

Tapping into the hidden strength

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People with disabilities or PwDs are often treated as incompatible among general public. While to an extent they do have a few drawbacks compared to the fully abled people, that does not necessarily render them unfit in a professional environment. Unfortunately, however, more often than not, they aren't hired by the organised sector.

Tackling this issue, the Youth 4 Jobs organisation in a tie-up with the State government came up with CPDL ---Centre for Person with Disability Livelihoods. The initiative tracks down disabled children from their socially

lower backgrounds, trains them in life skills and social skills and puts them through a recruiting process, ensuring a good 100 per cent better chance at being incorporated in the organised sector.

CPDL which began in October last year has thus far trained many PwD and as recent as the last Saturday, produced a batch of 22 people with disability graduates. Said Meera Shenoy, the executive director of CPDL, "Since October last year to now, we've trained about 2,000 people who have been absorbed into the hospitality sector, manufacturing, cash clerks and data entry level."

For an operation that began just about a year ago, the figure 2,000 is a staggering one. "True. People find it hard to believe; their jaws literally drop. But we have dedicated ourselves entirely to this project. What we have done is take these people in small batches for three months, train them in basic English and other subjects like mathematics and so on, depending on that person's disposition. We also now train them in basic computers. Once they're trained, they face the recruitment."

However, for the CPDL, the biggest challenge doesn't exactly lie in finding recruiters, but in finding PwDs and getting them to come to them.

"Most of them are among the lower economic strata of society. So tracking them is the first hurdle; they are dispersed over a wide region. When we started off, my managers and everybody personally went out into the villages looking for these people. Once we had a decent number, convincing them that they could dare dream of holding a regular job and convincing their parents to let these children come stay at the facility was tougher. Most of them have never been given or even heard of people like them being given the opportunity we were promising. So they were naturally weary."

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