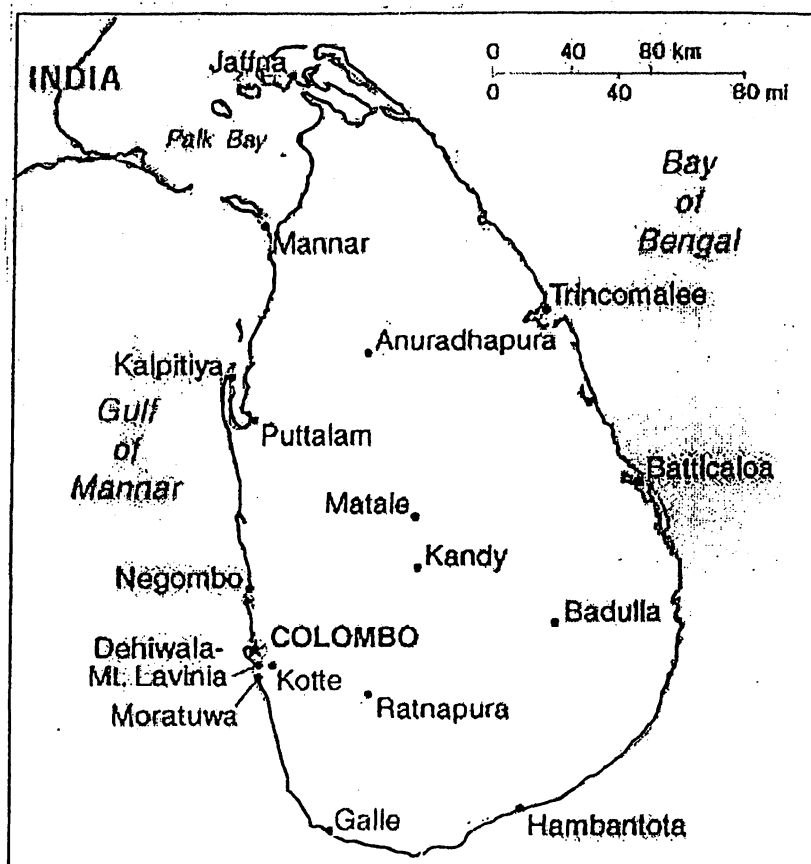


SRI LANKA

COUNTRY REPORT

High Level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude
the Asian and Pacific Decades of Disable Persons.
1993 - 2002 Otsu City Shiga Japan 25- 28 October 2002.



PRESENTED BY

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MINISTRY OF SOCIAL WELFARE
SRI LANKA

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Official Name – Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Capital – Sri Jayavardhanapura 109,000 (1990) Colombo is the largest city
Population – 18,318,000 (1996)
Life Expectancy – 71 years for men 75 years for women
Area – 65,610 sq km (25,326 sq mi)
Largest Cities – Colombo 615,000 Dehiwala – Mount Lavinia 196,000
Languages – Sinhalese; Tamil; English
Religions – Buddhism; Hinduism; Islam; Christianity
Currency – Sri Lankan rupee
Government – Unicameral republic

Provinces; Central, North Central, North Eastern, North Western, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Uva, Western; (note North Eastern province may have been divided in two Southern and Eastern.) Ethnic, religious, and linguistic distinctions in Sri Lanka are essentially the same. Three ethnic groups – Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim – make up more than 99 percent of the country's population, with the Sinhalese alone accounting for nearly three-fourths of the people.

The **written history** of the country begins with the chronicle known as the Mahavamsa. This work was started in the 6th century AD and provides a virtually unbroken narrative up to 1815. The Mahavamsa was compiled by a succession of Buddhist monks. Sri Lanka has had a continuous record of settled and civilized life for more than two millennia.

Sri Lanka is a land of great cultural diversity. Religion pervades many aspects of life and constitutes a basic element of this diversity. Buddhist and Hindu temples, as well as mosques and churches, with their own colourful rituals, are the most readily visible features of the cultural landscape. Varying degrees of colonial impact, modernizing influences, and wealth and income add other shades to the cultural mosaic. In architecture, sculpture, and painting, Sri Lanka's tradition extend far back into antiquity. The remnants of ancient works restored and preserved at archaeological sites, while reflecting Indian influences, also bear testimony to the inspiration derived from Buddhism. Classical literature, too, presents a blend of stylistic influences from India with Buddhist themes.

