

2015 Annual Highlights

... Building an Inclusive Future



Special Talent
Exchange Program (STEP)
www.step.org.pk

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Annual Highlights 2015

STEP is pleased to share its annual highlights summarizing another year of steady progress, despite continuing challenges.

After eight years of operations, 2015 has been the year for developing a vision for the growth and scale up of social model of disability. We have proved that it works - and works well. So our Board of Directors has decided it is time to find ways to promote this highly effective, quality, low-cost, delivery model to a wider audience, as a potential solution to some of the challenges facing Pakistan's disabled population.

As we embark on this exciting phase in STEP's journey, we used this year to take stock of where we are, and determine how to position ourselves for the scale-up. We plan to undertake the following:

“This will be to gradually devolve the current Disabled People Organizations (DPOs) to autonomous social entities operated by experienced disabled persons. The STEP will continue to provide core funding, technical assistance and stringent monitoring for quality assurance. Much of the effort in the next two-year phase will focus on achieving this by coaching the new leaders, and further strengthening systems, academic quality, and staff capacity. We recognize that this is a daunting task, and probably the first of its kind to be attempted in Pakistan, but we are excited about the challenge in spinning off DPOs into independent social entities.”

Inclusion of Persons with Disability in Disaster Risk Reduction (DiDRR)

The project is implemented in the framework of the Disability inclusive DRR Network for Asia and Pacific (DiDRRN). Besides Malteser International, members are: ASB, CBM, Center for Disability in Development, Handicap International, Pacific Disability Forum, South Asia Disability Forum. Associates in the region will further enhance the impact of the network. BMZ-project and overtakes the overall project management.

Inclusion of people with disabilities in the planning and implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction on local level and the integration of this topic into national and international strategies, policies on DRR and the next Hyogo Framework for Action(HFA2).

Target of project is Inclusion of people with disabilities in the planning and implementation of Disaster Risk Reduction on local level and the integration of this topic into national and international strategies and policies on DRR.

At Local Level, Disability inclusive community based DRR project is implemented successfully in Pakistan, Results and experiences of the community based project are disseminated at National Level, and are integrated in national policies and this project is able to establish Advocacy for disability inclusive DRR at International Level, that the Post-HFA document (HFA2) is disability inclusive.

The project aims to sustainable inclusion of disability on the ongoing discourse and practices on disaster risk reduction. Capacity building of local disability organizations on disaster risk management and awareness campaigns for national and sub national actors of DRR for inclusion are main components of this project.



The Project
Duration

18
Months

Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Democratic Processes and Elections in Pakistan.

In order to prepare for Election 2018 Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) in partnership with British Council Pakistan carried out a pilot year long project that works both at the grass roots and policy level to set up key interventions and initiatives that help Persons with Disabilities across Pakistan be better prepared and facilitated through capacity building sessions, public policy dialogues with political stakeholders and sustained advocacy efforts. STEP carried out all the activities with Training/Capacity Building facilitation provided by the lead trainers with a particular focus on capacity building of DPO's (Disabled Peoples Organizations) with specially designed content and tools and developing linkage among DPO's and stakeholders, advocacy and massive

campaigning. Following were the project objectives:

- ➔ Develop information resources to provide latest and accurate information for empowerment of persons with disabilities
- ➔ Training and capacity building of DPOs to increase participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes.
- ➔ Policy reforms for inclusive policies and procedure to improve participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes - develop a mechanism of registration for Persons with Disabilities as voters/CNICs with NADRA
- ➔ Awareness raising and reaching out to Persons with Disabilities especially women for improved knowledge participation of persons with disabilities in the electoral processes.



The Project
Duration

12
Months



Capacity Building for CRPD Implementation Pakistan

The project was designed and implemented with an aim to enhance the understanding of UNCRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) among key stakeholders in Pakistan which is pivotal to initiate and accelerate the process of implementation of UNCRPD in the country. With the financial and technical support from the Light for the World and the British Council Pakistan, project was conceived and executed by STEP (Special Talent Exchange Program) which is a cross disability organization led by persons with disabilities since 1997.

The project has been successful in carving way for establishment of mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of UNCRPD in Pakistan through achieving the envisaged results to a larger extent. Sensitization and capacity building of the key stakeholders including DPO's, NGO's, INGO's and Government focal points has developed a common understanding at a wider scale, though the technical debate and planning at policy level is still required.

Major achievements of the project include an analysis of the needed set of knowledge, development of training module and around 180 change leaders who have emerged from the training of trainers and cascade workshops. Pakistan has ratified the convention in year 2011 but after the devolution of powers to provinces the coordination for implementation of UNCRPD has been the biggest challenge in Pakistan, on this backdrop success of the project can be measured on two scales.





