

Sarathak Educational Trust report on Vocational skill building program in India for empowerment of people with disability

Background

In India, the population of persons with disability is around **26.8 million**, constituting 2.21% of India's total population (Census 2011). However, World Bank data proposes the number between 40 to 80 million. But despite the discrepancy between the numbers it is very clear that PwDs constitute a significant part of Indian Population.

Further, the statistics state that approximately **7.82 million** people between the age groups of 20 to 39 years have some or other forms of disability owing to complications at birth, environmental issues or medical conditions.

Further, according to a survey conducted by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment of Disabled People (NCPED), the percentage of people with disability in the multinational companies is as less as **0.05%** of the total work force. Although, it the mandate for the government organizations to have 3% of the total work force reserved for people with disability, the actual percentage which is occupied is only **0.54%**.

Therefore, in order to have persons with disability brought to same non-disabled, training becomes the most important aspect of the Skill Building Program. The candidates well trained in specific trades will be able to work and perform well and thus, add to the overall productivity of the organization and the nation. It will improve their quality of life overall.

Sarathak Educational Trust- Journey of training

During 2004 to 2008, Dr. Aggarwal left no stone unturned to explore various avenues to live an independent life. And, this self-struggle inspired research and exploration led him to the current status and issues persons with disabilities face. On the one hand, he acquired what all support system, in terms of policies, practices, and technological betterments are available for inclusion and mainstreaming of persons with disability.

And, on the other he got aware of mass ignorance and inaccessibility of all such developments to persons with disability. And, this realization paved way for setting up an organization that may actively work for removing barriers for persons with disability in different walks of life, named as Sarathak, i.e, doing something meaningful or significant.

And, right in accordance to its name, Sarathak is continuously engaged in introducing positive changes and adding significance to its beneficiary group across various age groups and activity areas through its free of cost services, creating barrier free service to all.

It is also engaged in creating more change makers through continuous advocacy activities, and associating various stakeholders together to contribute to the sector.

Today Inclusion, Empowerment, and Mainstreaming of Persons with disability is the guiding principle of Sarothak Educational Trust. The great journey of Sarothak began with a batch of 8 blind students in Delhi. The batch was trained in Medical Transcription, and employment prospects were also explored & provided to them.

Thereafter, team Sarothak started organizing job fairs for PwDs all across India, and facilitating employment for PwDs through sensitization and involvement of corporate groups, with the intent to ensure employment prospects to larger group of PwDs.

But soon it was realized, that the maximum of beneficiary group is not meeting the corporate requirements and thus failing on sustainable employment prospects. As a solution to it, Sarothak entered into Vocational Skill Building for Persons with Disability with a centre in Delhi. The first centre was started with the support of Team Computers and Nokia Siemens. Soon, Tech Mahindra Foundation came into picture and started supporting Delhi centre and other centres in Chandigarh, and Gurgaon. Years later with the support of other funding partners, Sarothak set up 20 centers all across India.

Sarothak Vocational Skill Building program- Aims and Objectives

Sarothak Skill Building Center aims at the development of skill and also providing employment opportunity to every candidate who completes the training successfully. A properly trained and groomed candidate is more probable to grab employment opportunity and that too in sustainable manner.

The project will focus on aspects – **Employability Enhancement** (Skill Development) and **Sustainable Employment** (Employment Generation) of persons with disabilities.

Hence, aims to create the demand of the skilled workforce of persons with disability in various industries by way of carrying job mapping drives and making the candidates competent and skilled to perform the job.

The criteria to enroll in Sarothak Vocational Skill Building program is as follows:

- Candidate must be of age group **18-35 years**
- Candidate must be minimum **10th qualified** with **disability certificate** approved by government of India.

Sarothak Vocational Skill Building program

Sarothak training program is divided in 2 models:

- Residential Model (90 days training with 4.5 training hours per day)
- Non- Residential Model (60 days training with 8 training hours per day)

The training program is divided into 4 parts-

Activities	Period
Basic Skill Building (Basic English, Basic Computers & Life Skills)	45 days
Sector Specific Training (IT, Retail, Hospitality)	30 days
Pre - Employment Training	7 days
On the Job Training & Placement	7 days

In case of non-residential model, the training days are reduced to 60 days and training hours are increased by 3.5 hour per day.

