



8th National Conference on Disability

Theme : Digital Divyang - Enabled & Empowered

17-18th December 2021

#DigitalDivyang

2- day brainstorming panel discussions with Industry Leaders, Policy Makers, Government Officials, Innovators, Researchers and Medical Practitioners

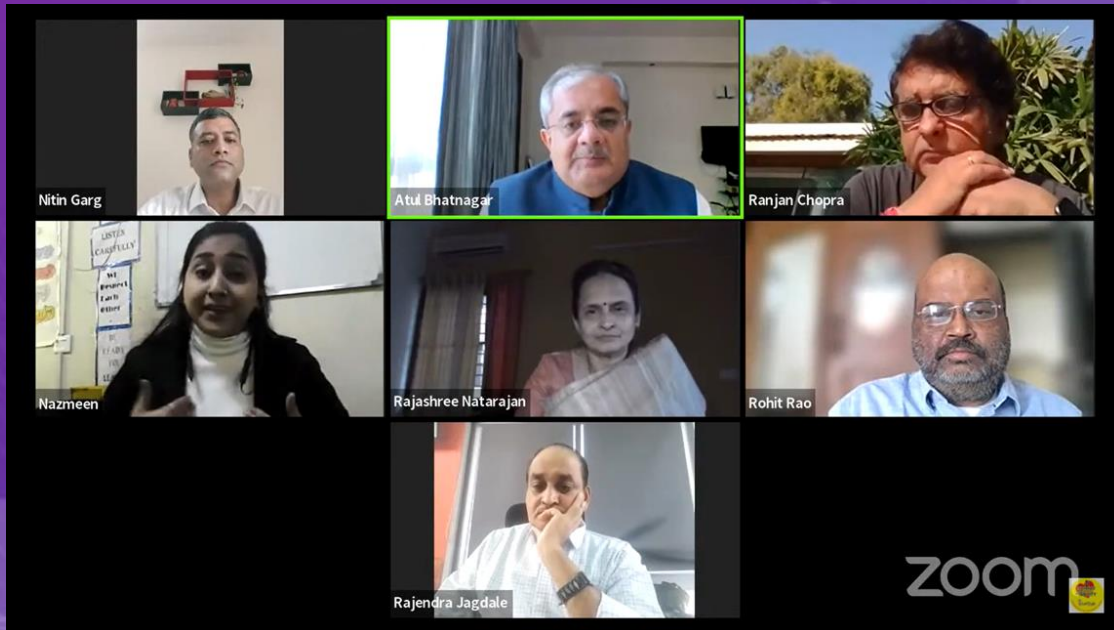
Digital & Outreach Partner



For further queries drop an email to- ceooffice.sarthak@gmail.com

Government & CSR Efforts Towards Sustainable Development

Day 1, Panel 1- 17th December 2021



- Nitin Garg, Chief Manager-Strategic Planning, Union Bank of India
- Atul Bhatnagar, Former COO, NSDC
- Ranjan Chopra, Managing Director, Team Computers
- Rajashree Natarajan, CEO, Cognizant Foundation
- Diksha Singh, Group Head HR & CSR, Powerlinks Transmission Ltd
- Sharmeen Kutky, Vice President- Corporate Citizenship, Credit Suisse
- Rohit Rao, Joint President & Group Chief CSR Officer, Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited
- Ritesh Sinha, Head Projects CSR, HDFC Bank Ltd
- Rajendra Jagdale, Director General & CEO, Science and Technology Park, Supported by DST, Govt. of India

Key Points

This Panel saw the coming together of Corporate as well as Government Actors in deliberating upon the manner in which the SDGs can be looked at from their industry lenses vis a vis disability.

- Technology is an enabler when used to eliminate barriers, rapid digitization of the world needs to be made accessible for all and be used to make the world accessible.
- Technology needs to be made affordable and available so it can be used for skill building of divyangjans. It also needs to be operationalized for early intervention, skill training etc.
- Meaningfulness of the word 'divyang'- signifies a shift where we are treated them with empathy and respect.
- Need to ensure access to education for PwDs- right from elementary level to higher education.

Key Points

- Urgent need to provide financial and digital literacy to PwDs- especially women and first generation learners.
- Need to go a mile deep- not a mile wide. Once systems have been created then we can go a mile wide as well.
- Need to create a 360 degree development cycle that is digitized.
- Why can't a divyangjan be a CEO or an entrepreneur?- need to provide them with appropriate skills and mentorship.
- Project SEED (Science Equity and Empowerment Development)- Program by the Department of Science and Technology that is happy to provide PwDs with fellowship for their technological entrepreneurship. This includes infrastructural & financial support, as well as networking and mentorship.

