

## Social Inclusion for the Differently–Abled: Issues and Strategies

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***It is time to end the culture of dependency and low expectations, and move towards a society in which we invest in people with disabilities, empowering and supporting them to participate and be included***

**S**ocial inclusion, the converse of social exclusion, is affirmative action to change the circumstances and habits that lead to (or have led to) social exclusion. The World Bank defines social inclusion as the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society.

Globally, persons with disabilities have been recognized as one of the largest minority groups which have been vulnerable to neglect, deprivation, segregation and exclusion. In the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most countries have provided some form of assistance to Persons with Disabilities (PWD), ranging from charity and institutional care to treatment and rehabilitation on human rights approach through governmental and non-governmental effort. After India's independence, the Government of India has accepted its responsibility to this sizable marginalized group and has formulated various programmes for the welfare and rehabilitation of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities face a wide range of barriers such as attitudinal, physical, and social that affects social inclusion. The attitudinal barrier

such as negative attitude of society towards people with disabilities acts as a social stigma about disability. The society believes that disability in a person occurs due to past sin or karma (fate) and no one can change this situation as it is God's punishment. The cumulative effect of these barriers is to marginalise people with disabilities from the mainstream of society and the economy. They experience disadvantage in many aspects of daily life compared with non-disabled people. The adverse outcomes experienced by many people with disabilities reduces quality of life both for themselves and for their families. Many of them feel isolated, unwanted and society may feel that they are a burden to society. Their families – parents, children and siblings – can also face negative attitudes, poverty and social exclusion. Many feel that they spend far too much time fighting society when they should be receiving the support they need to help themselves.

Marginalization is at the core of exclusion from fulfilling and leading full social lives at individual, interpersonal and societal levels. Evidently, marginalization has multiple bases in the social structure. The problems of groups with multiple disadvantages due to disability are understood through cross-cutting of gender dimension with other social

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factors like caste, ethnicity, religion, location, region etc. Both, disability and gender are physical constraints that totally ignore the person. To be a disabled man is to fail to measure up to the general culture's definition of masculinity as strength, physical ability and autonomy. To be a disabled woman is to be considered unable to fulfill the role of homemaker, wife and mother, and unable to conform to the stereotype of beauty and femininity in terms of physical appearance. They are the most marginalized and the most abused – physically, mentally and socially and for centuries, have been subjected to deliberate neglect, verbal abuse, physical assault and sexual harassment.

During the primary-school development period, friendships are formed through common interests, school activities and sports. Many children with disabilities in general usually lack the social skills necessary for peer interaction. For these friendships to form, an obvious requirement is communication. It involves the learning of communication and relationship-building skills by the child through his interactions with the primary social circle (i.e. family) and moving outward to other social circles such as relatives and peer groups. Social patterns of behaviour are formed during the period of early childhood, so early social experiences have a large influence in shaping the kind of adults children will become. For children with hearing impairment and children with intellectual disabilities, they are unable to utilize effective communication methods with the people around them; the difficulty in acquiring new friendships typically leads to a decrease in self-esteem and thereby affects their social inclusion. The biggest problem and root cause of the increase in isolation and anxiety is communication difficulties fostered by the mainstreamed setting. On the other hand, visual and locomotor disabilities are easily definable in the society in terms of the limitations that they impose, and therefore, society is much more accepting of these limitations and has a very clear

attitude of stereotyping towards people with visual and locomotor disabilities. Thus, it is important to give an opportunity to civil society to interact with people with different disabilities and find a way to help them to create social inclusion.

The language used by the well-meaning force people with disabilities to accept that they themselves are responsible for their condition. They are denied opportunities to get education, employment, and establish meaningful relationships with others, they are labeled as unproductive and therefore, they are regarded as a burden.

Many people with disabilities are unable to make an effective contribution to their local community and economy – yet, with the right support, they could be working and

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actively taking part in nation building. Many of them, currently out of work, represent a significant pool of potential skills and abilities – if only that potential could be tapped. Instead of being empowered to work and earn, too many people with disabilities are left to depend on benefits and government and family support. Poor economic outcomes during their working lives prevent them from providing comfortably for old age, thus prolonging disadvantage into retirement.

Regarding physical barriers, it is difficult for many people with disabilities to find disability friendly

surrounding environments. For example, transport systems and accessible buildings in Mumbai. Commuters with disabilities are found to be highly vulnerable due to poor accessibility in infrastructure design of trains and railway stations. It is important to recognize that people with disabilities, like other non-disabled people, have rights to travel in the train safely and they have also rights to expect the railway board to provide the facilities keeping in mind the diversity in their needs.

Regarding government policy to address different needs of people with different disabilities, they do not take a group of people with different disabilities into account, consult or involve, while framing policy design and delivery. Too often, people with disabilities feel that they are fighting a system which is fragmented, complex and bureaucratic, and which does not put the needs of disabled people at the heart of improving their life chances and social inclusion. This political and legal process leads to isolation, marginalization of people with disabilities and results in social exclusion.

### Strategies

The demands for social inclusion are, in fact, a protest against the oppression that society has been exercising. It is important to put end to victimization and exploitation. Removal of above said various barriers is the key to empowering people with disabilities, and giving them the opportunity to exercise their responsibilities as citizens – at home, in the community and at workplace. It is time to end the culture of dependency and low expectations, and move towards a society in which we invest in people with disabilities, empowering and supporting them to participate and be included.

Tackling these barriers is not a matter for government alone but people with disabilities themselves, employers, health professionals, educators, local communities, and providers of goods and services, all

have a key role in improving the life chances and adequate social inclusion for people with disabilities.

It must be carefully planned, provided with adequate resources and implemented with vision:

1. Sensitization/Awareness programmes for different stakeholders about different types of disabilities, their needs, their capabilities.
2. In service training for different stakeholders including medical professionals, teachers, civil servants, lawyers, employers, employment officers, local community leaders, to increase the knowledge about disability, to develop skills while working with them and to change their attitudes towards disability and people with disabilities.
3. Need to focus on strength, perspectives and abilities of people with disabilities and encourage them to empower themselves.
4. Need to make compulsory, course on disability and pedagogy of teaching for children having different types of disabilities to B. Ed and M.Ed. teachers training curriculum
5. The people with disabilities must have access to opportunities to contribute to the society supported by both specialist and mainstream policy which will help them to be a part of social inclusion as society will believe in their capabilities.
6. People with disabilities' needs should be actively incorporated early on within all mainstream policy design and delivery, alongside other citizens.
7. People with disabilities' experience of government support and services needs to change. There is a need to develop adequate dialogue between them.
8. Need to adopt universal design for barrier free and inclusive environment.

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#### **450 Million Euro Loan for Lucknow Metro**

Lucknow Metro will get a loan assistance of 450 million Euros (Rs.3,502 cr) from European Investment Bank (EIB) for its Phase-1A project. An agreement in this regard was signed in Brussels on March 30,2016 . The loan amount will be released in two tranches of 200 million Euros and 250 million Euros. The 22.878 km long Lucknow Metro Phase-1A project was approved by the Government of India in December, 2015 at a cost of Rs.6,928 cr on 50 : 50 equity funding by the central and state governments.