Supporting Women with Disabilities in Pakistan

This project aims to raise awareness about resources for women with disabilities and provide targeted training to increase their participation in the workforce, focusing on disadvantaged communities, including those in rural areas, refugees, and internally displaced persons. By cataloguing and mapping resources available to women with disabilities, conducting a public awareness campaigns, providing education and trainings.

The project will conduct outreach with a broad communication plan to raise awareness about this underserved population and challenge stigmas. This will include meetings with community leaders, and advocating with key members of parliament and government officials on legislation and policies that affect women with disabilities. This arm will also include an online portal run by the NFWWD that will contain information on resources available to women with disabilities.

This project will also include teacher training for teachers who work with students with special needs, particularly for teachers in rural areas, where they have more reach into the community, to develop their ability to identify students with special needs and inform parents about resources. Transportation for women with disabilities and other similar considerations can negatively affect the feasibility of women with disabilities getting to school, to training, or to jobs. This project will include transportation to training programs, seminars, and events for the participants.

The Project
Duration
12
Months

Telenor Pakistan

Open Mind Pakistan Program

Being an equal opportunity employer, Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) and Telenor Pakistan have focused on mainstreaming Disability by forging strategic partnerships, raising awareness through advocacy, training and volunteerism, ensuring building accessibility and enabling Inclusion in the work force. Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) and Telenor Pakistan are among the first to encourage employment opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and facilitate process through accessible technologies.

Last year Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) and Telenor Pakistan proudly announced the launch of Open Mind Pakistan (a localized adaptation of similar program in Telenor Norge) a special trainee program for Person with Disabilities Persons with Disabilities, making it the first BU outside Scandinavia to strategically take up the Initiative. In the absence of any precedence or governing framework in the country, the program is widely acclaimed and termed as an exemplary success story that can be adopted and replicated in public and private sectors to any scale.

The program was formally launched by Corporate Responsibility in 2013 with the objective of enhancing the employability of Persons with Disabilities through skill development, mentoring and on job training. An accessible recruitment model was developed for which a renowned disability consultant was on boarded to bring in technical prowess and best practices.



The Project
is on Going from
2013



Wall of Fame at Al-farabi Special Education Centre



The International Day of persons with disability 2015 was marked this year by organizing a one day activity on Dec 2nd 2015. This activity was held with a mutual understanding of Mobilink Foundation, Al-Farabi Special education Center and Special Talent exchange Program (STEP). Career Counseling session was facilitated by experts from the corporate sector (Mobilink Telecommunication Company). The session was headed by Mr. Sohaib Arshad, Manager Corporate Responsibility, Mobilink; Mr. Atif Sheikh, CEO, STEP and Ms. Naeema Bushra, Director General, DGSE including other volunteers.

A diversified group of 50 students with disabilities were facilitated by the experts in the decision making process of their career development. Mobilink team shared their personal success stories with the children with an objective to initiate a culture of mentor-ship at early stages of career building. Wall of Fame was inaugurated in Al-Farabi Special Education Center by STEP, which contains pictures and current positions/titles of outstanding successful alumni of the school.

International day of Persons with disabilities 2015 Launch of Android Mobile Application

On International Day of Persons with Disability, first-ever Android App has been launched in Pakistan on Thursday to connect persons with disability and their families with rights information that can bridge them to key stakeholders from where they can claim their rights and access to different government entitlements.

Disability Inclusive Voter Education (DIVE) has been developed by STEP

(Special Talent Exchange Program), with the support of International Foundation of Electoral System (IFES), during the project on 'Inclusion of Persons with disabilities in Political and Democratic Process' is implemented in Pakistan under sub-grant agreement with IFES (International Foundation for Electoral Systems).



Around 10 per cent of Pakistan's population suffers from one or the other form of disability and remain confined to their houses mainly because of the lack of information about the facilities available for them. "This application will contribute in removing this communication gap," STEP Executive Director Muhammad Atif Sheikh.

The new mobile app can help bridge the divide to some extent. DIVE will provide information and guidance to users to learn how to take part in elections actively, how to influence policy and planning in the favor of persons with disabilities and will facilitate them to utilize opportunities and services available to them in their respective districts. Through this first-ever Android mobile application for persons with disabilities, information regarding the facilities available in both public and private sector such as lists of education and rehabilitation centres, employment opportunities, laws, guidelines for CNIC registration, will become accessible for every disabled citizen of the country.

The application was unveiled in a policy dialogue on 'Towards a disability — inclusive post 2015 development framework Pakistan perspective' organized by the Ministry of Human Rights, Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP), National Commission on the Status of Women, Sight Savers, United States Embassy, National Forum for Women with Disability and Aurat Foundation.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights Ashtar Ausaf, the chief guest on the occasion, stressed on collaborative effort to empower persons with disabilities.