Corporate Panel- Unlocking Sustainable Employment Opportunities for Disability Sector

Day 1, Panel 2- 17th December 2021



- Sunil Pahilajani, Board Member, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Ajay Kanchan, CEO & Chief Editor, Media Today
- Priyanka Mohanty, Vice President, Startek
- Suchismita Mukherjee, Senior Manager-Talent Acquisition | Diversity & Inclusion, DHL Supply Chain
- Kanika Pal, South Asia Head - Community Investments & Sustainability Programs, Hindustan Unilever
- Vinath Hegde, Senior General Manager, Eureka Forbes
- Tilak Das, Head- Corporate HR- Reliance Trends, Reliance Retail
- Rakesh Prasad, Director HR, Indigo

Key Points

This Panel saw experienced D&I and HR personnel from various industries talk about how they have created space for the sustainable employment of PwDs, and how that has positively impacted businesses.

- Release of Sustainable Employment Report
- Four initial challenges faced by corporates when hiring PwDs
 1. Availability of Employable Population
 2. Accessibility of the Workplace
 3. Attrition, Quality of Work and Social Stigma around Disability
 4. Proving a strong ROI
- Once initial challenges are dealt with- there is a strong corporate advantage- from both the employer and client perspective.
- One needs to invest in job mapping and demarcate roles, reasonable accommodations, and sensitize staff at all levels.

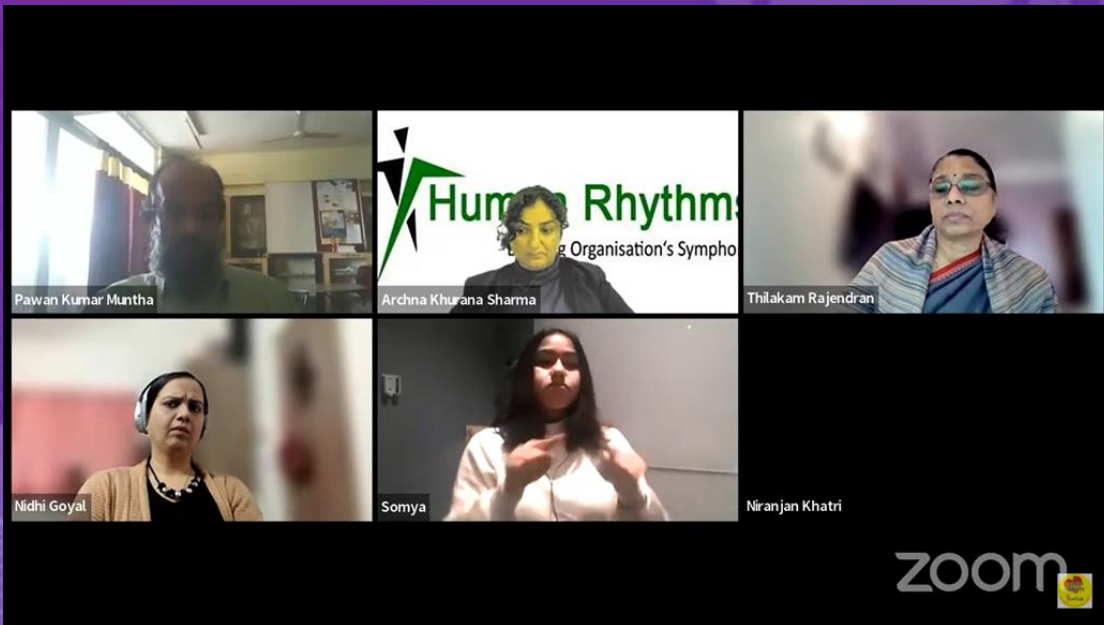
Key Points

- What worked for most corporates was to begin small and then ramp up the process to include more and more Employees with Disability
- Diversity and Inclusion fosters Creativity.
- Diversity and Accessibility also creates Customer Delight- important to building a loyal and growing client base.
- How Sarthak's aid has helped Corporates create access to job mapping as well as PwD candidates with appropriate skills.
- Need to also provide PwD employees with a feeling of belonging. This can be done through ensuring accessibility, internal publications of success stories, internal events, as well as workshops.

Be a Job Creator, Become an Entrepreneur!

