Disability Rights Advocacy and Employment: An Indian Example

A Case Study of the National Centre
for the Employment of Disabled People (NCPEDP)

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NCPEDP's Work:

Founded in 1996, the National Centre for the Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) is a New Delhi-based trust which sprang out of the post-1995 PWD Act momentum for the cause of disability rights. The groups five organizational pillars are Education, Employment, Awareness, Legislation, and Communication.

General Research Questions:

1. What kinds of general strategies does the NCPEDP engage in to promote employment and how can their impact be measured?

2. What are the NCPEDP's strategies for working with the Indian government on the state and national levels? With corporations and other NGOs?

3. How does the NCPEDP make the business case for disability hiring?

4. What role do activism and collective action play NCPEDP's advocacy?

Methodology and Data Collection:

- Snowball sampling for participants

- 49 semi-structured interviews and participant observation of internal meetings, training conferences, and government policy meetings

- Targetting government, partner NGOs, and business people

- Corroboration of individual accounts through institutional documentation, RTIs, third-party policy research, and background research into the legislative record

Disability Employment Context in India:

- 1959: Indian Government opens firs Special Employment Exchange for the Physically Handicapped

- 1970s: 3% reservation on government jobs

- 1995: Persons with Disabilities – Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation – Act

- 2001: Disability returns to the Indian Census

- 2007: India ratifies UNCRPD

NCPEDP's Focal Strategies:

1. **Government relations:** Identify gaps in service delivery, policy, and implementation --> create or instigate, then publicize schemes to redress these gaps

2. **Non-profit networking:** Unify disparate disability movements under a cross–disability umbrella through networking and information sharing

NCPEDP's Focal Strategies (CONT.):

3. **Private sector practices:** Use awards to bring attention to best practices in the private sector; develop individual champions within the business community

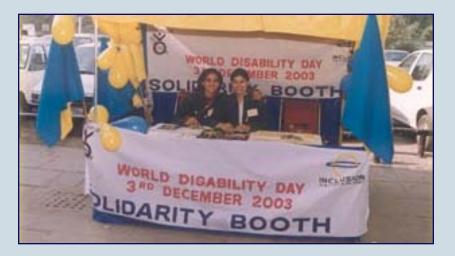4. **Media Relations:** Putting public pressure on targetted issues, laws, or groups

Results - Indian Government:

2001 and 2011 Indian Census Successes
- Counting disability
- Sensitizing enumerators and populations

Private Sector Incentive Scheme
- Pro: Forced implementation of government promises
- Con: Scheme under-utilized, unpersuasive incentives

Results - Non-Profit Sector:

Strategic Alliances:
- Disability News and Information Service (DNIS)
- National Disability Network (NDN)
- Disability Rights Group (DRG)

Best Practices:
- Bringing together allies for systematic UNCRPD implementation monitoring
- Five-Year Plans: Cross-cutting representation and movements for implementation

Results - Private Sector:

Crowning Champions:
 – NCPEDP–Shell Helen Keller Awards for
   Achievement in Disability Employment
 – NCPEDP–Mphasis Universal Design
   Awards

Effects:
 – Bringing attention to successful and
   inclusive business practices, within
   companies and industrial bodies

Limitations and Challenges:

Data Limitations:
 – Differing yields for official statistics on disability
 – Language barrier

Structural Challenges:
 – Most frequently cited barriers to disability employment
   include "mindset," "insensitivity," "discrimination," a
   need for "upping skills"
 – Sustainability and replication of advocacy practices

Lessons Learned:

NCPEDP – Strategy and Replication:

– Small size means flexibility and low overhead, but somewhat limited reach

– BUT, networking with NGOs and DPOs help to counter this limitation

– Charasmatic leadership a powerful resource, but a drawback for institutional sustainability