Over 70 percent of the population of Sri Lanka is of Sinhalese descent. The largest minority groups are the Sri Lankan Tamils and the Indian Tamils, which together account for about 18 percent of the population. The remaining population includes the descendants of Moors (Arabs), Europeans (Dutch), Malays, and Veddas.

Sri Lanka's economy is predominantly based on agriculture. Most of the people are subsistence farmers, who make a living by growing rice on their small plots. A large export trade in tea, rubber, and coconuts is the dominant commercial activity;

In 1977, Colombo abandoned statist economic policies and its import substitution trade policy for free market – oriented policies and export-oriented trade. Sri Lanka's most dynamic sectors now are food processing, textiles and apparel, food and beverages, telecommunications, and insurance and banking. By 1996 plantation crops made up only 20% of exports (compared with 93% in 1970), while textiles and garments accounted for 63%.

COUNTY REPORT – SRI LANKA

LESSONS LEARNED, ACTION AND ACHIEVEMENT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGENDA FOR ACTION, DURING THE ASIA AND PACIFIC DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS, 1993 – 2002.

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is a developing country, which has achieved people's participation through democratic principles, and exercises free socio-economic and trade policies and development efforts. It respects and works to protect democratic policies of liberty. Sri Lanka has gained independence in 1948 after the subjugation of colonial powers over four hundred years. Successive governments after getting independence attention were paid to find solutions for social and community based problems, such as poverty, unemployment, housing, health care, education and other welfare service for the backward and disadvantaged community groups. As the hard-core poverty and other social discriminations and inequalities had the root of basic community level problems.

2. Social Welfare

Government paid its attention to the welfare services of the people. The Department of Social Services was set up in 1948 to implement the social welfare schemes for the benefit of backward and disadvantaged community groups.

Then the concept of social services was granting of financial assistance to the needy to enable them to feed for themselves at subsistence level. In the formative years, that the main functions of the department of Social Services were, granting of public assistance to destitute persons and their families, the aged, the infirm and widows with dependents, provision of financial assistance to disabled persons and patients, granting relief of victims of natural disasters and granting of financial assistance to voluntary social service organizations.

Sri Lanka had adopted a firm social welfare policy as a pre-requisite to economic development of the country. A substantial portion of the government budget was reserved for the social sector such as Health, Education and Social Services. Out of the Population, 10% is considered as disabled in one way or another, It is estimated that at least 7% of this disabled population need special care and attention, due to some impairment.

Over the last decades the disabled population in Sri Lanka has increased considerably. Hence our government is committed to the welfare of the disabled in order to improve their self-reliance, self-confidence and quality of life. Government has set up the Ministry of Social Welfare as a focal point assigned responsibilities of social welfare and community development.

The mission of the ministry is as follows.

" To make disadvantaged partners in the national development by providing a conducive environment and opportunities through policy initiatives and leadership in social welfare and social development "

Sri Lanka Government has paid serious attention to the World Program of Action, and prepared periodical as well as action plans in line with it. Therefore, by the end of 1998-1999 it has been able to implement many activities under the subject areas of national co-ordination, legislation, accessibility, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and regional co-operation.

3. GOVERNMENT POLICY ON SOCIAL WELFARE AND REHABILITATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Human resources are the greatest wealth in a country. As such we have given special attention to the implementation of National Policies and Programmes that develop human resources. Persons with Disabilities are also part and parcel of

this and cannot be considered as a separate or singled - out entity. The Government of Sri Lanka is taking every possible action within available resources to uplift the lives of the different categories of disabled people and make them useful citizens who would contributed to the socio-economic of the country.

Therefore Social Welfare Ministry plans to introduce a National Policy on the Disabled. The Ministry has appointed a 12 member Committee to draft a National Policy on Disability. The Ministry is seeking the assistance of Ministries, institutions and other agencies for chartering of this new policy the first time such a concept has been introduced in this country.

The concept of equality, the protection of fundamental rights and responsibilities and removing barriers for marginalized groups (disabled females, children and youth) will be some of the main subjects covered by the draft. The public is invited to send views and suggestions.