Day 1, Panel 3- 17th December 2021

- Archna Khurana, Founder, Human Rhythms
- NV Chandramouli, Board Member, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Vineet Saraiwala, Founder & CEO, Atypical Advantage
- Pawan Kumar Muntha, CEO, Swadhikaar
- Thilakam Rajendran, Director, Alliance to Promote Abilities & Rehabilitation
- TD Dhariyal, Former State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, NCT of Delhi
- Nidhi Goyal, CEO, Rising Flame
- Rahul Gupta, Senior Vice President, Axis Bank
- Niranjana Khatri, Founder, ISambhav



Key Points

With a boom in Indian entrepreneurship, we need to start creating systems for PwDs to innovate and be entrepreneurs themselves. This panel deliberated on key points regarding the same.

- India has a large population- need to use it to our advantage and create entrepreneurs.
- With respect to PwDs, the earlier conversation was limited to job mapping- now there has been a conceptual shift where we are also looking at their entrepreneurial capabilities- need to now create the appropriate ecosystem for the same.
- As of now PwDs are invisible contributors- need to increase visibility.
- PwD entrepreneurs are also job creators for other PwDs.
- PwDs have talents that need to be nurtured. For instance, Vineet Saraiwala left his employment to start own venture.
- Systems are filled with technology and one needs to be constantly agile and remain in touch as it can be operationalized.
- When understanding the challenges of PwD entrepreneurs, one also needs to look at intersectionality. Like issues of Women or Dalits with Disability.

Key Points

- Policy Makers need to ensure that there is a level playing field for PwDs as well- need to provide appropriate concessions and facilities
- Need to ensure that PwDs become entrepreneurs by choice and not due to lack of options
- A number of measures need to be taken in order to create PwD entrepreneurs
 1. Provide incentives to companies outsourcing operations to PwDs.
 2. Reservations for PwDs when applying for loans.
 3. All legislative provisions need to be backed by clear cut policies.
- Need to make provisions to ensure that PwDs are empowered through the course of their entire job cycle. The essence of this is to create financial independence for PwDs in the entrepreneurial field.

Inaugural Panel- Digital Divyang, Enabled and Empowered

Day 1, Panel 4- 17th December 2021



- Sandeep Bhargava, CEO, Leap Edtech
- Padma Bhushan Dr. MB Athreya, Mentor-Sarthak Educational Trust
- Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, Niti Aayog
- Prakash Sharma, CFO, NSDC
- Raj Kumar Makkad, Disability Commissioner - Haryana
- Krishan Kalra, President, NAAI
- Dr. Jitender Aggarwal, Founder & CEO, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Lov Verma, Former Secretary, DePwD

Key Points

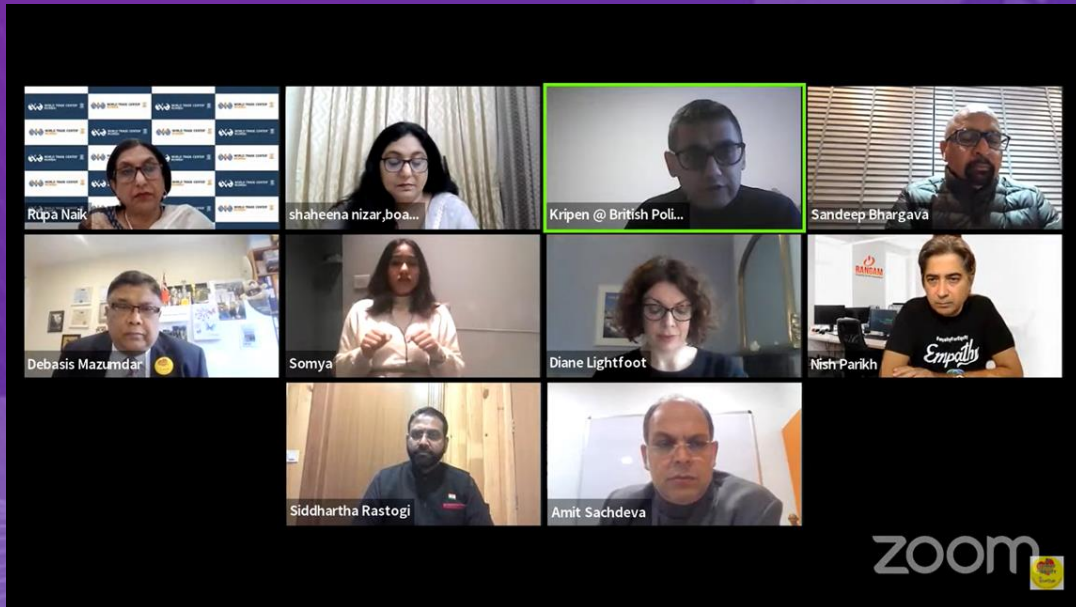
- Release of Sarthak Annual Report, NAAI Annual Report, RozgaarSarathi.
- It is very important for the Disability Sector to keep up with the times and make effective use of technology- how Sarthak has been able to put it to action
- Sarthak can play the role of an active on ground Civil Society Organization by helping provide feedback on governmental schemes and policies
- Department for Persons with Disability needs to become more active and more funds need to be allocated.
- Need to make use of Technology, artificial intelligence and rapid digitization while also maintaining human emotions and empathy

