State Level Consultation

on

Electoral Participation
of
Person with Disabilities (PwDs)

on April 16, 2018 at HCM RIPA, Jaipur

Rajasthan Report

Election Department, Rajasthan

Contents

Glossary	
Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)	The grassroot workers of the Integrated Child Development Project of Women & Child Development Department. They work at Anganwadi Kendras Level and is always quite familiar with the locals.
ASHA Sahayogini	Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA Sahayogini) are grassroot level female workers of the NRHM (National Rural Health Mission). She is a link between the community and the Healthcare Provider. The ASHA Sahyogini has close interaction with Anganwadi Workers for providing health care to the children and their mothers.
BLO	BLO is a part time Booth Level functionary, who facilitates the citizens for registration in Electoral Rolls and helps them at the time of elections.
Form 6	Statutory Form prescribed for inclusion of name in the voter list.
Form 7	Statutory Form prescribed for deletion of name from the voter list.
Form 8	Statutory Form prescribed for correction of the entries in the voter list.
Form 8A	Statutory Form prescribed for change of address in the voter list in case of shifting of residence in the same constituency.
Prerak	The grassroot workers of the National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA).
BMVSS	Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayta Samiti

Abbreviations	
AERO	Assistant Electoral Registration Officer
AMF	Assured Minimum Facilities
BLO	Booth Level Officer
CEO	Chief Electoral Officer
DEO	District Election Officer
ECI	Election Commission of India
EPIC	Electoral Photo ID Card
ERO	Electoral Registration Officer
PRO	Presiding Officer
PwDs	Persons with Disabilities
RO	Returning Officer
SAP	Specially Abled Person
SVEEP	Systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation
UDID	Unique Disability Identification Card
NVSP	National Voters' Service Portal
NVD	National Voters' Day
UNCRPD	United Nation's Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Literature Review

Introduction

As per Census 2011, India has about 2.68 Crore persons with disabilities (PwDs), which is 2.21% of the total population. In an era where 'inclusive development' is being emphasized as a core component of sustainable development, focussed initiatives for the welfare of these precious citizens of our society are essential. Yet, there are several social, political and economic processes where such persons find themselves marginalised, if not entirely excluded. The electoral process – which is ironically the greatest symbol of political inclusion and equality in our country – is one such example.

1. National Level legislative and Policy Interventions

A. Persons with Disabilities Act (1995)

The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights, and Full Participations) Act, 1995 was enacted by the Government of India to give effect to the "Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of the People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region" issued in the meeting of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Region in December 1992 at Beijing, China for launching the "Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993–2002."

The PwDs Act enlisted seven types of disabilities: -

(1) blindness

(2) low vision

(3) leprosy cured

(4) hearing impairment

(5) locomotor disability

(6) mental retardation

(7) mental illness.

The PwDs Act 1995 advocated a social welfare approach with respect to PwDs and focussed on prevention and early detection of disabilities; education and employment of the PWD. The Act also provided 3% reservation in Government

jobs and educational institutions. It stressed on making barrier-free situations a measure of non-discrimination.

In 2016, this Act was replaced by the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act** (2016), to align the domestic law with the UNCRPD, 2008 (discussed later). The Act was notified on December 28, 2016 after receiving the presidential assent and came into force on 19th April 2017.

The key improvements in this Act over the earlier Act are as follows:-

- **Expanded List of Disabilities**

  The Act expanded the list of disabilities from 7 to 21 and now includes cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack victims, hard of hearing, speech & language disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders (such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders such as haemophilia, thalassaemia, and sickle cell anaemia) and multiple disabilities. In addition, the Government has been authorised to notify any other category of specified disability. Persons with benchmark disabilities are defined as those with at least 40% of any of the above disability.

- **Standards of Accessibility**
  Standard accessibility in physical environment, different modes of transports, public buildings and areas are to be laid down which are to be observed mandatorily and a 5-year time limit is provided to make public buildings accessible.

- **Reservation in Vacancies**
  A reservation in vacancies in government services has been increased from 3% to 4% for certain persons or class of persons with benchmark disability. Incentives to employers in private sector are to be given for providing 5% reservations for persons with benchmark disability. Special employment exchanges for the PwDs are to be set up.

In order to make elections more accessible to the disabled in India, **Section 11** of the Act lays down rights of PwDs with respect to voting. **The Act mandates the Election Commission of India and State Election Commissions to ensure that all polling stations are accessible to persons with disabilities and all materials related to the electoral process are easily understandable by and accessible to them.**

B. National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006)

Apart from legal safeguards, the Central Government has also put in place an executive policy to safeguard the rights and interests of PwDs. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, promulgated in 2006, recognises that PwDs are a valuable human resource for the country and seeks to create an environment that provides them with equal opportunities, ensures protection of their rights and full participation in society. The National Policy recognises that a majority of PwDs can lead qualitatively a better life if provided with equal opportunities and effective rehabilitation measures.

The key areas of intervention under the policy are the following:-

(i) Prevention

(ii) Early Detection and Intervention

(iii) Programmes of Rehabilitation

(iv) Human Resource Development

(v) Education

(vi) Employment

(vii) Barrier-free environment

(viii) Social Protection

(ix) Research

(x) Sports, Recreation and Cultural Activities

The Policy lays stress on Physical Rehabilitation, Educational Rehabilitation and Economic Rehabilitation of PwDs to afford them a dignified life in society.

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is the nodal Ministry to coordinate all matters relating to implementation of the Policy. The Central Coordination Committee, with stakeholder representation, coordinates matters relating to implementation of the National Policy.

The Policy document also identifies other ministries for implementation of the National Policy for PwDs, important ones being:-

(i) Ministry of Home Affairs

(ii) Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

(iii) Ministry of Rural Development

(iv) Ministry of Urban Development

2. United Nations Convention on the Rights of PwDs (2008)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD or simply CRPD) and its Optional Protocol (OP) were adopted on 13th December 2006, as the first comprehensive human rights treaty of the 21st century. The Convention entered into force on 3rd May 2008 and as on April 2018, had been ratified by 177 member states with 161 signatories. States that ratify the Convention are legally bound to respect the standards in the Convention. For other States, the Convention represents an international standard for them to endeavour to respect.

India had signed the CPRD on 30th March, 2007, the day it had been opened for signature. As mentioned above, this Convention became the basis for the new law enacted by the Indian Parliament for safeguarding the interests of the disabled in India. To that extent, the CRPD is the bedrock on which all national level safeguards have been built.

The purpose of the Convention, as stated in Article 1, is to "to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all PwDs, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity". **The underlying key idea is to move away from treating persons with disabilities as "objects" of charity, medical treatment and social protection** towards viewing persons with disabilities as "subjects" with rights, who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent.

The Convention requires monitoring at both the international and the national level.
At national level, the Convention requires States, in accordance with their legal and administrative systems, to maintain, strengthen, designate or establish a framework to promote, protect and monitor implementation of the Convention. International monitoring is achieved via the Committee on the Rights of PwDs and the Conference of States Parties (COSP).

The **Committee on the Rights of PwDs** has the role of reviewing periodic reports submitted by States on the steps they have taken to implement the Convention. The Committee also has the authority to examine individual communications and conduct inquiries in relation to those States that have

recognised the Committee's authority to do so by ratifying the Optional Protocol (OP).

The other body, i.e., the **Conference of States Parties** (COSP) meets regularly in order to consider any matter with regard to the implementation of the Convention. **The COSP is the largest and most diverse international disability meeting in the world**. It provides a launching pad for advancing the human rights and inclusion of PwDs in society and thereby ensure their development.

Another key feature of the CRPD is Article 29, which discusses the Rights of PwDs about their participation in political and public life. It requires that States which are parties to the Convention guarantee political rights to the PwDs and adopt all appropriate measures to ensure that they enjoy these rights on an equal footing with others.

This provision encompasses a broad notion of participation in political and public life. At one level, it refers to political participation in terms of the **right to vote and be elected** (art. 29 (a)). In broader terms, Article 29 (b) requires **States parties to the Convention to take appropriate steps to promote an enabling environment** in which PwDs can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others.

Under Article 29, PwDs have not only the right, but also the "**opportunity**" to vote and to be elected. This sets up a duty on the States to guarantee, through the adoption of positive measures, that all eligible persons have the actual opportunity to exercise their voting rights.

Consequently, it is **not enough to extend formal voting rights** to PwDs. The States are also required to *"ensure that persons with disabilities are truly able to make use of their right to vote, for example by making polling stations accessible to wheelchair users, facilitating the use of assistive voting devices to enable persons with visual impairments to vote independently, or allowing persons with disabilities to be assisted in voting by a person of their choice"*. In other words, the CRPD acknowledges that merely granting voting rights is of little help when the same is not supplemented by a positive role of the State as a facilitator in the participation of PwDs in political life.

The CRPD further lists down the steps and measures that may be taken by States (**including the Election Commissions tasked with the conduct of free, fair and accessible elections**) to ensure greater participation of the disabled in the electoral process.

According to Article 29 (a), such measures include, *inter alia* :-

(a) Ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use

(b) Protecting the right of PwDs to vote by secret ballot

(c) **Allowing assistance in voting, where necessary and at the express request of the person concerned, by a person of one's own choice**

The aim of these measures is to remove the barriers that prevent PwDs to exercise their right to vote and participate in elections.

These barriers range from

(i) a lack of awareness about the right to vote

to

(ii) inaccessible information about elections and physical barriers at polling stations.

In order to remove these barriers, Article 29 calls for the implementation of practices which improve access to voting and electoral participation. Failure to guarantee accessibility by means of reasonable accommodation and universal design, as defined in Article 2 of the Convention, would infringe upon the right to political participation of persons with disabilities and the principle of equality and non-discrimination (Article 5).

In light of the above, it would be appropriate to look at examples from countries across the globe, where positive measures have been put in place for making voting an easier and more convenient exercise for the disabled.

[A] Europe

European countries have taken several initiatives make elections more accessible for citizens. These include good practices across the different countries which provide an overview of accessibility measures across Europe.