Access to information and Knowledge Platforms for Persons with disabilities.

UNESCO has led a number of initiatives to facilitate the empowerment of persons with disabilities, including through promoting "equalization of opportunities", the process through which the various systems of society, such as services, activities, information and documentation, are made available to all, particularly to persons with disabilities.

In order to support the leading role of UNESCO a workshop on 'Enabling Universal Access to Information and Knowledge Platforms' was organized in year 2014 followed by Launch of Study on 'Barriers Faced by Persons with Disabilities in Pakistan to Access Information and Knowledge' conducted by Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) where key stakeholders including civil society organizations, government departments and media assembled to learn about and discuss ways of improving barrier free accessibility to information and knowledge platforms with a particular focus on barriers faced by persons with hearing, speech and visual impairment. 58 media persons from leading media groups including electronic and print were open to discuss their concerns, questions and ideas during discussion and interactive sessions and identified

opportunities to further work on the subject. As follow up of the commitments made by key stakeholders technical workshops were organized in 3 leading TV Channels including one state owned and two private.

At conclusion session of the workshop held in Pakistan Television Headquarter Islamabad Mr. Muhammad Malick, Managing Director PTV said that PTV is a pioneer TV Chanel to introduce Sign Language on news bulletins and the service can be restarted again.

Similarly one day workshops has been organized at SAMMA TV and ROZE TV in which 20 participants from each TV Chanel including leading journalists, Producers and engineers attended the Workshop. Chief Executives of both TV channels expressed keen interest to introduce innovative solutions to make transmissions inclusive for persons with disabilities. And the letter of intention was signed by the both channels.

Technical team expressed their interest to seek technical details to make website accessible for persons with disabilities and to introduce Sign Language on TV Screen

Observance of International Women's Day 2015

Activities of International Women's Day (IWD) were launched on Wednesday with an impressive seminar organized to highlight issues faced by women with disabilities (WWDs). A large number of women with disability attended the event titled 'Panel Discussion on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', organized by National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) and National forum of Women with Disabilities (NFWWD) in collaboration with Sightsavers, the HumAhung Forum, VSO and the Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP).

International Women's Day (IWD), also called International Working Women's Day, is celebrated on March 8 every year. In different regions, the focus of the celebrations ranges from general celebration of respect, appreciation and love towards women to a celebration for women's economic, political, and social achievements. The speakers at the seminar highlighted the need to review laws and policies as a first step to mainstream women with disabilities. They said that such women are absolutely normal and it is the disability of the society to accommodate them. They also demanded the government to include WDDs at decision making level.

Chairperson National Commission on the Status of Women Khawar Mumtaz said women with disability first need to organise in order to raise effective voice for their rights.

Abia Akram from National forum of Women with Disabilities said that 10 to 15 per cent population of Pakistan is PWD and 50 per cent of those are women. "It was in 1997 when we started advocacy for PWDs and we realised that there was a huge number of WDD living the life of prisoners in their home. In most of the cases, they were even deprived of basic facilities."

She shared that National forum of Women with Disabilities is also signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the NCSW under which, they will identify areas where they can work together for the uplift of women with disabilities.





Launching of Pakistan Physical Disabled Cricket Team for Asia Cup

Pakistan has been the source of several innovations in the game of cricket. Pakistan has also been on the forefront in supporting other countries in the game, the cases of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka being two names that come to mind. Given Pakistan's history of unconditional support and innovation in cricket, it was not a surprise to learn about Pakistan's support for a previously ignored aspect of the game – disability cricket.

Pakistan has taken a very active role in both developing as well as promoting disability cricket. This is in spite of the fact that they have not been able to devote resources towards this. The bulk of the funding has been obtained from a private donor. Despite this, Pakistan has been the first country to bring disability cricket out of the domestic arena into the international arena.

This was the first Asia Cup-2015, for physically challenged cricketers. Participants arrived from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and different parts of India.

The series was being organized under the aegis of International Cricket Council for Physically Challenged



Launch of 5000 Basic Signs Language

Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) hosted the launch of “5000 Basic Signs Language”, on 10 June 2015 at Islamabad. For the first time in Pakistan, Pakistan Sign Language (PSL) digital learning tools have been created.

in order to bridge the existing gap in educational materials for the deaf. The struggle for the rights of people with disabilities in the country took a giant leap on the launch of '1000 Basic Signs Language'. “It's the most comprehensive work on sign language in Pakistan so far that features a 5000 basic signs visual lexicon in both English and Urdu on a searchable web portal, digital video disc and phone application,”

There are about two million deaf people in Pakistan, of them 50 to 60pc were children of school going age. But, only two per cent children have access to schools. In Pakistan, however, only few books were available on sign language. Each book contained not more than 500 to 700 words, PSL 1000 basic Sign contains commonly used words that are essential in day-to-day communication with deaf people.