Key Points

- Creation of Digital Portals for PwDs using which they can get UIDs and Assistive Device Support from the government.
- Need to create digital literacy among PwDs.
- This can be done by asking schoolchildren to provide PwDs with digital literacy as part of their summer project- will also help create sensitivity among children.
- Need to create a government helpline number that is also easy for PwDs to remember.

International Panel- Global Overview on Disability Inclusion

Day 1, Panel 5- 17th December 2021



- Shaheena Nizar, Board Member, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Siddhartha Rastogi, MD & COO, Ambit Management
- Rupa Naik, Senior Director, World Trade Center Mumbai
- Kripen Dhrona, Director of Operations, British Polio Fellowship
- Diane Lightfoot, CEO, Business Disability Forum
- Debasis Mazumdar, CEO, Seed Maritime UK Ltd
- Amit Sachdeva, Founder, Mahatma Awards
- Nish Parikh, CEO, Rangam
- Revathy Rugmini, South Asia regional representative, Leonard Cheshire
- Sandeep Bhargava, CEO, Leap EdTech

Key Points

In order to truly create change at a larger level, it is important for us to connect, brainstorm, and move forward in global synergy. The International Panel discussed on global points of action and possibilities in the sphere of disability inclusion

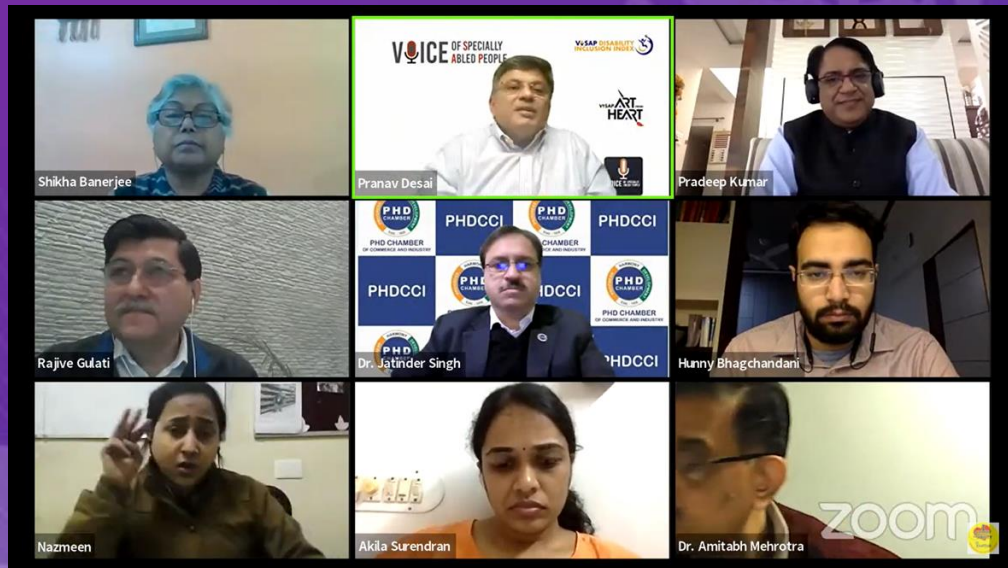
- Need a twin track approach for Disability Inclusion- Government Policy and Civil Society Approach.
- Over the course of the pandemic, businesses have developed the capacity to work remotely and the Senior leadership has been involved in this.
- This has created newer opportunities for disability inclusion.
- Johnson & Johnson released a strategy wherein they have been able to rehash the entire system in a way that includes PwDs- proves that there is a need to create the right roles, jobs, and responsibilities.
- It is important to create education and work on perspective.
- While treatment and training of PwDs is key to inclusion, providing livelihood is key to creating a sense of independence and empowerment- like Sarthak has been doing.

