabled persons. There are number of Non-Governmental Organizations with great track record for the service of disabled people. If they can collaborate with the government, the welfare services would become much more better than at present. The authors have explored the various innovative practices and programmes for main streaming the people with disabilities and coming paragraphs give an outline of the practices and programmes.

#### **1. Need Assessment**

The need for assistance and support for disabled persons may vary on different life stages and it is mostly based on health and environmental conditions. The accessibility of assistive devices with proper familial care and support are very much essential. In this context, the roles of NGOs are important to give proper assistance and support to the disabled person and their families. These formal supports are different in each stages of life according to the health and environment. The needs for each stage in life are classified under three categories such as childhood, adulthood and old age. Based on this classification the programmes and action of NGOs are framed.

## **2. Community Based Rehabilitation**

The Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) are getting significant importance in the life of disabled categories. It tries to provide proper aid and provisions not only for the disabled persons but also to their families also. The role of professional social worker is getting paramount important in regard by developing supportive groups who share similar experiences. They give training and orientation to the association of parents of disabled children to support teaches, train and handles their disabled children. There are Non-Governmental Organizations which runs community-based day-care centres for the disabled people with support of local self-government and supportive families. The NGO entitled as RUCODE from Tamil Nadu is giving best example for this type of initiatives. They are offering services to the disabled and cerebral palsy people. They have centres with 10 children, with a teacher and attendant for the support (Kishorkumar, 2009). This type of community-based rehabilitation would ensure greater autonomy for the people with disabilities.

## **3. Self-employment and Microfinance**

The availability of funding for starting small scale businesses would enable the disabled category to become secure. As we know that marketing skills and credit assessment programmes are very much important for running such small scale business. The International Study on Income Generation Strategies analysed 81 self-directed employment projects and highlighted four success factors such as self-directed identity, relevant knowledge, availability of resources and enabling social and policy environment. The availability of securing loan and very few assets won't allow them to think about a small scale business with the support of microfinance. There are NGOs working in the field of microfinance programmes and disability sector. An organization named Handicap International evaluated forty three different projects runs by various NGOs and found out that microfinance schemes were beneficial among the disabled people and that almost two thirds of them were sustainable (Perry, 2003).

## **4. Vocational Rehabilitation and Training**

Vocational rehabilitation services by NGOs help to develop the capabilities of disabled people. It empowers them to take part in the labour market. Alternative forms of training are imparted in the form of technical skills. The Persons with Disabilities' Self-Initiative to Development programme in Gujarat helps people with disabilities form self-help organizations

within the community (Shah, 2005). Community-Based Vocational Rehabilitation and Peer training are the recent initiatives by NGOs to provide alternative forms of training to the disabled people.

## **5. Assistive Technologies**

Assistive technology device is considered as an equipment or product which help to intensification, maintain, or increase the practical competences of a person with disability. The instruments such as crutches, wheel-chairs and tri-cycles are commonly considered are the assistive devices for mobility impaired people. The people with hearing impairment are using the assistive technologies like hearing aids and cochlear implants for the support. The people with visual impairment depend on magnifiers, talking books and softwares. The communication boards and speech synthesizers are useful for speech impaired people. The promotion of these assistive devices through NGOs significantly improved the status of life of disabled people in a comprehensive way. There are programmes for providing disability aids by governments with the support of NGOs. It is no doubt that these type of assistive technological devices accelerate independence and progress in the participation of disability people in the society. It is evident that these devices also helped to decrease disability and increased the support facilities through decreasing the care expenditures.

## **Conclusion**

Persons with disabilities require aid and care to attain a decent life in order to participate in the society on an equal basis with others. The status and figures reveals that the situation of disabled people is not much improving. The role of Non Governmental Organizations is the need for the hour to support and assistance for the welfare of disabled persons. The community assessment, community based rehabilitation, self-employment and microfinance, vocational rehabilitation and training, assistive devices with technologies etc are discussed in this paper. It is evident that various non-governmental organizations have effectively contributed for the care and protection of the disabled people.

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