(i) Belgium

Belgium has regulations about the organisation of elections. Since 1980, every building that hosts one or more polling stations, has to have at least one voting booth per 5 polling stations that is adapted for persons with a reduced mobility. At every election, a document is prepared with practical instructions for the polling stations[1]. Belgium also publishes a **special booklet** called the booklet on 'Voters with reduced mobility' explains the problems which people with disabilities often encounter because polling stations are not accessible. It was written as a joint effort by 20 different associations in the Walloon region of Brussels in Belgium. It was conducted by surveying 294 people in 6 different regions of Belgium. The surveys highlighted the many recurrent problems faced by people with physical disabilities when going to the polling station, including: lack of accessibility for people in wheelchairs, people with visual and hearing impairments. Letters were sent to the different communes in this area to raise awareness about the problem and to encourage them to put in place adequate measures for better accessibility at the polling station.

For the 2009 elections, they called for measures such as:

• Adapted transport on Election Day for people with disabilities.
• Awareness generation in polling station officials about the needs of people with disabilities.
• Larger characters and Braille on ballot forms for people with visual impairments.
• Easy to read texts about elections on electoral websites.

(ii) Romania
'Vote SMART' Campaign

The Vote Smart campaign[2] was organised by the Pentru Voi Foundation (member of Inclusion Europe), the Institute for Public Policies and Inclusion Romania. It aimed to create a communication network between voters and candidates for County Council elections and administrative sectors in Bucharest, which aimed to enable people to vote in an informed way. The Vote Smart campaign took place from May to June 2008 and offered the opportunity for political candidates from 5 different counties in Romania (Timis, Giurgiu, Hunedoara, Mures and Sibiu) and 6 candidates from Bucharest administration to present concrete ways in which they would **promote the social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities** to voters**.** Their answers were made public in the central and local press and through the organisations involved in the campaign to inform the electorate and hold the candidates accountable for their answers. This was a novel way to further the long-term interests of the disabled in Romania, since quite often, electoral issues gloss over the problems of persons with disability, since they are often not seen as a sizeable/influential constituency.

(iii) France

In France, the *Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel* (Supreme Audio-Visual Council) adopted a recommendation on 7 November 2006 aimed at facilitating access to electoral information in an accessible format through the use of subtitles and sign language.

(iv) UK

In the UK, absent or postal voting was introduced in the late 1940s to meet the needs of people with a physical incapacity, but then extended, in 2001, to all voters, regardless of the kind of impairments or even if the elector did not have a disability. Disabled electors are entitled to request assistance to mark their ballot paper by an immediate family member, a qualified elector or by a presiding officer. To prevent electoral fraud, the name and electoral register number of the disabled person and the companion are entered onto a list by presiding officers at the polling station. Following changes to the

Representation of the People Act 2000, regulations specify that tactile voting devices are to be available in elections to assist visually impaired voters or those with limited dexterity to mark their ballot in secret without the help of another person (BBC News 2001; Direct.gov 2011). Moreover, large-print poster versions of the ballot paper are to be posted at polling stations as a reference for voters when they mark the regular-sized ballot. Where polling stations are inaccessible –the presiding officer may take the ballot to the elector or the elector may request a postal vote (Electoral Commission 2008). In addition, recent UK legislation allows for the phased introduction of individual electoral registration, in place of the traditional method of the head of household registering the occupants of their private home.

[B] Africa

African countries have sought to make elections more accessible for the disabled through a combination of legislative and administrative measures.

(i) Kenya

In Kenya, **The PwDs Act 2003**, section 29, specifies that people with disabilities have the right to vote and may have a **personal assistant** whose duty it is to follow their instructions in voting in civic, parliamentary and presidential elections.

(ii) Tanzania

The PwDs Act, 2010 of Tanzania states that every person with a disability who is aged 18 years and above is entitled to enjoy and exercise political rights and opportunities as any other citizen without any form of discrimination; and have the right to vote, hold public office, and otherwise participate in the political rights and opportunities. The Responsible Minister shall ensure that these rights and opportunities for people with disabilities are guaranteed by certifying: *a) thatvoting materials, facilities and polling stations are accessible; b) training is provided for poll workers on the rights of people with disabilities and the practical means; c) that people with disabilities are encouraged to stand for elections; d) free expression of will and that voting is assisted by a person of their own choice; and e) setting up criteria and procedures to be applied in appointing qualified people with disabilities to be elected or to be appointed to represent them.*

(ii) Nigeria

Nigeria's **Electoral Act 2010** states that people with disabilities may request support from the registration officer to complete the registration form. Additionally, a voter with visual impairment or physical disability may be accompanied into the polling unit by another person of their choice. Visually impaired registered voters may, where available, use assistive tactile facilities. Similarly, legislation in Sierra Leone and Kenya allows voters with physical disabilities to be accompanied by another person of their choice.

In terms of policy interventions, in Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission's procedures allow people with disabilities to jump the queue in polling units when voting or registering to vote. Nigeria's communication policy recognises the need to communicate with people with disabilities in a targeted manner.

(iv) Mauritius

In Mauritius, voting premises were adapted by **ramps being installed in all polling stations**, and by booths at the height of wheelchair using voters being provided.

(v) South Africa

In **South Africa**, people with disabilities had the option of getting their registration officer to visit their homes to register or make changes to their voter registration details.

(vi) Other Countries

Legislation in countries such as **Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Burundi, DRC and Cote D'Ivoire** allows voters with disabilities to request the assistance of a family member or a friend to cast their vote.

[C] Australia

(i) Australia

The Australian Electoral Commission has initiated a number of significant measures for the disabled, some of which include : -

- A person can apply to become a **general postal voter** and receive their ballot papers in the mail. The AEC provides mobile polling to some

hospitals, assistance at polling places and disabled access at some polling places. Information on accessible polling places is available at election time on their website: https://www.aec.gov.au/Voting/people-with-disability.

- If someone has a physical disability that prevents them from writing, they can get someone else to complete and sign an **enrolment form for persons unable to sign their name** on their behalf.

- People who run elections are sent to help people who cannot get to their polling station. They do this before and on election-day.

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Victorian Electoral Commission
[Australia]

The Electoral Commission for the state of Victoria has a Disability Action Plan to improve access to registering to vote and voting for Victorians living with a disability

The VEC provide a range of services and resources to ensure that "the right to vote is not limited by language, disability or circumstance", which includes:

- Languages other than English
- Voting aids
- Mobile voting and voting outside a voting centre
- Assistance and accessibility at voting centres
- Voters voice app
- Easy English guides on voting
- Enrolment and voting advice for carers: Enrolment and voting advice is available for families and carers of people with a cognitive disability or impairment

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(ii) New Zealand

In 2014, New Zealand's Electoral Commission finalized its **Access 2020 Disability Strategy**[3]. Through this strategy the Commission aims to reduce barriers that persons with disabilities may encounter when enrolling and voting at elections. In addition, it provides information in accessible formats and maintains strong relationships with the disability sector. Access 2020 aims foremost to enable voters with disabilities to cast a secret ballot.

In 2014 electoral regulations for the first time enabled anyone who is blind, partially blind, or has another physical disability that prevents them from marking their paper ballot without assistance to cast a secret ballot from home via **telephone dictation**. 11,500 videos explaining telephone dictation voting have been distributed in New Zealand. In addition, the website of the Electoral Commission also includes material in sign language for the benefit of the disabled.

[C] North America

(i) Canada

In Canada, general methods made available by federal/provincial/territorial electoral management bodies for electors include advance polls, mail-in or special ballots, voting at home, voting at the office of a returning officer, mobile polls (i.e. travelling polling stations), transfer certificate and, in the case of Nunavut and Yukon, proxy voting. Other common legislative initiatives deal with language interpretation and assistance to the elector by a deputy returning officer or by another individual.

Canada has also witnessed substantial innovation in *'ballot design and formatting'* aimed at enhancing access and voting turnout by electors with physical and mental impairments. These innovations include audio tactile devices, audio cassettes as well as Braille to enable people who are blind or visually impaired to vote; different languages in addition to English and French; DVD and CD diskettes; large-print format; and voting templates for electors with a visual impairment.

Previously, many people with vision loss had to vote with the help of a sighted assistant. In 2006, with the help of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) and other groups, Elections Canada produced a new plastic template that will allow people with vision loss to vote in private. The tool includes raised numbers, Braille and a large-print list of candidates' names.

In addition, there are developments in recent years in the provision of assistive voting services and technologies – both human supports and technical supports – to electors with disabilities. Human support services include the option of personal assistance, provided by a family member or even a non-family member or by an elections official at the polling station, with registration and marking the ballot. Another human support service is the availability of language or sign language interpreter services on request. In the Northwest Territories, providing

the photograph of candidates on a ballot is also one of the forms of assistance provided to electors.

Assistive voting technologies that use equipment recently tried in some provincial elections in Canada include the "*sip and puff technology*" that enables a person with a spinal cord injury or other mobility impairment that denies them the use of their hands to vote.

Assistive Voting Technologies available in Ontario

- **The Audio Tactile Interface or ATI controller**

  It includes large raised buttons and bright colours and has Braille inscriptions. The controller is also described by audio.

- **Paddles**

  For voters who cannot use the keypad, there are red and blue paddles which can be pressed using hands, feet or even elbows. The paddles are labelled L for Left and R for Right.

Elections Ontario

There is an accessible voting page on their website to tell people about the different ways in which they can vote so that everyone can vote. This also has information about how to vote at home with the help of someone and in hospital. In fact, Elections Ontario has an entire section devoted to "Accessible Voting".

Below is a list of Voting Methods available to PwDs in Ontario :-

These facilities are for particularly those disabilities persons of which have limited platforms for voicing their needs as the citizens of the nation.

Canada also has a system of **Feedback Forms made available** at the polling stations to ask people about their experience of voting so that they can make improvements in the voting process, and based on that feedback facilitate voting for the PwDs.