Key Points

- How communities with Disability- like the community impacted by polio have always lived in relative isolation. Over time, they have successfully educated themselves and come forward but the pandemic also posed a unique set of challenges.
- Parents of PwDs need to be mobilized to help give their children the tools they need to lead a fulfilling life.
- We need to not just empathize but also empower PwDs.
- Need to create equity, not equality.
- India needs to adopt global best practices like mandates on PwD employment and penalties if quota is not met.

Role of Accessibility for an Inclusive Ecosystem

Day 2, Panel 1- 17th December 2021



- Shikha Banerjee, Board Member- Sarthak Educational Trust
- Pradeep Kumar, FOSI, FIETE Scientist-DRDO, Ministry of Defense
- Rajiv Gulati, Former Head, United Nations Technology Innovation Labs
- Pranav Desai, Founder, Voice of SAP
- Akila Surendran, Senior Engineer in Centre for Assistive Technology & Innovation, NISH
- Hunny Bhagchandani, Founder, Torchit Electronics Pvt. Ltd.
- Dr. Jatinder Singh, Assistant Secretary General, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Dr. Amitabh Mehrotra, Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC India

Key Points

Creating an accessible ecosystem requires a number of resources- appropriate technology, public policy, and civil society awareness. This panel pondered upon action points for the same

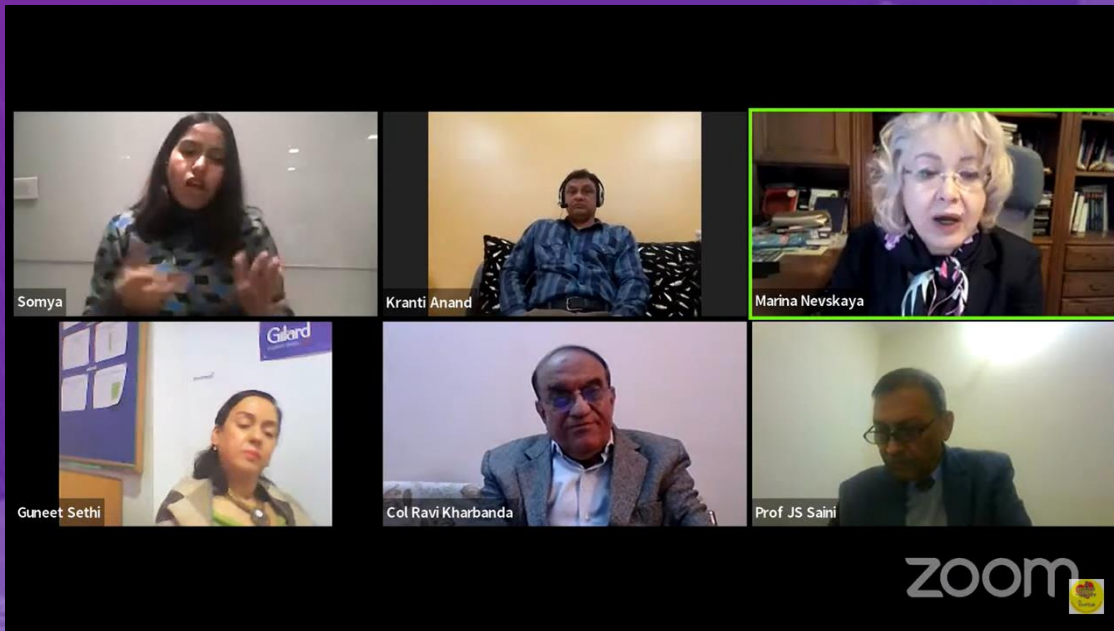
- The Accessible India Campaign is a very well designed policy but it needs to be made more actionable as there remains a gap at the grassroots level.
- We need to address and sensitize the leadership and leadership teams.
- All Stakeholders in the system need to work together in order to ensure accessibility.
- Issues of inclusion need to be prioritized and dealt with at the level of action.
- Technology like mobile applications like VOSAP, Assistive devices like Sarathi by Torchit Electronics need to all be put to use.
- Harnessing technology and proactivness on our part is key to creating accessibility.

Key Points

- Public Awareness also plays an important role. It is the role of the government to create awareness and ensure that compliance of their policies is being mandated.
- Even PwDs are often unaware of the various policies and rights-organizations like Sarthak need to play their part and bring up these issues at various forums.
- Technology needs to be harnessed by the civil society to fulfill all these functions.

