

Sarathak Educational Trust report on sustainable employment initiative for empowering people with disability

Background

In India, the **disability sector** in general estimates that **4-5% of the population** is disabled. **Niti Aayog** (*The Planning Commission*) recognizes this figure as **5%**. A report by the **World Bank** states that while estimates vary, there is growing evidence that persons with disability are around 40-80 million, which constitute between **4-8%** of India's population. As per the **Census of 2011** India has **26.8 million PwDs**, which constitute **2.21%** of India's total population. Irrespective of the varying estimates, because of the sheer size of the Indian population, even the lowest estimate of disability makes it equal to the population of several European countries put together. Viewed in this perspective, persons with disability represent the single largest combined minority group in India.

Analysis the employment status of people with disability, the finding of the World Bank Report '*People with Disabilities in India: From Commitments to Outcomes*' released in 2007, states that the employment rate of disabled people has actually fallen from **42.7% in 1991** down to **37.6 % in 2002**.

As per census 2011, nearly one third of the total disabled persons are working.

- At all India level, 36% of the total disabled persons are workers. Among the male disabled persons, 47% are working and among female disabled, only 23% are working.
- In rural India, 25% of the female disabled are working, while in urban India, the corresponding figure is 16%.

With the passing of **Rights of PwD Act of 2016** by Government of India, 13 new disabilities were added to the initial list of 8 disabilities which were recognized officially. This clearly indicates that number of PwDs would now have increased manifold, with the addition of new disabilities. This has further led to increase in number of unemployed PwDs.

Sarathak sustainable employment program

Sarathak Educational Trust a civil society organization engaged in inclusion and mainstreaming of persons with disability since 2008, with the support of its various stakeholder groups namely Government, Corporate, Civil Societies, Communities, Volunteers, and Donors, has introduced positive changes in the lives of many "Divyangs".

The program aims to ensure equitable inclusive employment for youth with disabilities:

- Acceptance of requirement and possibility of inclusion of Youth with Disability in different job roles specially in the huge potential in Corporate sector.
- Sensitization and creating awareness of corporate houses on the potential skill-sets of PwD work-force.
- Creating sustainable job opportunities for PwDs to enhance their socio-economic independence and inclusion in the society.

Sarathak Employment Model

Sarthak follows five-fold strategy to ensure placement of a person with disability

1. **Job Mapping-** It is the process to explore suitable job roles for persons with disability across sectors along with reasonable accommodation to ensure effectively meet the job requirements and expected level of performance.
2. **Candidate Mapping-** It is a process of aligning right candidate to the right profile. i.e matching skill set as per requirement.
3. **Recruitment-** Ensuring accessible ecosystem while conducting interviews during one to one placement drive or job fairs. (*Sign language interpreters, accessible technology in case of written test etc*)
4. **Disability Sensitisation Workshop-** It aims at creating awareness and sensitized approach among different levels of workforce in an organization to work towards creating an eco-sphere to have an inclusive workplace by recognizing 'ability in disability'.
5. **Post Placement Follow up-** It is a process of handholding employer as well as candidates for at least 6 months

Additional Services

1. **Accessibility Support (Basic/ Advanced)-** Accessibility support refers to Physical accessibility and involves Accessibility Audit of work-sites and sharing comprehensive report of required alterations to achieve Basic or Advanced level of accessibility, as per organization discretion.
2. **Secondary Training of PwD Workforce (For Career Advancement)-** Secondary training of PwD workforce refers to continuous workplace training and lifelong learning enabling workers and enterprises to adjust to an increasingly rapid pace of change. It also includes anticipating and building competencies for future needs to equip PwD workforce with required skill set for career development and growth.
3. **Rehabilitation of Disabled Workforce-** Every worker has a probability to acquire a disability or illness that hinders their ability to work. Thus, return to work or rehabilitation of disabled workforce is of immense significance as it assists employees to work while still recuperating and earning livelihood as well as contributing to organization's performance.

Sarthak Employment Journey so far

Sarthak's initiatives have successfully touched the lives of more than 4,00,000 Persons with Disabilities till date and provided employment opportunity to 18000+ PwD candidates in various sectors including **ITES/BPO, Hospitality, Retail Sector, Health Care, Manufacturing, Banking, E-Commerce** and many other sectors through the pan-India presence. Sarthak successfully operates its 20 Skill Building centres in various states namely Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

The journey of Sarthak which started in 2008, with the unfortunate loss of vision of Dr. Jitender Aggarwal, Founder CEO, due to sudden onset of macular degeneration of retina a non-treatable eye problem was full of challenges. There were hardly any job opportunities available in any sector whether it was Government, private or any other.