(ii) USA

A number of laws in USA have sought to ensure that people with disabilities can exercise their right to vote on an equal basis with other citizens[4]. These include the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) which requires that all public entities make reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices to ensure non-discrimination in the programs, services, and activities of state and local governments. The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 intended to increase the voter registration of Americans with Disabilities by requiring agencies that primarily serve people with disabilities to offer their clients opportunity to register to vote. The most recent change came from the **Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA)**, which required states to make polling places accessible "in a manner that provides the same opportunity to people with disabilities for access and participation" as is provided to non-disabled voters. This includes accessible parking and paths of travel. Each polling place is also required to have at least one direct recording electronic voting system for people with disabilities. HAVA also requires election offices to create a committee with local disability leaders to evaluate and select equipment purchased with HAVA funding.

[E] Asia

(i) South Asia

Closer home in South Asia, some measures have also been taken in Sri Lanka to assist persons with disability in the electoral process.

The Election Commission in Sri Lanka has recently introduced certain disabled-friendly measures in the electoral process by amendment in Section 54(2) of the Main Act by inserting **Elections (Special Provisions) Act No. 28** in 2011. The most important provision in it is that a person with partial/ complete visual impairment or a person with any other physical disability may be accompanied to the polling booth by an assistant and may be assisted, subject to certain conditions.

In order to be provide an opportunity to be thus assisted, the PwDs, or some other person one on her/ his behalf is required to collect the Application Form from the concerned Grama Niladhari or via the Elections Commission's Website and is also required to have the disability specified by a registered/ qualified medical practitioner and, thereafter, submit the filled-up Application Form to the Grama Niladhari again prior to the elections. The applicant is subsequently issued an **Eligibility Certificate** that can be presented to the polling officers at the polling station.

Conclusion

The available global experience demonstrates adequately that several methods exist for ensuring inclusive elections from the perspective of PwDs. While some good practices are followed across a country; others are followed at lower levels.

India has the chance to adopt and adapt some of these measures based on the needs of its differently-abled citizens. Any approach that the country adopts "**must be consistent with principles of accessibility, individual autonomy, community inclusion, respect for the inherent capacity and dignity of people, privacy in casting a ballot, and also assistance in voting, at the request of electors with disabilities, by a person of their own choice**".

However, for any approach to be successful it is vital that it is **led by PwDs**, based on an **evaluation of their immediate and long-term needs** and reflective of the vision of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of PwDs. For changes to be acceptable, it is also necessary to **invest in training** for polling station officials on how to assist PwDs, how to conduct elections for them and sensitization of the varying forms of disabilities.

Finally, India can also learn from countries such as Canada which has feedback forms at the polling station to ask people about their experience of voting so that they can review progress made and make changes in procedures as needed.

About the Consultation

Conception

The review meeting of Rajasthan (February 2018) by Hon'ble Election Commissioner Sh. Sunil Arora made a note of the initiatives being carried out in the state with respect to creating voter awareness. It was pointed out by the Election Commissioner, that the State Election Department was making substantial progress on awareness generation aspects in addition to the work of voter registration and conducting polls. Sh. Arora also pointed out that given that Rajasthan has a large population of PwDs (approximately 15 lakh), it was a suitable state to deliberate on the ways and means to make elections more accessible to the disabled. As a consequence, a State Level Committee on PwDs was constituted for conducting a Workshop regarding consultations on electoral participation of PwDs.

Work Undertaken in Rajasthan
(for inclusion of PwDs Electors)

Rajasthan has made rapid strides in the enrollment of **PwDs** persons on the voter lists. The Election Department of Rajasthan conducted back-to-back voter registration programmes since the beginning of last year 2017:

Yuva Panjikaran Mahotsawa (YPM)
Two-month programme conducted in February and March 2017

Comprehensive Voter Registration Campaign (CVRC)
One-month programme conducted in July 2017. PwDs were the important focus area during CVRC.

Annual Special Summary Revision (SSR)
Conducted from October 20, 2017 to January 15, 2018

Sabal Abhiyaan
Conducted from February 15- March 20, 2018

Sabal Abhiyan

Before the launching of Sabal Abhiyan, total number of PwDs eligible for enrollment in voter list were 10.38 lakh. Out of this only 1.09 lakh were registered. During the Sabal Abhiyan, more than 5 lakh voters already registered in voter list were identified and mapped. Thus, about 50% of the PwD population of the state has been registered in the voter list.

The strategy for the registration was as under:-

1. **Data Collection -** Assistance of Social Justice & Empowerment Depth was taken.

2. **Door-to-Door Surveys -** by BLOs to identify the PwDs already registered in voter list and eligible but not registered in voter list.

3. **Mapping in Electoral Rolls -** the identified PwD voters already registered were mapped in the electoral roll.

4. **Registration of Eligible Voter in Electoral Rolls -** the identified PwDs eligible but not registered in the electoral roll were registered.

Subsequently, the Election Commission of India has also issued instructions for holding consultation at District Level and at State Level, which will be culminated into National Level Consultations.

Objectives of the Consultation:-

1. Identify barriers to electoral participation by PwDs
2. Specify challenges in view of needs of PwDs
3. Recommend strategies for enhancing electoral participation of PwDs
4. Identify Concrete Actions that can be implemented for the 2019 General Election
5. Suggest a Long-Term Action Plan

Barriers to Electoral Participation

❖ **Attitudinal Barriers**
Most basic and contribute to other barriers

❖ **Communication Barriers**
Affect hearing, speaking, reading, writing, and or understanding

❖ **Social barriers**
Social barriers are related to the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, learn, work and age – or social determinants

❖ **Policy Barriers**
Lack of awareness or enforcement of existing laws/regulations/guidelines

❖ **Programmatic Barriers**
Services and systems that are either non-existent or that hinder the involvement of all people with a health condition

❖ **Physical Barriers**
Structural obstacles that prevent or block mobility or access

❖ **Transportation Barriers**
Due to a lack of adequate transportation that interferes with a person's ability to be independent
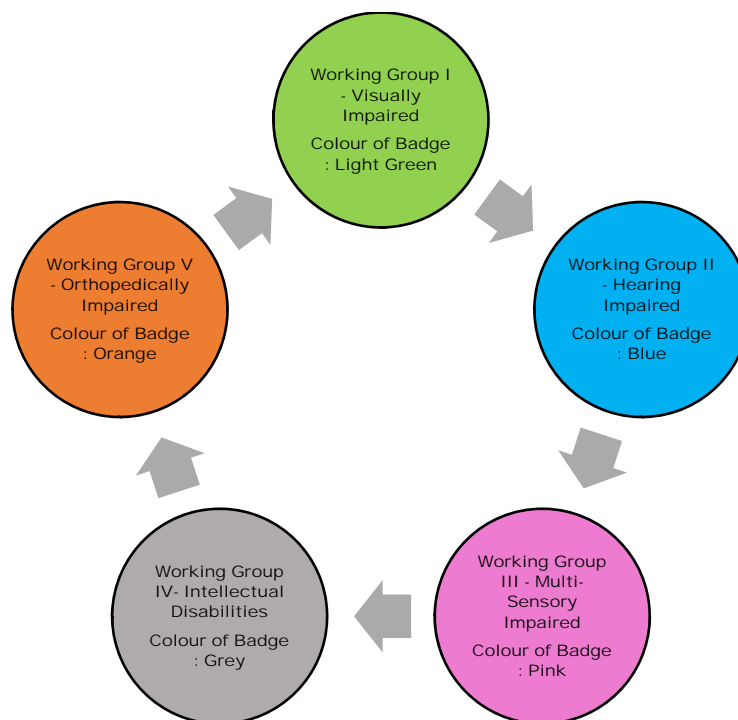
Methodology

To carry out state consultation a Workshop was decided to be organised on 16th April 2018 at HCM RIPA, Jaipur.

Prior to it, a series of meetings were organised by the **State Level Committee on PwDs** to identify relevant participants and stakeholders for the workshop. Keeping in mind the diversity of the disabilities, it was decided that the participants would be divided into working groups in order to effectively deliberate challenges and propose recommendations.

Therefore, **Working Groups** encompassing all types of disabilities were constituted as follows for the purpose of the Workshop (state level consultation) :-

- For the convenience & smooth functioning, the participants were divided in 5 Working Groups, each group comprising about 15 participants.
- For identification, each Working Group was assigned a specific colour – the participants were given badges of the colours accordingly.
- Each group was seated in a hall assigned to them and assisted by a computer personnel along with one laptop for making power point presentation

Working Group I - Visually Impaired
Colour of Badge : Light Green

Working Group II - Hearing Impaired
Colour of Badge : Blue

Working Group III - Multi-Sensory Impaired
Colour of Badge : Pink

Working Group IV- Intellectual Disabilities
Colour of Badge : Grey

Working Group V - Orthopedically Impaired
Colour of Badge : Orange

Colours assigned to Working Groups

- The Workshop was designed to facilitate interaction between all the participants and the Keynote Speakers to ensure that all participants had adequate background on the subject before beginning Working Group deliberations
- Group members were told to deliberate on the assigned theme and come up with some implementable suggestions for incorporation in the final outcome report of the workshop
- The groups were told to make a power-point presentation to the panel based on their discussion. Each group was given 10-15 minutes for their Group Presentation which was followed by a Q &A Session
- A separate room/hall was allotted to each Group as mentioned above in the table.
- Group members were to go through deep discussion on the assigned theme and come up with some implementable suggestions. The recommendations shall be incorporated in the final report prepared by the Department.
- The Workshop was so designed that all the participants were able to have interaction with the Keynote Speakers and have adequate background on the subject before they were to go for Working Group deliberations.

Proceedings of the Consultation

Welcome Address
by
Sh Ashwini Bhagat, CEO, Rajasthan

The workshop began with Mr Bhagat welcoming everyone on behalf of the State Election Commission (SEC), Rajasthan. He extended a warm welcome to the chief guest, dignitaries, key note speakers, department members and all the participants and experts. He proceeded to introduce the dignitaries on the dais: Mr Sunil Arora (Hon'ble Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India), Mr D. R. Mehta (Founder, Mahaveer Viklang Samiti), Mr J. C. Mohanty (Additional Chief Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Rajasthan) and Mr Sandeep Saxena (Deputy Election Commissioner, Election Commission of India). He expressed his gratitude for being able to learn from such rich and diverse experience of all the participants. He also welcomed all the election commission officers- DEOs, EROs and DMs who were the flag bearers carrying forward the moto of accessible elections to the grassroots. He stated that the workshop provides a unique opportunity and an enabling environment to all policy makers, CSOs, socially active institutions, and the election commission to work for and think about PwDs. He expressed his hope that this unique platform, bringing together many diverse organisations and viewpoints will strengthen the participation of PwDs in the electoral process. He thanked everyone and once again welcomed everyone.