The fundamental goal of Government policies and legislation is improvement of human welfare and human development. Detailed statements of Government policies based on democratic socialist principles elaborated the norms of protection of human rights, equalization of opportunities and Promotion of self-reliance of depressed groups. The policy also with reflect that the encouragement of the private sector including NGOs, investing in human capital to develop skills, improvement of necessary legal and regulatory frame work and establishment of suitable mechanism enabling people to improve there life.

The Constitution of the Sri Lanka Government in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNO resolutions and international conventions has given priority for the protection of hum rights and equal opportunities of every body, disregarding their race, religion, language, sex and status etc.

The Government policy implemented under the principle of Social Welfare has been changed after 1980 s based on the principle of social development. So as the concept of granting financial assistance for disadvantaged people has been changed and introduced more development oriented policies based on

rehabilitation and re-constructive methods. The concept that the rehabilitation of disabled people in rehabilitating centers has also changed by the community based rehabilitation concept.

Under the environment of a favourable policy background and innovative conceptual changes, The Government will change its strategies in rehabilitation of disabled community enabling to utilize this differently able group of human resource improving their living condition and providing them equal opportunities in the society.

4. Legislation

It was in 1996, that the protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act. No. 28 was passed in parliament under its provisions; the National Council and the National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities have been established to implement programmes.

The people with disabilities are also members of the Council, which is to implement the UN Standard Rules. This Council was set up with the approval of H.E. the President under the Chairmanship of the Minister of Social Welfare. A Trust Fund has already been established for the benefit of the persons with disabilities. The Secretariat was established in 1995.

Some of the main functions of the Council.:

- a. to advise the Government on the welfare, protection, and advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities;
- b. to take such measures as are necessary, in consultation with the relevant Ministers, Provincial Councils, Local Authorities, District and Divisional Secretariats, and other public and private sector organizations to promote the furtherance of, and safe guarding the interest and rights of persons with disabilities;
- c. to initiate and implement scheme for the promotion of the welfare of, and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities;

- d. to ensure the adoption of, and compliance with the relevant international declarations and conventions relating to persons with disabilities, by the Government;
- e. to identify the principal causes of disabilities and promote effective measures for their prevention and control,
- f. to establish and maintain rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities;
- g. to establish and maintain institutions to accommodate and care for persons with disabilities and provide educational and vocational training for such persons;
- h. to introduce programmes to make the physical environment accessible to persons with disabilities and implement schemes to provide access to information and communication by persons with disabilities.
- i. to monitor and co-ordinate the programmes and scheme formulated, initiated and implemented by the Government and by voluntary organisations and bodies, for the upliftment of persons with disabilities and to provide grants for such purposes, and to make necessary recommendations;
- j. to assist wherever possible, persons with disabilities to be gainfully employed.

Provision in the Act for Employment Opportunities and Accessibility

In terms of Section 23(1) of the Act, no person with a disability shall be discriminated against on the ground of such disability in recruitment of any employment or office or admission to any educational institutions. Further the Act has provision under Section 23(2) that " no person with a disability shall, on the ground of such disability, be subject to any liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to or use any building or place which any other member of the public has access to or is entitled to use, where on the payment of any fee or not ".

5. Education for Children and Youth with Disabilities.

In Sri Lanka School going children with disabilities are provided with special education that integrated them into the mainstream of education. In certain primary schools children are subjected to examination to detect impairment so that they could be treated for their impairment. The National Institute of Education has special facilities for teacher training and curriculum development to provide education to children with disabilities.

It is worthwhile to mention about this recent efforts made in establishing pre school for Hearing Impaired Children. The National Institute of Education too has a training programme for pre-school teachers on education for hearing impaired children. There are 16 special schools and about 150 special education units (attached to normal schools) for hearing impaired children through out the country.

Another important feature is that, special arrangements have been made to develop educational facilities for the disabled children in several schools, which run by NGOs too. These arrangements are in accordance with the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled persons.

In the formal education system, action is being taken to develop textbooks in the Braille medium. Also action is being taken to develop sign language through a team or researchers to educate the hearing impaired.

The Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education is involved in implementing special curriculums and special classes for the students with disabilities. There are about 40,000 students in these classes.

Disabilities Students Unit is established in the University of Kalaniya, Sri Lanka, and it is involved in training of people for community-based rehabilitation, in addition to the other special educational activities.

