

**Report on
Abilities Mela 2008, Hyderabad**

**Institution of Engineers, Khairatabad
Dates: 25 to 27 of April, 2008**



Organized & Reported by
LSN Foundation
Hyderabad

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LSN Foundation is a not-for profit trust, established in July 2007, in Hyderabad. The Foundation aims to build partnerships to improve networking quality and synergy on mutual activities of GO/NGO and promote and extend the exchange of best practice. On 25th, 26th and 27th of April, 2008, LSN Foundation in partnership with BCF (Business Community Foundation) Delhi, hosted the 8th Abilities Mela at Institution of Engineers, Hyderabad. 14 other NGOs/organizations participated actively in organizing the Abilities Mela. There were 64 stalls and a footfall of around 2000 people. The stalls were set up by NGOs from Hyderabad, Guntur, Ranga Reddy district, East Godavari and Vishakhapatnam, Corporate sector, and Government Institutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MELA

The main objectives of the Mela was to provide a common platform to NGOs and networks working on disability issues to come together to lobby for an inclusive society, to provide a single window of information and opportunities for training and livelihoods of the disabled, marketing products created by persons with disability to enable better quality of life for them by providing access to markets, livelihoods and mobility, sensitizing companies, students, CSOs & the public on disability issues and enable cooperation to promote inclusion at all levels and to match skills to opportunities through the website (and links) of disabled CV bank that employees can access.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The concept of Abilities Mela proposes to achieve the following outcomes, among others. The mela so far have initiated the process for achieving the same:

- To create awareness among the disabled on various organized sector employment and self-employment opportunities available to at least 500 employable, unemployed.
- Better markets for good/products made by the sector.
- Product diversification and up gradation through workshops and customer feedback.
- To provide platform to the disabled to display and sell their products
- Identifying core issues concerning the disabled which can be recommended to the Government & other Organizations
- Product improvement suggestions with help of NIFT
- Capacity building programmes for the employable disabled to increase their employability
- Increased sensitization among companies and civil society on disability as an issue through documentation of the effort, dissemination of information and demonstration of skills and expertise at the Mela.

PRE MELA ACTIVITIES

Though LSN Foundation was the key host of the Mela in Hyderabad, the methodology adopted to organize the Mela was inclusive and participatory. LSN Foundation invited NGOs, and other organizations and institutions to participate in the organizing of the mela. 17 organizations, of which most were NGOs but some were commercial, media, and proprietary, came forward

voluntarily and 14 sub committees were formed. Each committee had 4 -5 members and was responsible for a particular component of the mela. The collective effort and ownership culminated in a successful three day event.

INAUGURATION

The mela was inaugurated on 25th April's evening, by His Excellency, Shri Narayan Datt Tiwari, Hon'ble Governor of Andhra Pradesh. Guest of honor included Sri Nagarjuna Akkineni, Tollywood actor and Mr. Lawrence, Film Choreographer, director and actor, as both are actively working with disabled artists on their sets.



Chief Guest and Guest of Honor was inaugurating the Mela by cutting the ribbon

The mela was inaugurated by cutting the ribbon and lighting up of the lamp by the Hon'ble Governor and Mr. Nagarjuna of the exhibition hall where different NGOs had put up stalls displaying about the products, skills and the services offered by the organization. The dignitaries then visited each stall and commended the institution for their work in the field of disability.



Mr. Nagarjuna and Mr. Lawrence giving opening remarks in Mela

CULTURAL PROGRAMME



Cultural programmes by Disabled Youth

The inauguration was followed by two hours cultural program by artists with disabilities from ACT 7 and Mr. Lawrence's troupe from Lawrence Disability Foundation of disabled artists with exemplary talent. ACT 7 is a voluntary organization pioneering to explore, unearth and encourage the latent talents of exceptional people (who are Differently abled (Mentally Challenged, Autistic, Hearing Impaired, Physically Challenged, Visually Impaired) with a penchant for art & culture. Lawrence Group is state level organization

mainly operating in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh promoted Mr. Lawrence who is a film choreographer, director and actor himself. 80 PWDs between the age group of 10 years to 30 years from 17 institutions and NGOs located in and around Hyderabad participated in cultural programme of 4 hours on the two days of the mela – 25th and 26th April, 2008. The performance was highly appreciated by the Guests of Honor and the audience.