Abilympics Moscow 2022- Enabler for PwD Entrepreneurs

Day 2, Panel 2- 17th December 2021



- Guneet Sethi, Director HRD & CSR, Gilard
- Prof JS Saini, Board Member, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Bhushan Punani, Executive Secretary, BPA
- Dr. Sushma Goel, Associate Professor, Lady Irwin
- Dr Prateek Jain, Expert- Computer Program, SGT University
- Kranti Anand, Expert- Poster Designing, SGT University
- Col Ravi Kharbanda, Hon. Member, WorldSkills International
- Dr. Jitendra Jamdar, Chairman, Red Swastik Society
- Dina Makeeva, Russian representative, International Abilympics Federation Executive Committee
- Marina Nevskaya, Chairwoman of the Council for the Translator Contest Category, National Abilympics championship in Russia
- Igor Gribanov, Head of National centre, Russian Federation

Key Points

With the preparations for International Abilympics in 2022 gaining momentum, this panel saw specialists on the field reflecting on the importance of Abilympics, skill development, and entrepreneurship and how this can be upscaled. We were also joined by field specialists in Russia

- Need to create Governmental Support for the Abilympic Movement.
- PwDs need to exploit the various government schemes, CSR initiatives, institutional support, and Advocacy programs available to them.
- Corporates need to focus on inclusivity in the workplace and understand the kind of mental and financial gains this has in store for them.
- PwDs need to be given the opportunity to convert their special abilities into skill.
- Need to invest on special educators so they can also be mobilized to create solutions and space to unlock potential.
- Need to create mechanisms and awareness so PwDs can also take their skills and abilities to the World Skills Event.
- Russia has been able to develop the abilympics movement due to strong governmental support and go from 23 skill categories to 150 across their geographically diverse nation.
- They have also been able to get corporate experts to train their abilympic contestants.

India Disability Empowerment Alliance: Platform to empower likeminded NGOs

Day 2, Panel 3- 17th December 2021



- Gayathri Mohan, Head CSR, Sopra Steria
- Suresh Gupta, Former DDG, Department of Telecommunication
- Mahantesh G Kivadasannavar, Founder Managing Trustee, Samarthanam Trust
- Arman Ali, Executive Director, NCPEDP
- Shashaank Awasthi, V-shesh
- Neelam Jolly, Founder & Chairperson, Vishwas
- Meera Chetan Bhatia, Founder & CEO, SAI SWAYAM SOCIETY
- Srilakshmi Bellamkonda, Associate Director, Operations, Dr Reddy's Foundation
- Shanti Raghvan, CEO, Enable India
- Dr Dinesh Jain, Trustee, Sarthak Educational Trust

Key Points

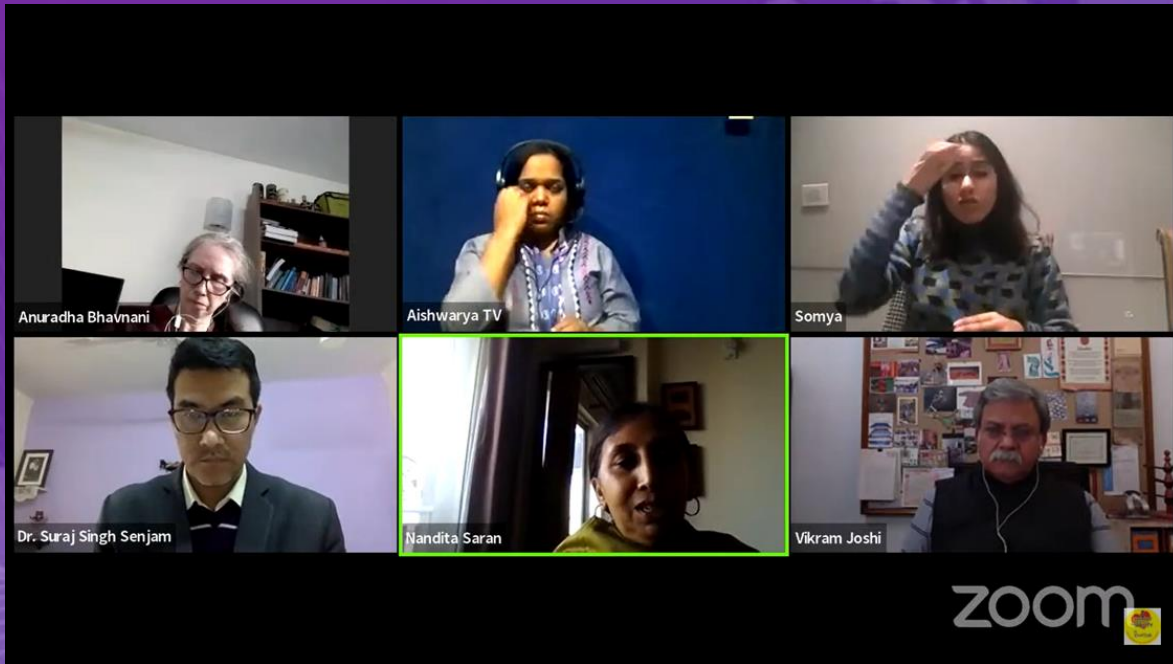
- How Sarthak creates outreach and networks using programs like Campus Connect and IDEA.
- So far, we have created an alliance of about 250 NGOs, mostly located in smaller towns and cities.
- Need to start a discourse to bring the disability sector together- it has been working in silos.
- Need to understand that as nonprofits, we are limited in our capacity and join hands with other organizations as well as the government.
- As organizations- we need vertical as well as horizontal integration.
- Disability's linkages with poverty- makes it difficult to create mechanisms for early intervention.
- Need to create an inclusive model of education- also helps sensitize abled bodied students

