



REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY, 2006

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Abstract

The national policy for people with disabilities, 2006 is a step towards ensuring a better life to people with disabilities. There are approximately 21.9 million people living with disabilities. The initiative by the ministry of social justice and empowerment, Government of India, came as a welcome change. The main aim of this policy was to ensure barrier free environment and improvement of rehabilitation services. This is a review paper on the policy for people with disabilities, 2006 after 15 years of its formulation.

Keywords: Disabilities, Social Justice, Empowerment.

Introduction

The national policies are framed by the government to implement measures for the welfare of its citizens. These programs are usually bottom up involving the local or regional authorities, regional development agencies up to the national level agencies.

The census of India 2011 reflects that 2.2% of the total population of our country belong to differently abled category which accounts for approximately 21.9 million. Out of which 12.6 million are males and 9.3 million are females. The number of disabled is more in rural areas as compared to urban areas(1).

The goal of full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society and development was established by the World Program of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982(2). Since then 3rd December is observed as the International day for disabled persons. The day mainly aims to promote a better understanding of the issues of people with disabilities and focus on rights of people with disabilities.

The UN decided to commit for the rights of disabled and thus convention in this regard was adopted in 2006. India signed the UN convention on 30th march. Subsequently, the then government took some major steps and started interventions for the people with disabilities.

The then government decided to amend the existing persons with disability act, 1995 and RCI act 1992. This was specifically done by the ministry of social justice and empowerment and this policy also came into existence in India(2).

The nation policy for people with disabilities

The national policy for persons with disability recognizes that the disabled are a valuable human resource and they can lead a better life if given with equal opportunities. This policy talks about providing equity, freedom, justice and dignity of all the individuals with disability.

This policy mainly focuses on rehabilitation of women and children with disabilities, providing barrier free environment, social security and encouraging research. It also focuses on prevention of disabilities, improving rehabilitation services, issue of disability certificates, promoting NGO's, enhancing the opportunities for disabled in the field of sports, recreation and cultural life, and making amendments to the existing acts dealing with the persons with disability.

The policy aims at achieving this by carrying out following interventions:

1. Prevention, Early Detection and Intervention
2. Programs of Rehabilitation
3. Human Resource Development
4. Education of Persons with Disabilities
5. Employment
6. Barrier-free environment
7. Social Protection
8. Research
9. Sports, Recreation and Cultural activities



The National Policy lays stress on Physical Rehabilitation, Educational Rehabilitation and Economic Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities for a dignified life in society.

Stakeholders

The main stakeholders are ministry of social justice and empowerment, ministry of home affairs, railways, sports and other ministries, local politicians, panchayat bodies, rehabilitations professionals, private transports businesses, commissioner of disabilities at center and state level, NGOs, civil works department, manufacturers of assistive devices, and disability people's organizations.

The opinion of these stakeholders varies from high support to the policy to high opposition based on their gains and losses. At national level there is very less opposition whereas at local level there may be opposition from different areas such as private transport businesses, private clinics and rehabilitation centers. The consequences are also different for various stake holders. Similarly, the opportunities and the obstacles associated with the implementation are different. Certain strategies need to be taken for improving the implementation of the policy as well as increase its coverage. The impact of the strategy implementation needs to be carefully looked at for future planning and future amendments thereof.

Policy implementation

It has been more than one decade of the drafting and implementation of the policy, the major concern is about the awareness among the vulnerable groups particularly of rural areas regarding the benefits extended to them. The people are unaware, the process of availing the services is too tedious and time consuming. Primary requirement for availing the services is possessing a disability certificate which in itself a tedious process. The persons have to travel either to the medical colleges or to district rehabilitation centers only on the specified dates to get a certificate issued. This process tends to be highly corrupted thus leaving the poor and unarmed persons unsuccessful. The functionality of the composite centers is unknown. The official website gives address to only a few and exact number of available centers is not mentioned.

Conclusion

The need for social and financial security for the individuals as well as the family is huge. Thus, the measures mentioned in the policy would ensure to provide some security but extensive research needs to be done to be able to provide them with a complete security. The education alone won't be sufficient, they need to be provided with sustain able means of earning so that they could be independent. As mentioned in the document the rehabilitation care is mainly available in urban areas the measures planned in rural areas need to be strengthened and properly re implemented. ASHAs are being given the responsibility to ensure that the disable person gets a comprehensive care but then it is sidelined by them because of their heavy work burden. Other national programs providing them with incentives become their priority.

There has been no description about the comprehensive services. Inclusive education as mentioned in the document is not enough; we need proper access to educational institutes as well. In many institutes there is neither a ramp at the entrance nor wheelchair friendly toilets. It's difficult for a disabled to survive in many governments building for few hours. Skill development and vocational training are imparted but it is in doubt that the training provided to will create an opportunity to have a sustainable income. The wage amount is not defined and the amount being given in some cases is very less to meet all their basic requirements.

Thus, the objectives of the policy seem to be in sync with the needs of the persons with disability. The measures undertaken so far as well as the implementation of the policy needs to be evaluated and the backdrops if any have to be taken care of.

Relevance

This paper helps us to understand the disparity faced by the people with disabilities and the proposed benefits by the Government of India in 2006(3).

Recommendation

The benefits of Universal health coverage should be extended to the people with disabilities by providing them with health insurance benefits. Providing the individuals with job security and improving the awareness among the disabled about the benefits extended by the government.

Ethical Clearance

No ethical clearance was required to write this since it is a review article.

Source of Funding- Self



Conflict of Interest – Nil

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