' *Education for us too* ' was the theme for the International Day of the Disabled -1997. Therefore numbers of fellow-up activities are in process. A committee consisting of high rank officials at the Ministry of Education and Social Services is working hard to make this a success.

6. TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Role of the Government

The Government has to use relevant international labour standards on the vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities a guide and reference for the development and implementation of training and employment programme. Special attention to the participation of girls and women with disabilities in training and employment opportunities.

Development of pre-vocational training, including at middle and secondary school level, to give girls and boys with disabilities the necessary preparation, of they so choose, for subsequent vocational training and placement.

Vocational Training is being provided to disabled persons under the formal education system, both, in the Government and Non Government Vocational Training Centres. There is a programme for provision of pre vocational by special units and special schools.

Vocational training is being provided in 21 trades in which there are opening for gainful employment. The government has decided to allocate 3% of public sector employment to persons with disabilities. Further, the Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up to locate employment opportunities in the public sector to the disabled and implement effectively. This concession is being extended to the private sector, and initial action has been taken to form a mechanism consisting of businessman to identify such job opportunities in the private sector.

Step have been taken to solve the problem of unemployment among the disabled in accordance with the recommendation envisaged in the Agenda for Action developing by the ESCAP.

6. Job Placement

Job placement of the disabled has become serious a challenge. Even though 3% of the State sector jobs should be reserved for the disabled, so far it has been effective only in the case of recruitment officers to clerical and allied grades. However, the Ministry of Social Welfare is presently taking action to see the same is followed with regard to all requirements of the entire public service.

Where job placement and employment of the disabled in the private sector is concerned, so far no regulations have been made under the existing law. At present the disabled are directed towards private sector jobs merely on the good relations of the relevant parties. So many measures have to be taken in this regard.

In order to solve the employment problem of the disabled of this country, we will have to take various steps in the future.. Creation of access facilities in work places to suit particular disabilities provisions of hostel facilities for the disabled and concessions for the Employers are the problems that we are confronted with in this regard. However, we expect to take all possible measures to take to solve these problems and create a job-market for persons with disabilities.

7. Vocational Training Centres

In order to engage in any employment, it is essential do develop skills and abilities pertaining to the relevant employment. This is equally valid for the disabled as well. Since many of the disabled find it difficult to reach high standards of education, it is of vital importance to take necessary action to promote their vocational skills. In order to promote the vocational abilities of the disabled; the Department of Social Services has established the following Vocational Training Centers.

Gampaha District

- i. Liyanagamulla Vocational Training Center, Seeduwa
- ii. Amunukumbura Vocational Training Center, Watturagama

Kandy District

- iii. Katuwala - Lewla Vocational Training Center
- iv. Wattedgama - Waminigama Vocational Training Center

Hambantota District

- v. Angunukolapelessa - Thelambuyaya Training Center
- vi. (In collaboration with the Ministry of Health)
Vocational Training Center of the Ragama Rehabilitation Hospital.

There are training centers run by voluntary organizations under the sponsorship of the department of the Social Services. These centers function in the Kalutara District, Gampaha District, Anuradhapura District and the Colombo District. The training courses conducted at the above Vocational Training Centers are in the following fields.

Electronics, Television, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, Motor Mechanism, Repairs of Motor Cycles, Lathe Work, Welding, Domestic Electronic wiring, Radio Repairing, Sewing, Carpentry, Watch repairing, Tinkering, Cane Industry, Batik Industry, Arts and Crafts, Brass Carving, Printing, Reed Works, Probation of fancy goods, Agriculture etc.

The duration of the training varies from 03 months to 02 years according to the particular field of training. About 600 disabled persons are selected for training each year. At the end of training every effort is made to direct them towards employment. Those who wish to be engaged themselves to self-employment will be provided with a Tool-Kit.

We have realized that some of our vocational training courses are behind time in the face of the changing labour-market and modern technology. Provision of training under modern technology systems is very costly. Persons who have

specialized knowledge in the preparation of course-works suitable for the disabled are very rare. Amidst, this situation - the Department of Social Services has taken every possible measures for the introduction of new course, elimination of out-dated course and provision of training according to new technology.