Chief Guest and other Dignitaries

The Commission's View

by

Sh. Sandeep Saxena, Dy Election Commissioner

Speaking on the theme of 'Accessible Elections', Mr Saxena noted that every year the Election Commission puts forward a theme to spearhead the democratic process. Some of the **recent themes** have been:

- 2015: Easy Registration, Easy Correction- so that every citizen can enrol and to promote not just greater participation but complete participation
- 2016: No Voter to Be Left Behind - special Drive to enrol left out electors, with a special focus on first time electors.
- 2017: Empowering Young and Future Voters- to encourage voters, especially the newly eligible ones

He stated that for 2018, the theme of the election commission is 'Accessible Elections'. The focus of the commission is to ensure that elections are accessible for every eligible citizen in the country, irrespective of any difference. He reiterated that the Election Commission will not stop making efforts till every single eligible voter is registered and can participate in elections and the theme for 2018 was a testament to that commitment. In this context, he stated that 'today is a milestone, a step towards ensuring that persons with disabilities can be included in the electoral process'. He further stated that the Election Commission was a lean and thin organisation with just 400 employees working for elections in a country where the population is a billion plus and electorate is 87.7 crore. While it is a mammoth task, the commission tries to ensure that every elector can participate.

He stated that the Election Commission has taken several initiatives with the vision of making elections accessible for people with disabilities. The Commission has mandated that every polling booth must have a ramp, election officials make sure that wheelchairs are mobilized and brought to the polling stations during elections. In some cases, officials also go to the homes of PwDs for helping them cast their vote and these are some of the steps that are already being taken to ensure that PwDs can vote. However, he reiterated that the Commission is a small organization and requires more support to ensure that all PwDs can vote.

He expressed his hope for the Workshop being held and stated that the feedback and recommendations from all groups would help in initiating concrete action in the direction of inclusive elections. He stated that the workshop would ensure that participants can pool resources and address various concerns of PwDs and he looked forward to the workshop outcome.

He also congratulated the continuous efforts made by the national government as well as the government of Rajasthan to register voters. He gave the example of some of the recent campaigns. These included: **Yuva Panjikaran Mahautsav** (February-March 2017) in which the Rajasthan Election Commission was successful in enrolling 22 lac voters, **Comprehensive Voter Registration Campaign** (July 2017), in which 12 lac voters were enrolled and also mapped disabled population in the state and **Sabal Abhiyaan** (1st Feb- 31st March, 2018)- where the focus was on youth and disabled people and 5 lac new voters were enrolled. He noted that in Rajasthan in the past one year (2017-18), 2.5 lac differently abled electors have been added and this is an unprecedented achievement, unmatched by any other state.

Mr Saxena noted that Rajasthan was leading by example, and he hoped that all these efforts to enrol PwDs will bear fruits through the workshop outcome. He asked all participants to think of steps for ensuring that elections are conducted in a manner to accommodate the needs of PwDs and help the Commission strive to make elections in Rajasthan in 2018 and in 2019- truly accessible!

Keynote Address
by
Sh. Bhushan Punani,

Sh. Punani began by stating that the topic is not whether elections should be inclusive or not, as the Constitution of India, Supreme Court as well as Election commission (EC) have already mandated that elections need to be inclusive. He elaborated that in 2004, the Supreme Court (SC) of India gave a landmark order in which it directed the EC to provide facilities to electors with disability. The EC has further issued two notifications to states to carry out the instructions of the SC. The measures mandated by the EC and SC include identification of PwDs, inclusive electoral roles, appointment of special officers, awareness and public education, involvement of NGOs, DPOs and CSOs, sensitization and orientation of election machinery, accessible website, communication, physical access at polling booths, cooperation of political parties, priority in entering, Braille signage, Braille ballot papers and special care for persons with speech and hearing impairment.

He emphasised that if all of this is in the guidelines then what is the need of this discussion today? He explained that the focus of the workshop was to focus on how to implement the guidelines and propose practical solutions that can make the electoral process more inclusive.

He then put forward some suggestions from his side and stated that he would like the discussions to focus on these:

Universal Considerations

- Orientation of Staff
- Inclusive "Manual of Instructions
- HumanTouch – Dedicated Official
- Walk in Voting – no waiting in lines or queues
- Free Transport
- Use of Emergency 108 Service
- Voting at Home
- Wash-room Facilities
- Telephone & Mobile Helpline
- Scroll line on Local TV Channels and
- Announcement on FM Radio
- Mandatory Mention of Disability in Election Card

- Services of Escorts or companion
- Public Awareness Campaign
- Earmarked Broadcast and Telecast Time on Radio and TV
- Budget

He stated that of all these *human touch* is the most important consideration. He also stated that if we can provide free *transport* for women on rakhi throughout Haryana then it is equally possible to arrange free transport for PwDs on election day. Also, it was essential to have an earmarked budget allocated for implementing all these suggestions.

He then put forward <u>specific recommendations</u> for various disability groups. These included:

Persons with Visual Impairment:

- Mobile App: List of candidates and location of polling booths
- Audio Device
- Large Print
- Proper Illumination
- Toggle Keys

Persons with Locomotor and such other Disabilities:

- Quality of Ramps
- Availability of Wheelchairs- including adequate Space at Polling Booth and earmarked Parking

Persons with Hearing Impairment

- Signage- including having pictorial charts
- Orientation of the polling staff on basic signs related to voting

He concluded by stating that if these measures are implemented then elections will become inclusive, not just for PwDs but for all the people with special needs- elderly, illiterate, suffering health conditions, etc and the voting process of the world's largest democracy shall become accessible, empowering, enabling and truly inclusive.

Keynote Speakers at the Workshop

Keynote Address
by
Mrs. Poonam Natarajan

Mrs. Natarajan began by congratulating the ECI for proactively focusing on empowering persons with disabilities and making the electoral process in India more accessible to them. She also congratulated Rajasthan for organising the workshop so that people can come together, think and move forward in this area.

Mrs. Natarajan very succinctly discussed the four objectives that the workshop should seek to achieve, which were the following:

I. To understand the problems faced to exercise right to vote

She stated that it is important to understand the problems faced in exercising the right to vote. She highlighted the fact that PwDs, especially those with intellectual disabilities, are still largely invisible. The 'stigma of incapacity' remains attached to them. The speaker felt that the ECI is going to be instrumental in bringing about empowerment of PWDs - which could then lead to them being considered as full citizens of India by the more privileged sections of our society.

Ms. Natarajan stated that to address this objective sensitization exercises need to be carried out at two levels. Firstly, the ECI could drive the message among the general public that "disability is diversity"and sensitise communities to understand this. Secondly, the PwDs are also required to be sensitized and made aware of their own rights, since they are now victims of the stigma that they have become used to living with.

She asserted that the 2016 ECI motto of 'No voter left behind' truly has potential to carry forward the message that every person should vote irrespective of capacity or capability. In fact, it will help PwDs realise that they have the capability and that capacity will be created by the ECI.

II. To make polling stations accessible for maximum active participation

Ms Natarajan highlighted that while the ECI has made conscious efforts towards accessibility in Electoral process, this obviously includes: ensuring that access is non -negotiable and indispensable, made checklists for Polling booths to ensure that all the requirements are met, giving information and communication to the public. Based on the ECI mandate, in 2009, Tamil Nadu

made an app-based checklist for 66,216 booths, to check if all requirements were made to enable PwDs to vote.

However, several initiatives still need to be made towards what continues to remain inaccessible. This includes:

- Access to nomination offices, CEO's and DEO's office
- Media releases
- Grievance redressal
- Websites and online information
- SVEEP activities

Hence, she stated that the workshop should focus on how to implement the orders of ECI for March 12th and September 7th, 2016 for providing facilities to people with disabilities, address issues of all disabilities in RPWD Act 2016 and put forward suggestion on how to ensure people living in institutions can vote.

III. To make the process of casting the vote disabled friendly

With regards to the third objective, she stated that working groups' discussion should revolve around:

a) the roles and responsibilities of: Nodal officers, Disability icons and Electoral Literacy clubs
b) How to develop: Public-private partnerships with disability sector
c) Focus on: Accessible Election observers with checklists, standard operating procedures and Training and Capacity Building

IV. To develop a Strategic Plan

She concluded her discussion by stating the final objective of the workshop was to develop a Strategic plan for accessible elections. The strategy would have to be multi-pronged and recommend action points for the Short term, 2019 Election year, the future - 5 years 2022 with the final aim of ensuring that every citizen is empowered.

Keynote Address
by
Dr. Uma Tuli

Dr. Tuli began by discussing the <u>Importance of Voting</u>. She stated that voting is important because:

- Voting is the foundational concept for our entire democratic structure.
- The citizens of any democratic country have the right to vote and this should not be denied
- The persons with disabilities are citizens too

She noted that this right to vote has also been recognised in Section 11 of The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. However, she emphasized that while the law exists the reality on ground is different.

She stated that the <u>Reality</u> on ground is that:

- Authentic data of persons with disabilities above 18 years of age is not available.
- There is lack of clarity on who is eligible to vote.
- While article 326 of the Constitution states that only persons of *unsound mind* are not eligible to vote, the term is also not defined

She then discussed the <u>Reasons why PwDs do not vote</u>:

- Lack of resources- funds, transportation, escorts etc.
- Social Isolation leading to lower rate of voting
- Absence of barrier-free environment for travelling and at polling booths
- Difficulty in voting i.e inside the polling booth, stairs, steep ramp, waiting period in line, reading the ballot paper, understanding how to use the voting machine, communication with election officers etc.
- Inadequate orientation among polling officers and staff regarding needs of persons with disabilities
- Reluctance of poll workers to help in use of voting machine
- Placement of EVMs at an inappropriate height
- Unavailability of rest rooms.