Key Points

- Need to work right from Primary Skilling to Higher Education- only 0.04% of PwDs are able to access higher education.
- Having a collective approach helps organizations optimize resources and maximize reach.
- Also creates hope to create a network that encompasses each and every PwD in some way or the other.
- Number of organizations have begun work on certain areas but have expanded over time to other verticals
- Need for Sangathan- Unity, best practices need to be appreciated so larger population can be outreached to.

Early Intervention & Inclusive Education Panel: Covering More Disabilities under RPwD Act

Day 2, Panel 4- 17th December 2021



- Vikram Joshi, CEO, Rangotri
- Anuradha Bhavnani, Board Member, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Nandini Rawal, Executive Director, Blind People's Association
- Dr. Suraj Singh Senjam, Additional Professor of Community Ophthalmology, Dr. R. P. Centre for Ophthalmic Sciences, AIIMS
- Aishwarya TV, Consultant, LV Prasad Eye Institute
- Sonam Dubey, Vice President, Global Delivery Centre, Clarivate
- Nandita Saran, Head of Centre for Multiple Disabilities, NAB Delhi

Key Points

Intervening early and providing rehabilitation is key to childhood disabilities. However, there are a number of challenges and misconceptions. This panel looked at those challenges and misconceptions and deliberated on ways in which this can be dealt with and worked upon fruitfully.

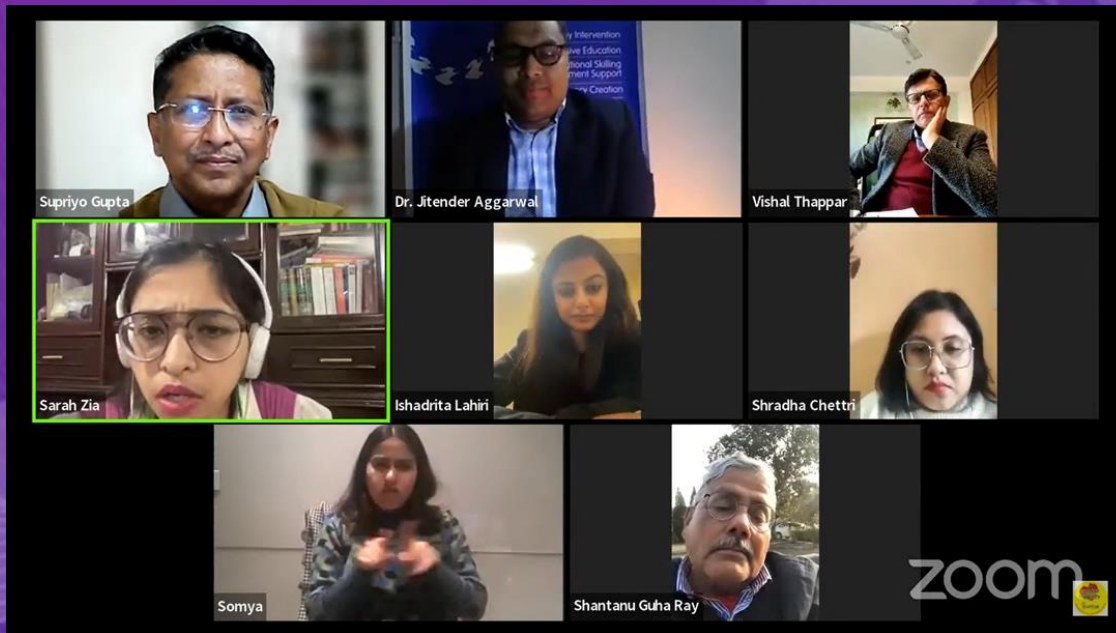
- Two main barriers to Early Intervention prior to COVID-19
 1. Acceptance by Parents
 2. Early identification and diagnosis of disability
- COVID-19 induced Social Distancing is the diametrical opposite of Early Intervention which relies heavily on physical proximity and touch.
- Early intervention services are mostly limited to metro cities and certain privileged pockets. Need to create better rural outreach.
- People are ready to spend out large amounts of money on finding cures but rather, one needs to concentrate on providing parents of children with disability with counselling in order to build acceptance.