The Mela story was covered extensively by both print and electronic media. Key people were interviewed both before and during Mela. The newspapers and TV channels that covered the event were vernacular, English, and Hindi medium -The Siyasat Daily , Eenadu, The Hindu, Sakshi, Surya Daily, Prajasakthi, Andhra Bhoomi, Daily Hindi Milap, Swatantra Vaartha, Eteemad Daily, Andhra Prabha, Andhra Jyothi, Gemini TV, ETV, NTV, TV 5 and C Channel.

STALLS BY THE NGOs, CORPORATES AND GOVT. AGENCIES

53 organizations participated in the mela, out of which 40 were NGOs from Hyderabad, Secundrabad, Guntur, Ranga Reddy district, East Godavari and Vishakapatnam, 6 were government organizations like Corporation for the handicapped, National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped, Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Handicapped, DRDA and IKP.

Besides this 5 Corporates participated – Lanco, Oracle (Volunteers group), Genpact, Airtel and Rajiv Gems Park. They facilitated first round of recruitments for their organization. LSN Foundation in partnership with Enable India will train these candidates for a smooth transition to their work environment and sensitize the companies to create an enabling environment.

The NGOs displayed and sold products ranging from fabric, saris to home products. NIFT students spend two days interacting with the NGOs and submitted a report to further improve the product design and quality.

Many stalls were information based -training courses offered by Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Handicapped, mobile shops run by PWDs supported by APVCC, portable wheel chair, courses and programmes for the disabled, training for Olympic level sport for the disabled, and various other process and programmes. Special MCR footwear for leprosy affected people made by leprosy cured people was also displayed. Aids and appliances with new materials and innovative design were also on display.

SEMINAR & WORKSHOPS

As a part of the mela one seminar, two round table discussions and one workshop was conducted over the three days. Eminent people from NGOs, Government organizations, Corporates and various other institutions working with persons with disability participated in it.

Media coverage during the Mela



Exhibition of stalls



Assessment of products, designs & quality of NGOs by NIFT Team

I. Seminar on Livelihoods for the PWDs

The main purpose of this seminar was to create awareness about the various employment opportunities available in the public and private sector and trainings offered by different institutions. This platform was also used to share views of specially abled people who are already employed by some organization or are self employed and the challenges faced by them in day to day life and at their work place. The highlight of this seminar was two specially abled speakers who had earned a reputed position at their work place despite of the physical and emotional barriers that



Round table discussions on women with disability

they faced in their way of achieving success. They stood as role models for other budding especially abled people. Six speakers participated in this seminar.

Panel Members:

1. Dr. Prabhakar , (Disability Specialist)APUSP
2. Mr.Sudhakar ,State Project Manager(Disability Program) SERP
3. Mr.Ramanand P – VP Human Resource- Genpact
4. Mr.Verramallu, S/W Consultant - Lasersoft, Chennai (PWD)
5. Mr.MV Sharma , Head Operations Dr. Reddy's Foundation
6. Mr.C V Bhargava , Tax consultant (PWD)

II. Workshop on counseling and soft skills

This workshop was conducted to impart soft skills and CV writing training to PWDs who were looking for jobs. It was conducted on all three days of the mela. A team of dedicated volunteers from various Corporates and educational institutions guided people with disabilities who visited mela for recruitment opportunities. A format was developed pre mela to collect relevant educational and professional information about the candidate. 451 such CVs were collected from PWDs. Some of the CVs were shortlisted on the spot by Rajiv Gems Park.