8. Skill Development in Agriculture and Agro Based Industries

The Ministry of Social Welfare envisages the upliftment of social and economic conditions of the disabled through the improvement of their skills in the areas of Agriculture and agro based Industries, with the technical assistance of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) . This is to be done by establishing a centre to conduct training in - Floriculture, Plants nursery management, Fruit Processing, Mushroom Production, Vegetable Crop Production, Fruit Production, Fresh Water, Fish Production and Poultry Farming for 180 disabled persons per year.

Trainees for different training programmes will be recruited in batches every three, six or twelve months depending on the activity. Areas of activities have been prepared with a view to help the trainees take up practices that are relative to their own areas for self employment income generation and food security.

9. Community Based Rehabilitation System in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Government decided to implement the Community Based Rehabilitation Programme under the Ministry of Social Welfare Services as a full fledged programme directly financed by the government, after observing several years progress as a pilot project, and considering as a successful and timely method to apply in rehabilitating disabled persons.

Community based rehabilitation is defined as, rehabilitation of persons with disabilities with the cooperation of the rural community utilizing resources available in the village. This is different from the system of institutionalized rehabilitation. But the concept of institutionalized rehabilitation is not rejected and a supportive role of institutions is sought in connection with certain aspect of rehabilitation needs.

This programme basically aims at placing entire responsibility of rehabilitation of person with disabilities on the community. In order to facilitate these activities, a committee known as " Rural Rehabilitation Committee " is set up at the village level with the participation of village officials, community members, trained volunteers, and with the members selected from the families with disabled persons.

The difficulty to rehabilitate the large number of disabled persons through the existing rehabilitation centers was the immediate need to adopt the community-based system in Sri Lanka. There are no enough facilities to rehabilitate about one million of disabled community of the country members, trained volunteer, and with the members selected from the families with disabled persons.

. Institutions existing in the island can accommodate only about 1000 persons annually. Further more, institutionalized rehabilitation does not cover all aspects of the rehabilitation process, as the activities of institutions based on one separate area.

Community based rehabilitation is a low cost and more effective programme. Here, a person with disabilities is rehabilitate after identifying specific disabilities of the person concerned, according to a planned rehabilitation programme to suit the individual person. In this connection, a proper coordination with the Government and Non Governmental Organizations is maintained and their resources are utilized for rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.

This programme has been recognized by UNICEF as well and very much suitable to the third world countries, and this can be described as a cost minimizing method which suit for poor countries. A huge amount of money is needed to rehabilitate disabled by institutionalizing them. On the other way a

large sum of money is needed for the maintenance of the institutions, and there is no involvement between the disabled persons and the society. This also reflects further an isolation of the disabled persons from the society.

The Ministry of Social Services implements the CBR Programme with the cooperation of various other Ministries, Departments and Institutions. Followings are such organizations participate in implementation of the Programme.

- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Labour & Vocational Training
- Ministry of Sports
- Ministry of Planning & Implementation
- Educational Unit for the Persons with Disabilities in the University of Kelaniya.
- National Institute of Social Development
- NGO's, CHIA Foundation, Nawa Jeewana

The Organizational Mechanism of the CBR Programme.

National Level.

The national level organization of the project is National CBR Steering Committee consists of the following members.

- Hon. Minister of Social Services - Chairman
- Secretary, Ministry of Social Services
- Secretary, Ministry of Education
- Secretary, Ministry of Health
- Representative, Ministry of Plan and Implementation
- Representative, Ministry of Defense
- Director of the Department of Social Services
- Director of the National Secretariat for the Persons with Disabilities
- Representative, National Institute of Education

- Representative, WHO
- Representative, United Nations Child Care Fund
- SHIA Foundation
- Nava Jeewana Institution
- Sarvodaya Institution

This Committee involves in planning and coordination activities obtaining the services required for the welfare and rehabilitation of the person with disabilities from the Ministries, Departments and other Institutions.

Provincial Level.

The provincial level coordinating body of the project is the Provincial Committee of CBR. This committee coordinates the activities of the project with the national and the district level and to provide necessary services for the person with disabilities. The committee consists of the following members.

- Chief Secretary of the Province
- Secretary, Provincial Ministry of Social Services
- Director, Provincial Department of Social Services
- Provincial Director of Health
- Provincial Director of Education
- Representatives of NGO's
- Interested parties and Public representatives.