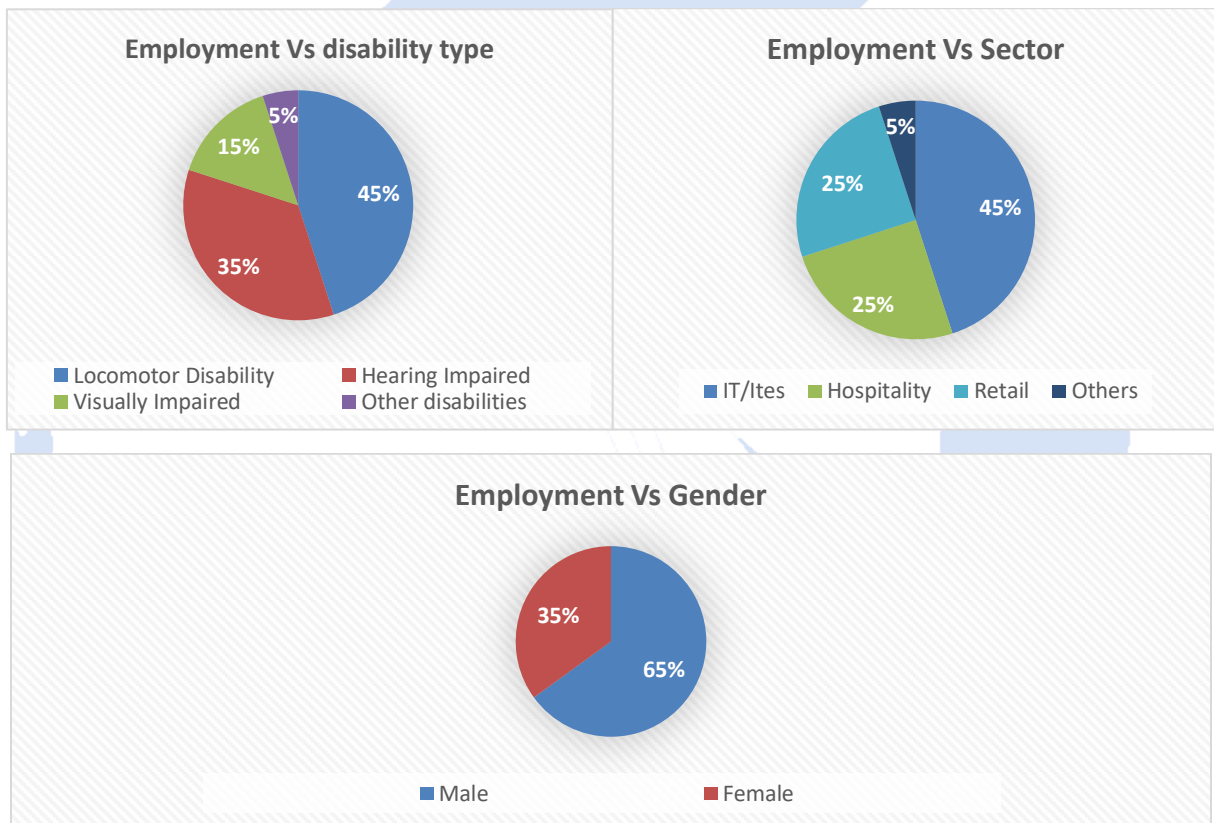
Whilst exploring and understanding different options to sustain himself various sectors like BPO, IT/ITES, Retail, Hospitality, Banking, Manufacturing, etc., were approached successfully. His was achieved

through sensitizing the management and ensuring hiring of PwDs through, job and candidate mapping exercises, leading to sustainable employment.

These pioneering best practices model of training PwDs as per the market requirement, considering demand and supply scenario in the country was also adopted by Government Departments in the country.

Most of the trainings imparted by Govt agencies mainly involved job roles like candle making, book binding, furniture making, which hardly had avenues of getting meaningful jobs for PwDs. Sarthak engaged with Government ministries like **Skill Development and Human Resource development** through inviting and projecting its successful employment model, which led to formation of **Sector Skill Councils**, which started training PwDs as per the market demand. Sarthak also ensured the replication of best practices, in the **National Action Plan, 2015**, which was formulated by **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**, for mainstreaming PwDs through **skill trainings**, related to current job roles available.

Measurable Outcomes



Additional Milestones

- Provided sustainable employment to 18000+ candidates in various sectors and provided sector specific skills to 16000+ PwDs, till date.