III. Round table discussion on women with disabilities

This round table discussion was organized to address problems faced by disabled women, mainstreaming of disabled women's issues in disability policy, mainstreaming of their issues in women's policy and projects, empowerment of women with disabilities, demystifying stereotypes against women with disabilities and ensuring social protection. And to help formulate a charter that will influence the Government and the policy makers to help women with disabilities realize their potential and gain access to all the services that they rightfully

deserve. Some of the participants in the discussion were Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, from Bhubaneswar, who runs a study circle for students of competitive examinations She's the founder member of SHARE (Shared Entertainment and Recreation) a local organisation that stages street plays, organizes treks, fashion shows and other activities for the disabled. One of the more successful efforts in which she was involved was 'Samara', a fashion show in Chennai. All this and more—from a wheelchair 40 eminent delegates participated in the workshop.

Mrs. Manjula Kalyan founder of Swayamkrushi in 1991. Currently serving as the Founder-Director. She is an eminent member of the Special Education community and has dedicated her life to protecting the rights of and enhancing the lives of those with special challenges. And Chandra Supriya, a High court Advocate and visually challenged. She is the recipient of the Role Model in India Award from the President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam on World Disabled Day, December 3, 2006. Mrs Anita Rajendra, Commissioner of disabled welfare and senior citizens chaired the session.

Outcome:

Three joint committees were formed to implement and tackle key issues. Their recommendations will also be put forth to the concerned Government departments to garner their support further.

1. Survey of working women's hostels in order to make them accessible to working women with disabilities
2. Formation of Community watchdogs to safeguard women and girls with disabilities from physical and emotion abuse
3. Integrating healthcare for disabled women with general healthcare facilities at districts block and state level

IV. Round table discussion on "Supportive policy framework for the differently abled with special focus on accessibility"

The prime reason for organizing this round table discussion was to seek a variety of views and suggestions which can be put together as a charter of recommendations emerging from "Abilities Mela 2008". Some of the key participants were Ms. Anita Rajendra, Commissioner Disabled Welfare, Mr. Jayesh Ranjan, MD APTDC, Dr. Krishna Chandra, VRC, Mr. Sanjay Chawla, MAYTAS, Mr. Sudhir Reddy, MD IVRCL, Mr. Ravindra Nath, MD Raheja, Mr. Gangadhar Rao, Managing Trustee, Commitments, Ms. Amita Joseph, Director Business and Community Foundation, Mr. Bhida, Town Planner, HUDA and others.

VOLUNTEERS

Around 100 volunteers from renowned corporates like Satyam and Oracle and from educational institutions like NIMH, Sweekar Upkar, St. Ann's degree college for women, St. Francis degree college for women and First Ray Foundation volunteered for the mela. The volunteers actively participated in the mela through various activities like soft skill training of the PWDs, venue



logistics, documentation etc. Overall volunteers contributed to a large extend of the smooth functioning of the mela.

FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES

Post mela training for PWDs is being organized at Vocational Rehabilitation Centre by LSN Foundation, VRC and Enable India. LSN Foundation in partnership with Enable India will evaluate, train and facilitate placement of the candidates who have submitted their C.Vs.

The first phase of evaluation has already begun. Partnerships with Corporate sector and other industries are also being forged. NIFT has already submitted a detailed report with recommendations for product improvement and NGOs will soon be invited to attend workshops.

STRENGTHS

- The mela provided a common platform for knowledge transfer and exchange of best practices to NGOs and institutions working with the disability
- It brought differently abled people together and they drew from each other's experiences and there were some role models to emulate and encourage
- The mela has created a convergence in the sector of disabilities

AREAS TO IMPROVE

- Scale down the mela logistics
- Increased monetary participation from participants(increased stall fee, no free lunch, etc)
- Increase interaction with the stalls (end of the day sessions)

CONCLUSION

As compare to the last year Abilities Mela held in Hyderabad in Aug 2007, there was all round improvement in this Abilities Mela. The level of participation has gone up significantly. The focus on outcome has made the Mela more impact oriented & result oriented. However there are many areas that still require further attention. This Mela is a useful learning experience for all of us to make the coming edition much more purposeful for the PWDs.