Key Points

- Schools and Colleges need to be equipped with appropriate knowledge to build inclusive systems.
- The government has worked on the provision of assistive devices- Civil Society too needs to play its part.
- Disabilities are diverse and one needs high level collaboration to produce results.
- Need to work on evidence and research based action.

Media Panel: Leveraging Prime Time Stories to Trending Charts- Insights to create an Inclusive India

Day 2, Panel 5- 17th December 2021



- Supriyo Gupta, CEO, Torque Communications
- Shantanu Guha Ray, Indian Editor, Central European News
- Ishadrita Lahiri, Author, The Print
- Sarah Zia, Journalist, HT Education
- Shradha Chettri, Journalist, Times of India
- Vishal Thapar, Group Editorial Head Defence & Security, Business World

Key Points

Disability as an issue requiring coverage is often ignored by media. However, this needs to change. In this panel Sarthak invited various experts from digital, print, as well as television media to reflect on actionable points that can help create more representation.

- Stories and issues of disability aren't prioritized by media as it doesn't capture audience and there is an issue of lack of sensitivity.
- The world has certain realities of ableism that percolates to media.
- Issue of lack of representation in media which can be dealt with by creating mandates like in the corporate sector.
- Change need to flow in from the top- from editor to reporter.
- Reporters land up on the field with zero sensitivity, need to sensitize them.
- Stories on disability are often the first to get dropped as the understanding is that they deal with a miniscule population.
- The manner in which stories are treated needs to be dealt with-Paralympics was widely covered as it was treated with a lens of national pride and achievement.

Key Points

- The reporter needs to keep their eyes open and dig for stories- look at people and not issues, cultivate empathy and humanity.
- When stories on disability focus on people rather than issues- they get higher chances of getting featured.
- Digital and Social Media are least affected by metrics on advertisements- they can be used in order to set a benchmark and hopefully print and television will follow.
- Social Media can also be a medium to popularize issues of disability- especially for younger Gen Z and Millennial audiences on twitter and Instagram

Valedictory Session

Day 2, Panel 6- 17th December 2021



- Hon'ble Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister of Roadways and Transport
- Prof (Dr.) MP Poonia, Vice Chairman, AICTE
- Padma Bhushan Dr MB Athreya, Mentor, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Dr. Jitender Aggarwal, Founder CEO, Sarthak Educational Trust
- Lov Verma, Secretary, DEPWD Government of India



Key Points

- Thankful to have Hon'ble Union Minister of Roadways and Transport as the chief guest and Prof (Dr.) MP Poonia, Vice Chairman of AICTE as the guest of honour.
- The Disability movement in India needs to become a Jan Andolan- a People's Movement.
- Schemes and Policies like RPwD Act, Accessible India Campaign all need to be revived.
- Can create an app based system that PwDs can use to find volunteers who can help them with issues they face in everyday lives.
- The life cycle approach of Sarthak- not about charity but rather also about the skills and abilities of divyangs and how they can be put to use.

Key Points

- Earlier Corporates didn't want to employ divyangs but now they have realized the benefits and the market demand has grown.
- Sarthak's CapSarathi App now has 13,000 users.
- Suggestion to Mr. Gadkari to employ PwDs at toll plazas.
- AICTE is also committed to the cause of inclusive education and is party to the plan under NEP to create barrier free education material.
- Sarthak's Global Disability Resource Centre appreciated as a great initiative.
- Concept of Antyodaya- obligation of society to reach till every last marginalized person, guide them and help them.