

Webinar on Empowering Persons with Disabilities in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Through Google Meet Platform

15th July 2021 (Time: 15:00 to 17:30 Hrs.)

Concept Note:

India is home to an estimated twenty-one million persons with disabilities and in Gujarat; it is around 1.1 million. Persons with disabilities; face barriers to full and effective involvement in society, with many experiencing intersecting disadvantages arising from disabilities interacting with other parameters, including gender, age, income, place of residence, and ethnicity.

Many persons with disabilities are poor and in vulnerable employment or self-employment, without adequate social protection. The poverty rate for families that included a member with a disability was found to be substantially higher (12.8%) than it was for families without any disabled members (7.7%). Furthermore, persons with disabilities are two to six times less likely to be employed than those without disabilities.

These disadvantaged circumstances make persons with disabilities even more susceptible during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those with existing health conditions. Certain containment measures, including social distancing and self-isolation, may be difficult for the persons who are suffering from cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy. Persons with intellectual disabilities may require support for meeting their daily needs. As for most people who were already financially insecure or living on the margins before the pandemic, COVID19 has wiped out livelihood prospects for persons with disabilities.

In the emerge of the COVID-19 outbreak, governments have the responsibility to mainstream disability inclusion into pandemic responses to safeguard the health, survival, well-being, and rights of persons with disabilities.

Due to the unprecedented spread and scale of the COVID-19 pandemic, most governments, are facing new challenges in mounting coordinated and effective responses to protect their populations.

Objectives:

- A. To introduce basics of Disaster Risk Management and COVID-19 pandemic
- B. Addressing Gaps and challenges about acute and longer-term needs of persons with disabilities
- C. To explore collaboration focused on the economic and social empowerment of persons with disabilities

Target audience

The webinar aims to involve participants from the following groups:

- Staff Members and associate members, including representatives from Department of Social Justice and Empowerment especially: Social Security Officer, Planning Officer, Project Officer, Probation Officer & Inspector, RMOs & Sr. M.O. of Health & Family Welfare Department
- Representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities
- Persons with diverse disabilities, parents, and supporters with insights regarding types of support required for the economic and social empowerment of persons with disabilities about COVID-19 fallout.

Format and modalities

A. Keynote address:

To underscore the responsibility and Schemes of governments as duty bearers in upholding the rights of persons with disabilities, will deliver the keynote address on rights-based approaches to protecting and empowering persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

B. Experience-sharing:

Real-life challenges faced by persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic will be shared by Ms. Deepa Sonpal and Ms. Neeta Panchal

C. Policy crucible about New Normal:

There will be a session on the theme of developing and delivering disability-inclusive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Bhusan Punani will be invited to draw on their experience and insights, share case studies, and make policy recommendations.

D. Reflections on the way forward:

Reflections on how governments, persons with disabilities, civil society organizations could move forward in partnership to empower persons with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The webinar will be broadcasted live on YouTube channel (15:00 to 17:30 Hrs.)

Resource Persons:

1. Dr. Bhusan Punani, Executive Secretary, BPA, Ahmedabad
2. Shri Binoy Acharya, Director UNNATI
3. Shri Akhil Paul, Sense India Int. Ahmedabad
4. Ms. Deepa Sonapl, Disability Expert (Independent)