She then put forward Recommendations for addressing the problems under three broad categories- Institutional, Advocacy, and Capacity Building which necessitates the need for Convergence.

Recommendations for Institutional improvements

- Data regarding persons with disabilities in voters list those casting their vote should be collected and documented
- Provide trained escorts at the booth
- Ensure a separate queue for persons with disabilities
- Ensure proper signage/ icons for identification of the election symbols on the EVM
- Consider introducing Postal Ballot and mobile voting booth

Advocacy based Recommendations

- Ensuring websites are accessible prior to the election to create greater awareness
- Using different delivery methods through drama, songs and videos for the same message for a greater impact
- Creating awareness through social, print and electronic media

Recommendations for Capacity Building

- The State Commissioners for persons with disabilities to be oriented and asked to implement necessary guidelines
- Electoral Literacy programmes should be conducted in various institutions
- Officials and volunteers involved in elections should be oriented and sensitized to needs of persons with disabilities
- Civic education not only on exercise of voting but about democratic values, active citizenship participation and it should be incorporated in national school curriculum

She concluded by putting forward the **Mantra for Convergence**. She stated that Convergence between corporate sector, community, families, educational institutions, social agencies, media and government is required for effective inclusion in voting. She emphasised that the role of all the stakeholders is important and equal opportunities require equal shared responsibilities.

Address

by
Sh. J. C. Mohanty,
Additional Chief Secretary , Department of SJE, Rajasthan

Sh. Mohanty began by asserting that the speakers before him had comprehensively covered the issues of steps which need to be taken to make elections accessible for PwDs. However, he emphasised that while many recommendations have put forward and several policies already exist, it is the practical aspect that needs to be kept in mind and that is the objective of todays workshop. He also pointed that several initiatives discussed by the key-note speakers require attention, these included mapping of PwDs and providing trained escorts to PwDs on elections day.

He also presented some facts regarding the efforts made by the Social Justice Department, Government of Rajasthan with respect to elections. He stated that efforts began in 2017 (1 June- 27 September, 2017) where the government organised **Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Vishesh Yogyajan** Shivir (camp for PwD) during which a door to door survey organised by the department helped in the identification of 9,28,012 disabled people. This database was used by EC of Rajasthan to see how many were registered in electoral roll and then a special drive was conducted to enrol those were not registered. This mission has several benefits including:

- Identification and Registration of PwDs
- Issuing Disability Certificate
- Making Aids & Appliances available to PwDs
- Issuing Unique Disability ID (UDID) Cards to PwDs

He stated that Rajasthan is now the leading state in issuing UDIDs to PwDs. In addition, he stated that the Social Justice Department would collaborate with the Election Department to carry out sensitisation programme for election officials w.r.t. electoral participation of PwDs. He also stated that the department could carry out a sensitisation programme for election officials w.r.t. electoral participation of PwDs. He concluded by saying that these were few suggestion and he looks forward to the participants coming up with more suggestions for making elections in Rajasthan more inclusive.

Address
by
Padmashri Dr. D. R. Mehta, IAS (Retd)
(Ex-Chairman SEBI & Founder, BMVSS)

Dr. D.R. Mehta emphasised upon three points in his address:

1) Importance of gathering and developing more information about PwDs- presently disabled persons are classified into 21 categories. It is important to understand that they are a financially marginalised category. Only when the state understood this aspect can policies be made for improving the situation of PwDs

2) Understanding the magnitude of the problem- he stated that besides understanding the socio-economic conditions of PwDs, it was important to have realistic data on PwDs. He stated that while the was census says 2.68 crore people are disabled, not all of them needed interventions for accessing elections. He emphasised that because 40% disability is the criterion to classify as PwDs, therefore, out of the 2.68 crore PwDs, the numbers requiring intervention, may be 1.80 crore only. Therefore, planning should be done by keeping this figure in mind.

3) Difficulty of PWD and possible solutions for franchise- he stated that the focus should be on registration and reach. For example, under registration, it would be useful to focus on poor old people with locomotor disability and not those who have been given aids and appliances and are mobile. Also, important to focus on people with intellectual disability and visual disability and this job could be assigned to panchayat samitis in each state. With regards to reaching polling booths, people with locomotor disabilities can reach the site as they have been given tricycles and wheelchairs. However, it was more important to think of solutions for those with intellectual disabilities as so far nothing has been done to make elections accessible for them

He concluded by saying that when you talk of PwDs it is a very diverse group and the most basic need is to focus on specific categories and work to enable them.

Address by the Chief Guest
Sh. Sunil Arora, Hon'ble Election Commissioner

The Chief Guest, Sh. Sunil Arora addressed the participants. He began by stating that disability was a very lonely existence and hard enough without facing barriers that restrict citizenship and equal participation in the country.

Address by Chief Guest

Hence, the focus is to ensure that those who are registered as voters can vote without facing difficulties. He asserted that when we speak of disability issues, there are many best practices that exist in this country and the need was to scale up those practices.

He stated that he is hopeful that the groupwork would lead to good suggestions and the EC would try and implement the suggestions. He also assured the participants that from the next year onwards there will be separate budget for PwDs under the general budget for SVEEP. He concluded by stating that while many suggestions will come forth which require action at a national level, his request was to promote a realisation that each person can do much about PwDs if they just spend 30 minutes of their day thinking on disability and working for PwDs.

Chief Guest

Hon'ble Election Commissioner Sh. Sunil Arora

Breaking in Working Groups and Guidance by Ms. Smitha Sadasivan, Disability Consultant, ECI

The Address by the Chief Guest was followed by Ms Sadasivan sharing the purpose of the Workshop with all the participants. She explained that the State Workshop being organised in Rajasthan was in line with the direction of the Election Commission in taking forward the 2018 National Voters Day theme of 'Accessible Elections' by having Consultations with stakeholders to devise a comprehensive strategy for 'Inclusion of Persons with Disability in electoral process'. She noted that as per the EC directive, the expected outcomes of the consultative process would be to include inputs for drawing the roadmap for enhancing inclusion of the PwDs in electoral participation. The documents received from state consultation would serve as the base for developing a national Policy document on the subject.

The purpose of the workshop was to deliberate the following aspects:

- Identifying barriers to the Inclusion of PwDs in electoral participation (including physical, attitudinal, communication, policy, programmatic, social and transportation). Issues and Challenges in removal of barriers, how they have been addressed.
- Good practices developed
- Strategies for enhancing the participation of PwDs

In the post lunch session, presentation templates were shared with all participants who were assembled in 5 working groups. See *Annexure-3* for details of the Working Groups The template outlined the key discussion points and gave an outline of the outcome points. Although 21 disabilities are recognized by the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, they were categorised into 5 for the purposes of this workshop:

- Blindness
- Hearing Impairment (deaf and mute)
- Intellectual disabilities
- Multi-sensory impairment
- Orthopaedic impairment

The Working Group deliberations

WG - Intellectual Disabilities

WG - Hearing Impaired

WG - Multi Sensory Impaired

WG - Visually Impaired

WG - Orthopedically Impaired

Group Presentations and Recommendations

WG - 1 : Visual Impaired

Group Coordinator: Sh. Praveen Kumar Gurunath Executive Director, VSO India (completely blind)

Different Disabilities Covered

Visually Impaired, Low Vision, Deaf-Blind

Geographical/ Socio-economic Representation etc -52 lakh in India are visually impaired people. 35 lakhs are in the voting age-group, around 81% in rural areas and 90% economically poor.

Pre-Voting Challenges

- Communications systems are not in accessible formats such as party manifestoes, pre-voting slips, voter slips, information about the centres, names of the candidates, facilities, process, websites, documents, circulars, brochures, posters, social media campaigns etc.
- Programmatic: as majority of visually impaired are poor they are unable to reach the pooling booths on their own
- The political parties do not consider people with disabilities as a vote bank. There is no accurate data available on the number of people with disabilities and their enrolment in the voters list
- Lack of accessible information on polling booths, candidates, and also information on systems and processes
- Inability to contest election

Barriers to Voting

- Not all VI persons know Braille; many who know Braille are comfortable in regional language braille and not English braille
- Proper maintenance of Braille Ballot Papers is not done currently in all polling booths
- Websites are inaccessible and content is not readable, non-availability of text to speech software. Other documents, circulars, notices issued by the election department are similarly inaccessible
- Inadequate lighting / illumination at the polling booth

- No grievance reddressal mechanism for visually impaired persons related to voting and electoral processes
- Lack of awareness about registration
- <u>Physical barriers</u>: all polling booths do not confine to the accessibility norms including dimensions and specification of the ramps and Braille signage's. Lack of tactile path / indicators and hand rails.
- <u>Transportation barriers</u>: lack of adequate transportation interferes with a person's ability to be independent

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Good Practices

- Voting booths are present in the vicinity of the school/college where disabled population is large. For example, in Blind People's Association in Gujarat
- Electronic voting to be introduced with OTP facility for users as practised in the US

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Strategies for Enhancing Participation

Actions Points: 2019 General Election

- Setting up special polling booths in special institutions and homes
- Providing option of Postal Ballots to PwDs
- Creating facility for online voting
- An option of verification of vote should be added in EVM using IVRS
- Disabled candidates to contest elections in 2019
- 3% reservation in contesting all level of elections
- 3% of seats in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha to be reserved for disabled people
- Cross platform accessible mobile app for providing election relation information
- All party manifestos to be in accessible formats such as braille, audio format and be uploaded in their websites, which need to be made accessible for persons with print disabilities

Long Term Action Plan

- EVM should have toggle keys
- Deaf blind voters should get interpreters of their choice
- Tactile Braille system should be made available for all deaf blind voters