Every year minimum 250 people with disability are trained in each center in India. Presently, Sarthak is having 20 skill building centers at 11 states of India namely West Bengal, Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab, Delhi NCR, Rajasthan, Madya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu.

Technical and Self Employment trainings in Sarthak

- Tailoring and stitching (Ambala, Haryana)
- Web development (Pune & Mumbai, Maharashtra and Hyderabad, Telangana)
- Carpet Making (Budaun, UP)

Measurable Outcomes (2008-2020)



Additional Milestones

- Provided vocational skill building training to 16000 PwDs in the trades of IT, Retail and Hospitality across India

- 20 Centers across India namely Delhi, Chandigarh, Kolkata, Ludhiana, Ambala, Gurugram, Ghaziabad, Pune, Mumbai, Thane, Virar, Chennai, Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Bhopal, Lucknow, Jaipur.

Case studies

Neetu: Healing hands

She remembers them distinctly, the colour of sky on a clear day, the fiery red hibiscus flowers in a tin container at home or the green frock her mother had bought on her eight birthday.

At 35, Neetu still asks her mother to choose her clothes. Not only because she loves her but also because her mother can see the colours and she can't.

"Of course I tell her what styles I want. For example on a relaxed day, I could wear a salwar kameez but when I have things to carry in my backpack or I have a hospital's appointment to attend to, I prefer jeans," she says with a smile. A pink lipstick has been put carefully and lovely orange nail paint, sits pretty on her dainty fingernails.

"I love my job. The fact that so many people ask for me, that they wait for their turn to see me feels great. But what I love most is to think that they get rid of their pains and relax", she confesses.

Neetu works as a female therapist at PayU office in Gurgaon, five days a week. The women employees line up to get a quick neck and shoulder massage. On Saturdays she works from 9 to 5 at C K Birla hospital as a medical tactile examiner. I got trained in 'Tactile Breast Examination' (TBE) technique, she says with confidence. Pioneered by Dr Frank Hoffmann, the internationally accepted Discovering Hands concept uses the exceptional sensory skills of visually impaired women for manual breast health screening. This helps with early detection of cancer, she smiles.

But she didn't smile as often till about a decade back, shares Neetu. As a school girl in Hapur in Uttar Pradesh, she was always happy to go to school. But that was only till class five, she shares. Because post that, she began losing her eyesight gradually, because of Optic Atrophy. The doctor advised her not to strain her eyes but Neetu couldn't think of not studying. She always looked for brighter areas in class where she could see better, avoided telling her parents how



she was slowly not being able to see their faces clearly. “It was a sinking feeling to think I was slowly losing everything that was comforting and familiar”, she says. Post her class 10th exams, Neetu knew she couldn’t study any longer as she had lost her eyesight completely by then. For a young girl full of dreams and hopes, it was a cruel blow. “My world was suddenly plunged in darkness. It was a very difficult phase. What made it worse was the fact that I was at home, always” she recalls.

After years of sitting at home trying to keep negativity out, when she finally heard of training centre for blind women like her in Delhi’s Hauz Khas, she was determined to join it. From her small protected world, it was a big change but Neetu was beginning to dream again. She also completed her class 12th.

Soon after, she heard of Sarthak Educational Trust which helped her with a job placement at PayU, where she has now been working for three years.

“When I spent endless days at my village, hoping this misery would end, I couldn’t even imagine life could be this meaningful. It feels great to be independent. I live in a paying guest accommodation in Guragon and travel to work on my own. I am no different from any other working woman now”, she says with confidence.

Future Plan

- Setting up more skill building centers in urban and rural parts of India.
- Exploring self-employment courses in the trades of Beauty and wellness, electronic repair etc.
- Adoption of global best practices.