- Created awareness and sensitized 1000+ corporate houses for hiring PwDs, through 100+ advocacy events like workshops, conferences, job fairs, etc.
- Created job opportunities in BPO sector companies like Aegis, TCS, Wipro.
- In Hospitality sector PwDs placed in hotels like ITC, Lemon Tree, Marriot, IHG, Hyatt, Westside, Andaz and many others in different profiles like F&B Stewards, Housekeeping, Kitchen helpers, backend operations depending on the types and degree of disabilities.
- In retail sector, organizations like Future group, Vishal Mega mart sensitized for hiring PwDs, followed by many others like Reliance Retail, Marks and Spencer, V-Mart, Landmark, etc., in various job roles like Customer Service Associates, Data Entry Operators, Cashiers, Packers and many other profiles.
- Sarthak has also started placing candidates with partner companies in Manufacturing sector like, Orient Crafts and Sriram Pistons, in profiles like data entry workers, packers, etc.
- Sarthak though it's more recent activities have also started placing PwD candidates in various other sectors like Banking, having partnered with banks like State Bank of India, HSBC, Axis and Punjab National Bank.
- Other successful partnership in placement of PwDs in recent times has been with E-Commerce companies like Amazon, Flipkart, Make my Trip.
- These interventions of Sarthak in providing meaningful and sustainable job opportunities has successfully highlighted that not only do the PwDs have a greater commitment to their work and determination, but also have higher productivity in different job roles available for them. Further, it has also been proved that their engagement with the organization also improves the morale and the work output of the other employees. Another important outcome of hiring PwDs by Corporate has resulted in enhanced footfall of customers. All these factors ultimately lead to better organizational performance and productivity and ensure them being economically self-reliant and lead a life of dignity and respect.

Case study

Would her seniors like her work, would she make friends easily, would she be able to speak well? These were the only worries 31 year old Jyoti Singh had when she joined her first job at the 108 emergency call centre in Lucknow.

All the other challenges she had learnt to fight since she was born. A mother of two, Jyoti has not had any sensation on her waist down 20 days after she was born.

But every morning when she wakes up at 3 am to head to her shift from 5 am to 1pm, it is only excitement she feels about heading out to work. Her children aged 14 and 10; help her with



small chores like getting her water ready for bath, putting her clothes for the day. While her mother readies her tiffin, her father drops her in a scooter, every day.

“I want to think of what is right in my life”, she smiles.

Married at 18, Jyoti is currently fighting a divorce with her husband of 15 years. The couple lived in a setup; her parents had made for them, a floor above their own. “It didn’t work out for a host of reasons. Nothing is more important than self respect for me. I want to now focus on my children and make them proud of their mother. I have parents and an elder brother who have always encouraged me and of course God who has shown me the right path and been so kind,” she says.

For so much more could have gone wrong, she says.

On a pleasant October night when her mother, Uma Rani Thakur, gave birth to second child, at home, the family was overjoyed. “We already had an elder son and the family was finally complete,” says the mother.

Everything was perfect except a small abscess on the baby’s lower back. Following the tradition of not stepping out of the home for the first five days, the first thing the parents decided to do was take their daughter to a hospital on the sixth day. The naming ceremony was to happen after they returned from the hospital.

“The doctor told them, I had to undergo a surgery and the chances of survival were thin even after that. If I lived, I would lose sensation down the waist, lose eyesight, lose my mind or have my head grow constantly. Thankfully I only lost sensation down the waist”, shares Jyoti.

Jyoti was all of 20 days when she had her first surgery and the Thakur family never knew the milestones most parents did. Instead they dealt with other challenges.

From dealing with a child who had no control on her bladder to a burn accident that further disfigured her foot as a six month old, the parents saw this and more.

But they were sure they did all they could for their little girl. Jyoti in turn was slowly growing into a patient young girl who learnt to find her happiness in small things around her.

Not only did she manage to complete her schooling but also went on to do her BA and then did a course with Sarthak that helped her get a job.

“Till you experience pain you don’t know the value of joy. It has been a challenging journey but with my training at Sarthak that helped me with a job, I finally feel complete and independent.”

Future Plans

1. Sarthak is working with a mission to ensure more than 30,000 PwDs in India are benefitted by 2022, by gaining meaningful employment opportunities.
2. Exploring possibilities of partnering with other sectors like Civil Aviation, Healthcare, Entertainment,
3. Exploring and identifying self employment opportunities in agriculture and allied industries, especially in rural areas

4. Reaching out to 2000 equal opportunity employers

5. Adoption of global best practices.