- Adequate illumination at polling stations for low vision voters
- Proactive use of FMs and Other radio stations for election IEC
- Announcing list of candidates with serial numbers ballot papers through FM and Other Radio Channels
- Audio announcements of ballot sheets to be available at polling booths as well as CEO/DEO's accessible websites.
- Braille ballot sheets to be made available in regional language apart from English
- Robust IVRS based grievance redressal system
- Using geo fencing technology to enrolment of left out/new visually impaired/disabled voters
- Specific IVR system (Helpline)to be developed for all information to be communicated to the population, which will be used for identifying candidate's information, location and accessibility of polling booths etc. This has to be created by all mobile network service providers under the direction of the government.
- Adequate modification in the VV (voter verified) pad machines for ensuring the suitability of VV pad for visually impaired voters. This is to ensure the confirmation of the pressed button against the candidate
- All websites related to elections and political parties should be made accessible ensuring accessibility of design and content including social media. As currently the documents uploaded are not accessible to assistive technology used by visually impaired persons.
- Tactile indicators and railings along the pathway
- Magnifiers for people with low vision to read the registers/ballot sheets
- Polling officers to allow adequate time for voters with disabilities to cast their vote without hurrying them
- Free transport through all available public transport system on voting day
- 108 should be available with wheel chair
- Escort to be of one's own choice should be allowed for visually impaired persons
- Election official should be sensitised through visits of special institutions
- A popular celebrity Brand Ambassador should be engaged in all campaigns, awareness drives and encouraging population to ensure disabled citizens to vote and ensure accessible voting
- Sensitization of Political Parties and their media cells regarding the voting of disabled citizens
- Walk in Voting should be made mandatory in all voting booths for disabled citizens
- Grievance redressal mechanism to be made accessible for persons with all categories

WG - 2 : Hearing Impaired

Group Coordinator: Ranjana Sethi, Director of LKC Jagdamba Andh Vidhyalaya Samiti

Different Disabilities Covered

Deaf and hard of hearing

Pre-Voting Challenges

- Lack of an Enabling Eco System that motivates him to vote, informs him of the implications of voting to a particular person or a party.
- Lack of confidence to reach out to a polling station and have a hassle-free voting experience
- Lack of a dedicated chapter in the Election Manifesto of a political party that encourages disabled voters to go and vote
- Difficulty in inclusion of name in the voters list and obtaining EPIC Card

Barriers to Voting

- Communication Barrier**:** Main barrier is communication- they cannot communicate unhindered, and also policy related. Policies are also a barrier for them
- Lack of dedicated information in manifestos
- Lack of sign language training for polling officers
- Lack of walk through video- covering all steps from home to polling booth

Good Practices

- Delhi Election Department has made an awareness CD for training of presiding officers and BLOs (professional support by AADI)
- Gujarat Election Department has used video for sign language interpretation for Deaf Blind Adults
- Tamil Nadu Election Department during the 2016 assembly elections used election street plays which incorporated a sign language interpreter. In addition, the by-elections to Dr. Radhakrishnan Nagar constituency had 4 pictorial posters in simple language along with signages to facilitate voting

Strategies for Enhancing Participation

Action Points: 2019 General Election

- Standardised signage for all polling booths
- Training for polling staff
- Door to Door Survey to identify PwD
- Films on Mock Poll for Differentially abled voters
- Tag/Voting Slip to Differentially able voters
- Toll free call centre (with video call access)
- All information including media announcements and interviews of Election officials to be telecasted in sign language
- All SVEEP activities to include sign language versions /human interface
- All manifestos / campaigns of political parties to have sign language version / human interface
- There are 4 people working in polling booth- need to have 4 posters outside polling booth stating what each person is doing- will help HI people
- Involve HI associations- strong federations must be involved in the pre-election period for enabling them to vote

Long Term Plan

- Early initiation and sensitization for election
- Hassle free and facilitated inclusion of name in the voters list
- Right kind of communication that tells him the date of voting and place of voting
- Signage and Trained Human interface (sign language interpreter) that helps deaf voter to cast his vote. Induction loop to be made available in polling booths based on the requirement of the mapped voters
- Customised Training to all election related employees
- Documented AV film that would be made available to all employees having smart phones covering all categories of disability
- Walk through videos for voting
- Use of Social Media and all other communication platforms available for dissemination of information like cinema screen etc
- Use of Postal ballots
- Grievance redressal mechanism to facilitate deaf persons by sign language video call facility at control room, etc

WG - 3 : Multi-Sensory Impairment

Group Coordinator: Sh. Arman Ali, Executive Director, Centre for rehabilitation and training of multiple disabilities

Presentation- Ms Sneha Chandra, national centre for employment of disabled people

Different Disabilities Covered

a) Deaf blind

b) Cerebral Palsy with either sensory disabilities for e.g, Visual Impairment, Hearing impairment, Intellectual impairment, epilepsy.

c) Autism with intellectual impairment, epilepsy.

d) Psycho social disabilities

Pre-Voting Challenges

- Lack of disability certificate at the time of voting
- Lack of awareness about voting rights, amongst persons with disability and their families
- Programmatic: personnel/ funds/ service related
- Information related: lack of information about enrolment/ inaccessible party manifestoes
- Outreach: lack of socio-political outreach/encouragement to disabled groups

Barriers to Voting

- Multiple challenges in 1 person make it very difficult to go and vote
- Lack of awareness among the election machinery as well as the community in the independent voting ability of persons with multi-sensory impairment and that reasonable accommodations are required for the same.
- Not Recognizing **Tactile Sign language** in elections as a means of communication
- Lack of Awareness campaigns on special days like World Disability day about disabilities like deaf blindness
- Lack of voting rights and facilities for people with multi-sensory disabilities

- Booth Level Officers overloaded with work making it difficult to cater to PwDs
- Lack of Mapping done on the basis of all new disabilities
- **Psycho social disabilities** are invisible and need to be captured

Strategies for Enhancing Participation

Action Points: 2019 General Election

- Tamil Nadu (Disability Rights Alliance India) App- checklist (for accessibility of polling booth) can be replicated.
- Organise voting in institutions
- Depiction of PWDs in all campaigns around voting
- Tactile path to be made in polling booths similar to the ones used in metros
- Train BLOs and depute people from each state who can communicate in sign language in each state for elections in the state
- Provide disability certificate for reasonable accommodation
- Polling officers to allow adequate time for voters with disabilities to cast their vote without hurrying them / making them nervous
- Demonstrations of how the EVMs are to be used should be given to Persons with Disability

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Good Practice

- Organize voting in all registered residential institutions specially for persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. (Best practice in Assam and Tamil Nadu)

- Material Audio visual/ Manual made by persons with disabilities to be included as part of the training – for example, Model Booth in Delhi

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Long Term Plan

- Sensitization of PwD and family members and other stakeholders
- Identification and mapping of disabled voters and linking them with voters list with reasonable accommodation or support he/she requires
- Organize Mobile voting
- Awareness of all stakeholders, - BLOs, police, electoral officers
- Increase the number of Master trainers

- Persons with disabilities with high support needs including blood disorders should be given Postal ballot options
- Persons with disability should train the master trainers and the BLOs
- Accessibility of the polling booth must be confirmed including that of the cubicle, table size etc and should be standardized
- Election Accessible observer who should be a person with disability must be appointed
- Disability must be included in every election materials – like hoardings, campaigns, songs, films, TV
- Tactile path and support for deaf blind people
- Family members and friends play an important role in helping us understand elections. So, awareness generation targeting family members
- Making it easier to reach the polling stations
- Disability certificates to be made possible especially for Autism, Intellectual disability and psycho social disability and learning disability, (District Collectors to be proactive to organize medical board).
- Disability icons in every district to create awareness
- Accessibility election officers with checklist to be appointed in every district

Sh. J. C. Mohanty, ACS, SJE chaired the session for presentations alongwith other experts

WG - 4 : Intellectual Disabilities

Group Coordinator: **Ms. Kshma Kaushik,** Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal

Pre-Voting Challenges

- Systematic: Registration in Form 6, registration camps not conducted in residential institutions associated with persons with intellectual disabilities.
- Attitudinal: Family and Community is not sensitized towards voting rights of adult with Intellectual Disabilities
- Programmatic: Impairment is not mentioned in Voter ID (if possible)
- Information Related: Lack of Awareness of Polling Process in general population and election department for adult with Intellectual Disability
- Outreach: Political parties' manifesto is not in accessible format

Barriers to Voting

- Attitudinal Barriers: Family members are not aware that their adult children with disability can vote and don't consider importance of their voting rights. Officials in Election Machinery not sensitised either
- Communication Barriers: Polling process is not known in advance by families and people with intellectual disabilities because there is no system available to make them aware before voting
- Social Barriers: Parents and Community don't understand the voting rights of Intellectual Disabilities
- Policy Barriers: Section 49D Conduct of Election Rule should be modified and amended (a person accompanying a blind or infirm elector who cannot move without help), as per 2016 RPwD Act
- Programmatic Barriers: first aid facility at polling booth
- Physical Barriers: Unavailability of Escorts, Good ramps for severe disabled (persons with high support needs)
- Transportation Barriers: Transportation is not available to reach polling booth (for people with high support)

Strategies for Enhancing Participation

Action Points: 2019 General Election

- Regular Awareness of community at large about civil and political rights of PwDs
- Polling party vehicle can be used for the transportation of PwDs on election days
- Media awareness: Short movies and jingles in picture halls, television, radio, FM, local channels
- Mock/experiential voting demonstrations to be conducted in the community as well as institutions working with persons with intellectual disabilities
- Information regarding facilities made available and voting process in easy to understand language by print/picture/video/audio to be provided prior to polls as well as made available at polling stations
- Availability of escort in certain situations
- Orientation of officers involved in enrolment as well as polling team along with police officers and polling agents
- Transportation for high support group
- First-Aid should be available at polling booth and polling officer should know the ambulance no. to call in emergency
- Quiet resting/seating area to be made available, to be used if required by voters with high support needs.
- Availability of material in pictorial, print, visual or auditory form to understand the voting process

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Good Practices

- Delhi Election Department has made an awareness CD for training of presiding officers and BLOs (professional support by AADI)

- Gujarat Election Department has used video for sign language interpretation for Deaf and Blind voters

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Long Term Plan

- Amendment in Representation of the People Act
- Mandate manifestos in accessible format
- Polling agent should be sensitized

