

ICT for Person with Disability

Over 600 million people, or approximately 10% of the world's population, have disabilities of one kind or another. In 2007, the World Bank estimated that PWDs constituted 4–8% of the country's population, or about 40–90 million persons. According to the 2011 national census, which used a different methodology and definition of 'disability', 2.13% of the Indian population (about 22 million persons) had some form of disability. At this period of time where Technology has reached very far, accessibility to public services and professional sectors, social and economic inclusion is still a challenge for Person with Disabilities. At the level of effective implementation, delivery and downstream engagement, **ICTs can play a crucial role in empowering PWDs.**

Although there have been initial in the inclusion of PWDs and their access through ICT in India, far more needs to be done in terms of **identifying the needs** of persons with specific disabilities (or combinations of disabilities), and **undertaking R&D activities** for technologies or devices to empower these PWDs. **To make interventions in this critical area more meaningful and saleable there is a growing understanding and acceptance that technologists, solution providers, and design manufacturers need to interact with PWDs to understand their needs first hand, and to co-design indigenous hardware and software solutions.**

UNESCO and the Open Knowledge Community (a joint initiative of UNESCO and the Ministry of Communications and IT, Government of India) organized two day **National Conference and Exhibition on 'ICTs for Persons with Disabilities: Taking Stock and Identifying Opportunities'** 9-10th September 2014. The conference provided a platform to discuss and document India's achievements and challenges in the space of **ICT-related policy formulation and implementation, innovation, content development and provision of access for PWDs.** Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) provided a backend support through overall coordination with logistics and research resource ensuring a very successful and acknowledged success of the two day consultation.

Information and communication technologies constitute a primary intervention where DEF provides institutional support. The workshop was able to provide highlight wide range of challenges faced by PWDs across various thematic areas of relevance and underlining the benefits of ICT which demands a thorough understanding of these challenges. The thematic areas of discussion that has been emphasized are **Aspirations of Youth; ICTs for Inclusive K-12 Education; ICTs for Inclusive Higher Education; Web Access and Compliance; Employment and Professional Growth for PWDs in an ICT-enabled Economy; ICT-enabled Participation of PWDs in Arts and Cultural Life; Available Assistive Technologies And Solutions: Review And Analysis.**

OKC will be collaborating with DEF to take forward the recommendations of the workshop **by integrating ICT seamlessly with other non-digital or offline systems and services that promote accessibility, participation and inclusion across sectors.**