

Linking Youth with Disability to Jobs

Boys and girls walk with the help of wooden sticks or heavy callipers in the upmarket Hi-tech area of Hyderabad, looking different from the computer nerds in T-shirts and jeans. All have a smile. For the first time they nurse hopes and dreams. They have been told that they too have “abilities” and can get “jobs” like other non disabled youth. Life has been a struggle for them in the villages. Going to school and colleges means changing two overcrowded buses. The wheels of their tricycles get stuck in the mud in the rainy days and there is no one for miles around to push. Brothers and sisters look at them as a burden who need to be taken care of when aged parents pass away. There are government quotas for jobs. But they do not know English or computers to take these online exams. As Saraswati says, “My father, a marginal farmer, educated me by lifting me on his shoulders to school. Yet I could not even get a small job in the village. People pointed at my disability. I used to cry out of frustration. Today after CPDL trainings in Hyderabad, I earn Rs. 64,000/- annually at HDB Finance. I send money for my parents’ medical bills and my sister’s education. Now I want to do an MBA and be a manager some day.”

Centre for PwD people with disability Livelihoods (CPDL) is a public-private sector partnership between Youth 4 Jobs Foundation and Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh. It identifies, motivates, trains, links to quality jobs and lifelong learning rural youth with disabilities from underprivileged homes. The work is extremely important, since India has about 70 million persons with disability; the majority are in its villages. Barely

0.01% are linked to organised sector jobs. CPDL is one and half years young. It has become the largest in the country, having trained 2,500 boys and girls and placed 70% in quality jobs. The work has been awarded the NCPEDP Shell Helen Keller award and the McDonald award as a partner NGO. The World Bank study on girls and employment has highlighted this work on the most vulnerable population as a best practice. Recently UNDP in its report for the Planning Commission has also focussed on CPDL work as a model to be taken across the country.

What makes CPDL interesting, besides its impact, is the project design. The three stakeholders are 3 Ps - public, private and people. For a bottom-up approach, there is complete ownership of the trainings by the disabled youth and their parents. In fact, the process begins with disabled youth from the village getting trained to build a data base of their friends. This also helps reach a scattered segment of the population. The youth are told these are “trainings with a difference” where if they study well, they can actually get a job.

Two model training centres run by Youth4Jobs set the quality and also help build capacities of other NGOs and training organisations which are selected to come under the CPDL umbrella. Selected organisations are taught the entire value chain of taking an unemployed disabled youth for employment and monitored strictly for quality. The model centres have an open air atmosphere of learning, computer labs, where they are taught English, since most youth are from a vernacular medium. Classes are interactive, with skits, games and songs.



This is to encourage youth to open up and participate, rather than listen mechanically as in a village school. Techniques like video shooting them before and after the sessions are used to trace their gradual blossoming. The youth slowly develop self confidence. Lessons in managing the city (transport, hostels) and money (savings, PF) are given including health and hygiene to girls.

Companies hesitate to hire youth with visual impairment. Youth4Jobs arranges chess matches between HR of IT companies and the blind. Inevitably the blind boy wins and the IT employer is sensitised. Grants are also raised to buy assistive aids like good quality callipers, hearing aid, laptops with jaws and scanners. This year Youth4Jobs plans

to set up one centre in some metros, based on the demand from companies, for maximum impact.

With skilling of youth becoming a mantra, thanks to the youth bulge in India, the demographic dividend can only be realised if vulnerable segments of society like youth with disability, are also made employable.

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