- Postal Ballot for certain condition where they cannot reach
- Final aim- every citizen is empowered
- Next 5-7 years, regular awareness regarding political rights of person with Intellectual Disability through brand ambassadors or through famous personality
- Disability should be mentioned in Voter ID, if possible. Impairment is not mentioned in voter ID- especially intellectual disability
- Provide some incentives to escort to encourage support of escorts for PwDs
- Voter ID Card may mention disability if possible, but if person doesn't have a certificate it should not be a barrier

WG - 5 : Orthopedically Impaired

Group Coordinator: Ms. Smitha Sadasivan, Disability Consultant, Election Commission of India

Presentation by Mr Rajan Vishal, District Election Officer, Alwar

Different Disabilities Covered

Amputation, polio, myopathy, dwarfism, spinal cord injury, muscular dystrophy, stroke / paralysis, old age issues, arthritis, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis etc (overlapping with developmental & multiple disabilities)

Barriers to Voting

- **Attitudinal Barriers**: Attitude of the society that PwDs cannot be independent and need support of a person without disability all the time. Political partiers underestimate the vote bank and conduct campaigns in inaccessible venues
- **Communication Barriers**: Talking to companions of PwDs and not willing to listen to the views of PwDs that concern them
- **Policy Barriers**: lack of awareness on Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016: Right to access to infrastructure, public spaces, information, programs, products, services, reasonable accommodations, etc
- **Programmatic Barriers**: non-involvement of Persons with disabilities in the process & discussions concerning them.
- **Physical Barriers**: difficulty in adapting a pre-existing polling booth infrastructure in accessible ways, usually classrooms.
- **Transportation Barriers**: inaccessible transport system

Strategies for Enhancing Participation

Action Points: 2019 General Election

- Facilitation of free transport including one accessible vehicle for a small cluster of booths
- Budget allocation for accessible facilities like standardised ramps, wheel chairs, transport / awareness programs
- District innovation fund to be utilised for reasonable accommodations for elections
- Accessible tables with knee space for voting compartment. Stool for short persons in each polling booth. 1 m extra length cord to be attached

- Standard Ramps of at least 1:12 gradient with hand rails
- Clearance of debris / obstacles/ unlevelled surface at polling booths
- Disabled friendly toilets, drinking water facility and seating arrangements
- Accessibility audit of all polling booths by trained officers and report uploaded in CEO/DEO websites
- Polling booths in residential institutions
- Reorganisation of polling booths wrt distribution of PwDs
- Postal ballot to be incorporated for PwD, senior citizens
- Training of booth volunteer/police personnel
- Standardised learning material for election officers to be evolved
- District level officer/Nodal officer for accessible and inclusive electoral officer to be persons with disabilities
- Special Gram Sabhas to be conducted on participation of PwDs in electoral process, specifically before elections for PwDs and grass root election machinery.
- General SVEEP/Awareness programs to be inclusive and in accessible formats including sign language, braille, easy to understand language etc
- Specific SVEEP measures such as experiential demo, pre-recorded audio messages, films, sms to be relayed pre-polls
- Repeated announcements / programs about PwD facilities in elections in Television, Radio, Cinema theatres, Cable network
- ELCs to be inclusive; and specific measures to reach PwDs to be evolved.
- CEO/DEO/ROs offices to be accessible
- Observers checklist to include accessible electoral process to be audited / observed periodically from the time of arrival of observers.

Long Term Plan

- Data mapping of 21 disabilities and others who require specific support
- Block/Village level Community Based Rehabilitation CBR approach for mapping PwDs; CSOs to extend support in intimating facilities required by pwds in their directory.
- Inclusive Electoral literacy in school curriculum with specific focus on reasonable accommodations for different groups including PwDs
- Sensitisation of LLCs and legal guardians; Central/State/District advisory boards
- Mobile polling booths
- Final aim- every citizen is empowered

Cultural Presentations by Specially Abled Children

Summing Up
by
Sh. Sandeep Saxena, Dy. Election Commissioner

The workshop was concluded by Mr Saxena stating that the Election Commission was already deliberating on some of the suggestions put forward by the groups and he was hopeful that some changes will be implemented for the 2018 elections. He stated that some of the immediately implementable suggestions definitely require action and these included:

1) Training for Attitudinal orientation of election officers to be able to respect PwDs and make them feel comfortable on the day of elections

2) Creating Rules for an Enabling environment- to ensure that educational material on elections is available for each of the disability group.

3) Postal ballot or proxy voter- for those voters who cannot access polling booths. However, while the Commission will propose this recommendation, this would require action by law makers.

Sh. Sandeep Saxena, DEC

He concluded by saying that electoral reform is something that the Election Commission stresses upon regularly. However, many changes need to be supported by political will and for that the citizens of the country need to raise their voice. He gave an example of a recommendation which had emerged from almost all the Working Groups- on ensuring that manifestos of political parties should be accessible by PwDs and should have a section on PWDs and accessibility. However, it would require action from the public for policy

makers to pass such a law. In his opinion, such laws are possible and would be done if the participants of the workshop and their networks unite and appeal to political parties as one community. He asserted that India needs people from the field to come forward and take the voice of PwDs to political parties and law makers. He ensured everyone that if this was done, reform would not take time. To conclude, Mr Saxena thanked everyone for attending the workshop and sharing their valuable inputs in ensuring accessible elections for all in 2018.

Key Recommendations

[A] Policy Level

(1) Amendment in Conduct of Election Rules, 1961
Provision for escort with all type of Persons with Disabilities.

(2) Budget Allocation
Adequate Budget allocation for creation of facilities for PwDs.

(3) Accessibility Audit
Accessibility audit of all polling booths by trained officers and report uploaded in CEO/DEO websites

(4) Postal Ballot
Postal Ballot to be incorporated for PwD, senior citizens etc.

(5) Observers' Checklist to be Modified
The Observers' Checklist may include accessible electoral process to be audited / observed periodically from the time of arrival of observers.

(6) Online Voting
Exploring the possibility of online voting.

(7) Modifications in Election Machinery
- An option of verification of vote should be added in EVM using IVRS.
- EVM should have toggle keys
- Specific IVR system (Helpline) to be developed for all information to be communicated to the population, which will be used for identifying candidate's information, location and accessibility of polling booths etc. This has to be created by all mobile network service providers under the direction of the government.
- Adequate modification in the VVPAT machines for ensuring the suitability for visually impaired voters.

(8) Disabled candidates to contest elections
Reservation for PwDs at all level of elections

[B] Administrative Level

(1) Data Mapping
Identification and mapping of disabled voters with voters list.

(2) Provide Disability Certificates
District Collectors to be proactive in providing disability certificates.

(3) Training & Sensitisation
Training and sensitisation of all personnel being deputed on election duty.

(4) Involvement of PwDs in ELCs
Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) to be inclusive and specific measures to reach PwDs.

(5) Appointments of PwDs as Election Officials
District level officer/ Nodal officer for accessible and inclusive electoral officer to be PwDs.

(6) PwDs Specific SVEEP Programmes
The SVEEP activities should be focused on specific needs of the PwDs voter.

(7) Accessible Election Offices and Polling Booths, Accessible Election Processes
The election related offices and polling stations should be made accessible to PwDs. The election process should also be so that the PwDs can have easy access. Particularly for visually impaired voters the documents and ballot paper should be in Braille.

(9) Improvement in AMFs
- Adequate illumination is a problem for low vision voters in a number of polling stations especially towards evening in winters
- Ramps having the right ingredient

[C] Communication & Media Level

(1) PwDs Brand Ambassadors
- A popular celebrity Brand Ambassador should be engaged in all campaigns, awareness drives and encouraging population to ensure disabled citizens to vote and ensure accessible voting.
- Disability icons in every district to create awareness

    Rajasthan has appointed Devendra Jhajhariya, Paraolympics Javelin Gold Medallist as State Icon of Election Department.

(2) Proactive use of Media
- FMs and Other radio stations for election Information, Education and Communication (IEC)
- Announcing list of candidates with serial numbers ballot papers through FM and Other Radio Channels

[D] Technology Level

(1) IVRS based grievance redressal system
- Robust IVRS based grievance redressal system.
- Grievance redressal mechanism to be made accessible for persons with all categories

(2) Using Geo-fencing Technology
Geo-fencing technology may be used for ensuring electoral participation of PwDs.

(3) Cross-platform Accessible Mobile App
- For providing election related information
- All party manifestos to be in accessible formats such as Braille, audio format and be uploaded in their websites, which need to be made accessible for persons with print disabilities

(4) Accessible Websites
All websites related to elections and political parties should be made accessible ensuring accessibility of design and content including social media. As currently the documents uploaded are not accessible to assistive technology used by visually impaired persons.

[E] Field Level

(1) Sensitisation of Political Parties and Media
Sensitisation of Political Parties and their media cells regarding the voting of disabled citizens is important for ensuring greater participation of PwDs persons in the electoral process.

(2) Special Gram Sabhas
Special Gram Sabhas may be conducted on participation of PwDs in electoral process, specifically before elections for PwDs and for grassroots election machinery.

