



## Press Release

Bhubaneswar: December 2, 2020: On the eve of International Day for Persons with Disabilities and as part of the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women and Girls, a Webinar “Towards a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world was organised by Centre for Advocacy and Research with support of Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Blind Association of India and Bhubaneswar and Odisha Livelihood Mission.

The Webinar focused on the challenges that persons with disabilities (PwD), are facing in the context of COVID 10. The challenges ranging from trying to access essential sanitation services to prevent the virus to securing social protection including financial assistance and necessary support for developing alternative livelihood.

Akhila Sivadas, Executive Director, CFAR in her opening remarks, said, “This webinar is the third in the series and today we are here to not only to take stock, reflect but also act together to address the present crisis that the disabled living in informal settlements are facing especially in trying to access adequate water, sanitation and hygiene services and facilities”, she added.

Pramodini Maharana Age 42, Bastibikash highlighted the plight of disabled persons. Speaking about this she said, that “after a lot of struggle, when persons with disabilities were able to earn their livelihoods through doing petty business, the pandemic has once again pulled us down.” She went on to add that the government has not extended enough support to help them overcome their day to day travails. She urged the government to think of some doable ways of supporting the disabled persons during this period of distress.

Kasturi Patra, Age 35, from Saliasahi Basti Bikash Parisad lost her hand and injured her face badly, in an unfortunate accident “I struggle all day to make a living and the pandemic has made it harder for people like me”. She went on to state that they always felt ignored and excluded but now that she knows about how water and sanitation can be made disabled friendly, she feels that “not enough is being done” for them.

Ms Mamta Rani Panda, a polio-affected anganwadi or ICDS worker, from Balangir District, Odisha understands the plight of persons with disabilities and knows the difficulties they face in availing ICD services. Speaking about the needs of the disabled, she stated that in view of all the challenges they face the PwDs have developed a strong will power to cope with all manner of distress

Dwelling on the emergency response needed for the disabled, Mr. Sannyashai Kumar Behera (OAS-1) SSEPD Department, Government of Odisha stated that, “The government should come up with an a plan to map the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities and respond to their acute distress and deprivation.” Mr Behera added that a special package should be made available to take care of the livelihood activities of the disabled who are poor and living in cramped spaces. Focussing on the water and sanitation needs of the disabled, Mr Behera emphasised that this must be taken up on a priority basis by the government so that the persons with disabilities get it as their entitlement and right. The law on Rights of Persons with Disabilities should also be amended with a special mention on having access to adequate water and sanitation services especially in the context of the pandemic.

Mr. Basant Nayak, Programme Manager, Centre for Youth and Social Development, Bhubaneswar underlined that, behind any intervention, budgeting is the most essential component and when we talk about budgeting for disabled, data segregation is the most essential element. The government must enumerate persons with disabilities to know the actual size of the population and allocate the resources accordingly.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene are essential for prevention of COVID 19 and more importantly for persons with visual impairment, limited mobility and those who are mentally challenged stated Dr. Bhushan Punani, Executive Secretary Blind People's Association. He further elaborated that, State is mandated to provide access to water, sanitation and personal hygiene on equal basis to persons with disabilities as matter of right. We must prevail upon concerned authorities to extend these facilities as a matter of right.

Ms Baijaynti Mohanty, Block Programme Manager of Odisha Livelihood Mission in, Kendrapada District, Odisha emphasised that “building more awareness of various schemes is essential as it will enhance motivation, improve ability to be independent develop entrepreneurial skills, capacity to be self-reliant and work closely with the service providers”

Rabindra Satpathy, District Disability Rehabilitation Officer, Sambalpur stated that any welfare schemes for persons with disabilities needs to focus on livelihood development and to ensure that they are able to achieve social, educational and economic empowerment.

The Webinar was a part of the project, *Water for Women: Mobilizing, Facilitating and Replicating Socially Inclusive WASH Initiatives in India's Urban Slums*, supported by Water for Women Fund, Government of Australia. It was attended by 65 government officials, development organisations and community representatives

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Essential

### **Sixteen days of activism against gender-based Violence**

*A statement released by Mr António Guterres, UN Secretary-General on the occasion, stated the following, “As the world retreated inside homes due to the lockdown measures introduced to curb the COVID-19 pandemic, reports showed an alarming increase in the already existing pandemic of violence against women in different ways.”*

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is a global campaign which begins with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25 and culminates on the Human Rights Day on December 10, 2020. On this day, women, men and organisations worldwide to give a clarion call to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination, violence and enable women to exercise their rights as citizens.

### **International Day of Persons Living with Disabilities-December 3, 2020**

According to UNESCO guidelines on persons with disability:

- Persons with disabilities in the world are among the hardest hit by COVID-19
- Of these 46% are older people aged 60 years, one in every ten is a child with disability and one in five a woman
- Of these 80% live in developing countries

The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons was proclaimed in 1992 by United Nations General Assembly resolution 47/3. It aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society and development, and to increase awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.

The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed world- wide, every year on December 3, 2020

### **About Centre for Advocacy and Research**

The Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), a non-profit organization, founded in January 1998, is committed to advancing the rights of a cross-section of marginal communities from a gender and development perspective. We work across 116 districts and 9 cities in the states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

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