The book also features PSL translations into English, Urdu and Pakistan's four main regional languages; Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi and Pashto. PSL 5000 Basic Signs can be used in the classroom, as a self-study tool, and as a reference guide. The entire

Consultation Workshop of DPO's (Disabled People Organization) on the Strategic Plan of NFWWD (National Forum of Women with Disabilities)



Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP) along with National Forum for Women with Disabilities (NFWWDs) is a leader in Pakistan in advancing innovative strategies for the inclusion of PWDs. NFWWD's expertise is spread across the country. Its diverse membership includes grassroots women leaders with disabilities, disabled people's organizations, national and international organizations, government, human rights agencies and UN.

Offering not only a country perspective, but also expertise at national and international levels STEP and NFWWDs, create awareness in policy making bodies and increased capacity within other women's organizations and disabled people's organization. Their commitment is to empowering men and women with disabilities to claim and strengthen their rights. Members of the National Forum of Women with Disabilities meet every year to share their experiences and strategically plan themselves for better performance.

In this regard, a two days National Strategic Planning Meeting of National Forum of Women with Disabilities was held in Chancery Guest house, Islamabad on 7th and 8th November, 2015 and one day National Consultation workshop of Disabled People Organizations and key disability stakeholders was held in Ramada Hotel, Islamabad on 9th November, 2015.

The event was held in close collaboration with Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP), British Council, CBM, CBID Network and Sight Savers. The Forum gathered over 25 women with disabilities from different cities, each group representing its province across Pakistan.



Workshop on Inclusive Education

According to the World Report on Disability approximately one billion people are living with a disability in developing countries. Education of persons with disabilities remains a challenge for policy makers especially in the developing countries. Persons with disabilities have to face educational exclusion due to ineffective special education which caters only the need of few.

Considering the above situation STEP in collaboration with USEFP has organized a comprehensive two days training workshop for 60 nominated teaching staff/professionals of three big universities from Islamabad on Inclusive Education. The following topics were covered during the training;

- What is Inclusive Education under the article 24 of UN CRPD?
- Inclusive Education: The only way forward
- Human Diversity in Education; an introduction to exceptionalities
- Understanding Special Education Needs
- Adapting Curriculum and instructions
- Teaching Strategies
- Designing and Implementing an IEP (Individual Educational Plan)
- Exceptional students in regular classrooms

The project was one of its own kinds, designed for the education professionals who don't even know about the inclusive education and how to properly communicate with persons with disabilities. Since this project is implemented by person with disability itself therefore the importance of inclusive education is kept in mind so that the participants can easily take care of the needs of the persons with disabilities.

Under this project a group of trained professionals prepared to set an inclusive education environment within their educational institute and also the training motivated and sensitized the professionals on the significance of Inclusive education so that they can easily communicate and understand the needs and demands of persons with disabilities.

National Key Progress Display



**Launch of Nucleus
by School of
Leadership
Islamabad
January 7, 2015**



**National Dialogue on
Pakistan Disability Act
in Karachi
February 11, 2015**



**Launch of Research
Moving from the
Margins
in Islamabad
February 27, 2015**



**National Consultation
on SGD-4 by
UNESCO
Islamabad
December 15, 2015**

National Key Progress Display

**Consultation on
Disability
Legislation
Islamabad
May 20, 2015**



**Federal Consultative
Workshop, Development
of Federal Disability
Strategy in line with
UNCRPD, SDG
Islamabad
September 3, 2015**



**Discussion on Inclusion
Election with MNA
(Member National
Assembly)
Ms. Nafeesa Khattak
Islamabad
October 24, 2015**



**International Conference
on Inclusive
Education
Lahore
November 4, 2015**



International Key Progress Display



**Annual General
Assembly of Workability
International,
San Diego USA
June 19, 2015**



**Opening of UN ESCAP
Accessibility Centre
Bangkok, Thailand
May 26, 2015**



**World Conference
on Disaster Risk
Reduction (DRR)
Sendai, Japan
March 19, 2015**



**Second Session on
Working Group on
Incheon Strategy
New Dehli India
March 1, 2015**

International Key Progress Display

**Strategic Planning
Workshop on DiDRRN
During World
Conference on DRR
Bangkok, Thailand
March 17, 2015**



**APWLD Strategic
Meeting,
Manila Philippine
November 2015**



**Bridge Training Workshop
on the Convention on the
Rights of Persons with
Disabilities and Inclusive
Development,
Bangkok Thailand
October 2015**



**South Asia Regional
Disability Rights
Dialogue on Political
Participation
Colombo, Sri Lanka
October 2, 2015**





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