(3) Community Approach
- Block/ Village level Community Based Rehabilitation CBR approach for mapping PwDs
- CSOs to extend support in intimating facilities required by PwDs in their directory

List of Annexure

Workshop Agenda

Date	**16th April 2018 (9:30 am to 05:30 pm)**
Venue:	B. S. Mehta Auditorium, HCMRIPA, JLN Marg, Jaipur

Minute to Minute Programme

Time	Programme
Registrations 09:30 am - 10:15 am	
High Tea 10:15 am - 11:00 am	
Inaugural Session	
11:00 am - 11:03 am	Welcome of Guests with Flowers
11:03 am - 11:05 am	Lighting of Lamps & Prayer by Visually Challenged Children
11:05 am - 11:10 am	Cultural Performance by Specially Abled Children
11:10 am - 11:20 am	Welcome address by Sh. Ashwini Bhagat, CEO
11:20 am - 11:30 am	Accessible Elections - Commissions View by Sh. Sandeep Saxena, DEC
11:30 am - 11:45 am	Keynote Speaker - Mr. Bhushan Punani
11:45 am - 12:00 pm	Keynote Speaker - Mrs. Poonam Natarajan
12:00 pm - 12:15 pm	Keynote Speaker - Dr. Uma Tuli
12:15 pm - 12:25 pm	Address by Sh. J.C. Mohanty, ACS, SJE
12:25 pm - 12:40 pm	Address by Sh. D.R. Mehta, FOUNDER, BMVSS
	Address by Chief Guest Sh. Sunil Arora, EC
	Presentation of Mementos
01:00 pm - 02:00 pm	Breaking in 5 Working Groups & Group Deliberations in their assigned rooms
Lunch Break 02:00 pm - 02:45 pm	
02:45 pm - 04:00 pm	Preparation of Working Group Reports in their assigned rooms
04:00 pm - 05:30 pm	Cultural Performances by Specially-abled Children, Working Group Presentations and Discussions & Summing Up
	Vote of thanks

List of Participants		
Keynote Speakers		
1.	Dr. Bhushan Punani	Executive Director
2.	Dr. Uma Tuli	Founder, Amar Jyoti Research & Rehabilitation Centre
3.	Ms. Poonam Natrajan	Ex-Chairperson, National Trust of India
Participants from other States		
4.	Chetan Sharma	Chief Manager, Oriental Bank of Commerce, Jaipur
5.	Praveen Kr. Gurunath	Executive director, VSO India
6.	Ankit Pradhan	Director, National Institute for the Visually Handicapped, Dehradoon
7.	Jayshree Ravendran	Ability Foundation, Chennai
8.	Sneha Arya	Senior Consultant, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP)
9.	Arman Ali	Executive Director, Centre for Rehabilitation and Training of Multiple Disabilities, Guwahati
10.	Ms. G. Shyamla	Director, AADI – Action for Ability Development and Inclusion
11.	Shyama Chona	Director, TAMANNA
12.	Ms. Smitha Sadasivan	Disability Consultant, Chennai
13.	Prof. Malashri Lal	Former Dean of University of Delhi
14.	Ms. Manvi Jalan	AADI, New Delhi
Participants from Rajasthan		
15.	Mr. Devendra Jhajhria	State Icon, Election Dept., Para-olympic sports person
16.	Ms. Deepak Kalra	Umang, Jaipur
17.	Ms. Meenaxi	Umang, Jaipur
18.	Jitendra Bhargava	Secretary, Rajasthan Netraheen Kalian sangh
19.	Dr. Vimal Dengla	National Association for Blind
20.	Prateek Agarwal	Jaipur
21.	Ms. Sushila Bohra	Founder chairperson (CEO), Netraheen vikas sansthan
22.	Dr. Ganga Singh	Director READS, Jaipur
23.	Kusum Bhandari	University hostel for blind and disabled
24.	R.K. Mohla	Coordinator, Prayas
25.	Sudeep Goyal	Director, Asha ka Jharna
26.	Ms. Kshma Kaushik	Rajasthan Mahila Kalyan Mandal, Ajmer
27.	Dr. Puja Mukul	Jaipur Foot, Jaipur
28.	Ms. Ranjana Sethi	Director, LKC Jagdamba andh vidhyalaya samiti

29.	Ms. Renu Singh	Disha, Jaipur
30.	Mahesh Wadhwani	EX- Principal, Poddar School, Jaipur
31.	C. S. Trivedi	Principal, Shri Nirmal Vivek
32.	Yogesh	Director, Yogesh Shiakshink Sansthan, Niwai (Tonk)
33.	N.P. Singh	CEO, Apna Ghar, Bharatpur
34.	Hemant Sharma	Principal Project Coordinator, Lupin HWRF, Bharatpur
35.	Kailash Manav	Narayan Sewa Sansthan, Udaipur
36.	Akashdeep Arora	Deputy Commissioner, R.C.E.E., Jaipur
37.	Ms. Bhavna Jagwani	Convener, Mohan Foundation
38.	Anil Chaplot	Parent and retired IAS
39.	Ms. Seema Srivastav	Parent
40.	Col. Anand Prakash	Parent

Government Officers

41.	J. C. Mohanti	ACS, SJE
42.	Dr. Satish Verma	Addl. Superintendent, SMS Medical Hospital
43.	Gaurav Goyal	DEO, Ajmer
44.	Rajan Vishal	DEO, Alwar
45.	Abhimanyu Kumar	DEO, Karauli
46.	Mukatanand Agrawal	DEO, Bhilwara
47.	Naresh Kr. Thakral	DEO, Sikar
48.	Siddarth Mahajan	DEO, Jaipur
49.	Bishnu C. Mallick	DEO, Udaipur
50.	Ravi Kumar Surpur	DEO, Jodhpur
51.	Ashok Kumar-II	Dy. DEO, Nagaur
52.	Om Prakash-III	Dy. DEO, Bharatpur
53.	Rajveer S. Chaudhary	Dy. DEO, Dausa
54.	Hemendra Nagar	Dy. DEO, Pratapgarh
55.	Bhagirath Bishnoi	Dy. DEO, Pali
56.	Vasudev Malawat	Dy. DEO, Baran
57.	Rakesh Kumar-I	Dy. DEO, Churu
58.	Haritabh Kr. Aditya	ERO, Niwai
59.	Laxmikant Katara	ERO, Sawai Madhopur
60.	Suresh Kumar Khatik	ERO, Chittorgarh
61.	Neeraj Mishra	ERO, Barmer
62.	Divanshu Sharma	ERO, Bundi
63.	Nanu Ram Saini	ERO, Bikaner

Composition of Working Groups

Working Group I	Working Group II	Working Group III	Working Group IV	Working Group V
Visually Impaired	**Hearing Impaired**	**Multi-Sensory Impaired**	**Intellectual Disabilities**	**Orthopedically Impaired**
Coordinator: Praveen Kr.Gurunath	**Coordinator:** Ms. Jayshree Ravendran	**Coordinator:** Arman Ali	**Coordinator:** Ms. Kshma Kaushik	**Coordinator:** Ms. Smitha Sadasivan
Chetan Sharma	Dr. Ganga Singh	Sudeep Goyal	Ms. Shyama Chona	Ms. Kusum Bhandari
Ankit Pradhan	Mahesh Wadhwani	Ms. Sneha Arya	R. K. Mohla	Kelash Manav
Jitendra Bhargava	Ms. Ranjana Sethi	Ms. G. Shyamla	Prof. Malashri Lal	Dr. Puja Mukul
Dr. Vimal Dengla	Ms. Asha Bhatnagar	Ms. Deepak Kalra	C. S. Trivedi	Ms. Renu Singh
Prateek Agarwal	Ms. Bhavna Jagwani	Ms. Meenaxi	Yogesh	Gaurav Goyal
Ms. Sushila Bohra	Abhimanyu Kumar	Ms. Manvi Jalan	N.P. Singh	Rajan Vishal
Akashdeep Arora	Bishnu C. Mallick	Ms. Seema Srivastav	Hemant Sharma	Prakash Rajpurohit
Rohit Gupta	Hemendra Nagar	Col. Anand Prakash	Anil Chaplot	Rajveer Singh Chaudhary
Naresh Kr. Thakral	Haritabh Kr. Aditya	Ravi Kumar Surpur	Mukatanand Agrawal	Rakesh Kumar-I
Ashok Kumar-II	Suresh Kr. Khatik	Siddarth Mahajan	Bhagirath Bishnoi	Nanu Ram Saini
Vasudev Malawat	Laxmikant Katara	Om Prakash-III	Divanshu Sharma	Dr. R. C. Meena
Ms. Alka Vishnoi	Dr. Manprakash Sharma	Neeraj Mishra	Dr. R.K. Solanki	
Dr. J.K. Chauhan		Dr. Mrunal Joshi		

Keynote Speakers

Dr. Uma Tuli : An educationist, social worker, rehabilitation professional and sports woman, Dr. Uma Tuli was the first non-bureaucrat appointed by the Government of India as Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities. Among the several key positions that Dr. Uma Tuli has held include Chairperson - Education Commission, Rehabilitation International, USA till 2012 and presently National Secretary in India, Executive Member of International Abilympics Federation, Member – Advisory Board -Voice and Vision, National Resource and Training Centre for Children with Visual and Multiple Disabilities, including Deafblindness Mumbai, Member - Core Advisory Group on disability, National Human Rights Commission, and several other Committees of Govt. of India. Her contribution in the Disability sector has earned her several accolades. The most significant of them are Padma Shri for Social Work, Manav Seva Award, Helen Keller Award, UN-ESCAP Award for Pioneering Achievement, Hong Kong Foundation Award, Nehru Smriti Award and President's Gold Medal for distinctive services in Home Guards. She is a member of the General Body of the National Skill Development Agency (NSDA),

Mrs. Poonam Natrajan: Ex- Chairperson, The National Trust, GOI- New Delhi; Former Director Vidhya sagar, Chennai; professional experience over 39 years. Ms. Poonam Natarajan is one of the pioneers of disability and development activities in India. In 1985, she founded the Spastics Society of India, Chennai presently known as Vidya Sagar. Chairperson of the National Trust at the Ministry of Social Welfare, she is engaged in making disability policies, legislation and programmes rights-based and people-centred. She has pioneered a range of programmes for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the area of health insurance, livelihoods and assisted living. She also served as a member of the "New Law Committee" which was formed to harmonise national legislation with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. She has co-authored a book on Management of Cerebral Palsy: A Trans disciplinary Approach.

Ms. Poonam also has received a multitude of Awards, including a Certificate of Honour from Guild of Service (C), in recognition of outstanding achievement and contribution in the field of disability, research and advisory services.

Dr. Bhushan Punani : Dr. Bhushan Punani is the Founder Director of Blind people's Association (BPA), Ahmadabad, presently serves as Executive Director. He serves at Shah Investors Home Ltd. also as the Executive Director. He has won numerous national and international awards for his outstanding contributions in social sector. He is involved in advisory and executive roles with various government and non-government entities working for disability rehabilitation and policy making. He is also serving as a Director on the board of Wagh Bakri Tea Group. Dr. Punani is an outstanding administrator with Doctorate from Gujarat University and MBA from IIM-Ahmedabad.