

# HRD COMMUNIQUÉ

## newsletter

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*Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for All*



"There are admirable potentialities in every human being", Andre Gide

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## Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

How wonderful it would be if everyone leads a meaningful life!

We are delighted to bring you this issue of HRD Communique' with the message to create a society in which people with and without disabilities participate equally to realize the fruits of economic development.

There are some 600 million people with disabilities worldwide or 10% of the world population, with 400 million of them living in the Asia and Pacific region (ADB Poverty and Social Development Papers 2005). In order to ensure that disability is not the cause and consequence of poverty, we have to break the complex system of social restrictions imposed on people with impairments resulting in the denial of rights and equal opportunities. Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are poor because they are denied access and opportunities most basic to human development — education, income, and self-esteem.

Poverty among PWDs can be reduced if government, micro finance and vocational training institutions are willing to include them in their programmes. Development organizations can serve as a vehicle to mainstream PWDs in the economic sphere by developing programmes for capacity-building to take consultative and leadership roles in the community at large as well as in their own organizations. It is imperative that PWDs are enabled to serve as trainers in the development of leadership and management skills of members of Community Organizations.

We hope that with this issue we are successful in creating awareness for social independence of PWDs and we will continue to work studiously for their uplift. We also hope that our readers will add their voice to this important issue. Your feed back to improve the contents of our publication is always welcomed.

# Opportunities Without Prejudice

*An inclusive society must be the over all objective of government policies for Persons with Disabilities and all development programmes of non-government sector.*

Quota system is not enough to mobilize the human resource with disabilities in the country, which is ten percent of the whole population. Persons with Disabilities face a multitude of barriers that limit their access to education, employment, housing, transportation, health care, rehabilitation and recreation. They are among the poorest of the poor and most of them live in low income groups. Lack of information about the opportunities and services available for PWDs within the country and in rest of the world has forced them to be confined in their houses. On the other hand due to inadequate awareness in the society, persons with disabilities are not being accepted as useful human resources in the economic development.

The United Nations estimates that some 600 million people worldwide have a disability and that the vast majority of disabled people live in low and middle income countries. PWDs include very heterogeneous group of people, so it becomes difficult to give any definition which is acceptable to all. The proportion of disabled in Pakistan as per census 1998 is 2.49 percent of total population, which is quite diverse from the estimates of World Bank, UN and WHO. Classification of disabled

**There is dire need of more accurate data and research on causes, prevention and curative efforts to understand the social and economic realities and possibilities with regards to disability.**



M. Imran in Awareness Campaign for Inclusion of PWDs in the Society - 2005

population by different categories of disabilities shows that the proportion of people with seeing disabilities is highest among disabled followed by movement and hearing disabilities. The issue of disability is gaining more and more importance all over the world as well as in Pakistan due to the Disability Movement for a rights

based society initiated by organizations of PWDs themselves since almost two decades. The World Bank and other donor agencies have included this issue in their mandates. Governments have framed various policies for PWDs including jobs reservation, concession facilities in travelling, special training institutions, etc.

The Government of Pakistan has made efforts to support the rights of Persons with Disabilities. It has (i) ratified several international conventions; (ii) promulgated the National Policy in 2002; (iii) begun revising the ordinance on employment which would raise the employment quota of PWDs to two percent to ensure more job opportunities; and (iv) taken initiatives to develop 'inclusive education' pilots to mainstream children with mild to moderate disabilities to ensure achieving the Millennium Development Goal of "Education For All". An infrastructure for Special Education and Training was established in Pakistan in the 1980s which far exceeds that of most of the developing countries. However, despite these efforts, the sad fact is



Mainstream activities of Persons with Disabilities.

that most people with disabilities and their families remain completely un-served by government and even NGO resources. There is dire need of more accurate data and research on causes, prevention and curative efforts to understand the social and economic realities and possibilities with regards to disability. At the same time, it must be assured that policies, laws, programmes and coordination

**The major barrier to employment and other socio-economic benefits for Persons with Disabilities in our society continues to be attitudinal barrier.**

mechanisms are in place.

The available data, which makes rather conservative estimates, tells us that, one in eight households in Pakistan is inhabited by a person with disabilities. It is a

poverty issue: only 28 percent of PWDs are literate and only 14 percent are actually working (with 5 percent looking for work). Nearly 70 percent of PWDs are dependent on their families for complete financial support. These statistics aside, the stigma of disability remains the greatest impediment to changing the way towards

society, within families who see a disabled person as a loss of productive potential, a drain on family resources. So, while on the one hand, the strong cultural family network ensures their financial security, on the other, the stigma often results in their remaining invisible members of society.



Atif Sheikh, Zobaida Jalal (Minister for Social Welfare and Special Education) and Lozina Shoaib during National Consultation Workshop on Accessibility - April 2006

The major barrier to employment and other socio-economic benefits for PWDs in our society continues to be attitudinal barrier; stereotypical thinking and assumption about what people with disabilities can and can't do. The truth is that, the range of abilities of persons within any disabilities group is enormous. We need to get rid of our stereotypical images and view each "individual" as just that "an individual".

Access to and sharing of information resources can build the capacity of local and national disability organizations, promote advocacy by and for people with disability and improve the quality of life experienced by disabled people.

A developing society has to be sensitive to the needs of PWDs for their social inclusion. Cognitive adjustments can change the way disabled people function, the attitudes they encounter. Disability ordinance 1981 is an effective instrument to bring a paradigm shift but due to lack of implementation, it has not made much difference. On the other hand "The Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990" (ADA), within 10 years of legislation has made a substantial difference to the quality of life for the disabled in USA which proves that the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the decision taking and policy making process is the most effective means of escaping the vicious circle of marginalization, poverty and social exclusion.



John W. Wall, Country Director, The World Bank, inaugurating a Mobility Project in 2007.

empowerment of PWDs. Stigma remains in society at large, within communities, and even, in many cases of uneducated segments of