District & Divisional Level.

There are District level CBR Committee organized under the District Secretaries to coordinate the implementation of the project in the village level and to provide necessary facilities for the persons with disabilities. The District committee consists of the representatives of District level public Institutions, NGO's Voluntary Organizations and other interested parties. The District Secretary is the district coordinator of the project and the Divisional Secretary coordinates the implementation of the project in villages.

Procedure in Implementation of the CBR Programme

Under this programme the trained volunteers identify all the disabled persons visiting them in their houses and make them ordinary persons as far as possible. For this purpose in the first instance, action is taken to rehabilitate them by obtaining assistance from their families and the community. The resources existing in divisional, district, provincial and the national level are diverted to rehabilitate disabled persons. Further the necessary services and other requirements are provided for rehabilitation of them.

This programme is implemented at rural level. At the first stage, social services officers and a field officers of the Divisional Secretariat are given 18 days training enabling them to establish the village committee and to holding awareness programmes and also to select volunteers workers through the village committee.

These volunteer workers are given 12 days training through the trained divisional level officers. The trained volunteers identify disabled persons visiting of every home and direct them to relevant clinics for diagnosing the disability and provide necessary services. When the services are provided for at first, it is considered the possibility to provide them from the village by the rural rehabilitation committee that consist of the elders, elite and volunteers leaders.

If there is any task, which can not be done within the village, it is directed to the divisional steering committee, which consists of important public officers and volunteers organizations etc. Hear it is a special feature that every decision is taken and every plan is done at the divisional level by the members of the steering committee, through the government officers.

This system is organized as a network. So that, if there is any inability to provide the disabled persons with the services and facilities at the divisional level, it can be forwarded to the district level, provincial level and the national level respectively.

The Present Operational Position of the Programme

The Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program in Sri Lanka was implemented in the year 1980. This program which was implemented by various institutions and organizations was started as national project by the Ministry of Social Services in 1992 .

CBR program is being experimented and it is present in 4703 Grama Niladari Divisions of 126 Divisional Secretariat divisions in 18 districts in Sri Lanka. Although the National CBR program is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Ministries, Departments and other Institutions are performing a major role in this directions. A major role is being performed in order to fulfill the health requirements of persons with disabilities. Similarly, a contribution is made by way of formulation of Island-wide programs for prevention of disabilities. This contribution is made by means of operation of special unites at ordinary hospitals and special hospitals for persons with disabilities. Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Vocational Training, Ministry of Sports, Ministry of Plan Implementation and in addition to this Ministries and Department, various institutions and NGOO contribute to the CBR program.

10. Voting Benefits for the visually Impaired Persons

The Social Welfare Ministry is to make necessary arrangements to ensure the voting rights of the blind populations in Sri Lanka . According to the present situation the blind people have to obtain the assistance of an elections officer to cast their vote during polling. But most of the blind are not satisfied with this procedure as they cannot check whether the vote had been cast according to their choice by the officer concerned.

A vital discussion held among Social Welfare Minister the Elections Commissioner and all political party leaders to discuss this matter. During this discussion the possibility of amending the present election law to allow blind votes to be accompanied by a person of their choice to exercise the vote on their behalf seriously considered,

In existing laws There is no provision for the visually impaired persons to bring in another person who has his confidence regarding the marking of ballot paper in his presence. Therefore it is necessary to amend the relevant sections of the Presidential, Parliamentary, Provincial Councils Elections Acts, Local Authorities Elections Ordinance and the Referendum Act.

It is paramount to maintain the secrecy of vote at any election. Therefore it is necessary to amend the relevant sections dealing with maintenance of secrecy at elections. In order to achieve this, the person who accompany the visually impaired person to the polling station shall also make the statutory declaration of secrecy substantially in the form set out in relevant schedule. The person who is accompanying the visually impaired voter shall not be an individual contesting , an authorised agent or a polling agent nominated for the relevant election.

11. Housing

Everybody needs to live somewhere. Disabled people, in common with other members of population, usually prefer to live in their own homes rather than in institutions. The difficulty disabled people face is in finding accommodation which is suitable for their needs. Disabled people can obtain their homes in two ways. One is to buy or inherit and the second is rent from the public or private sector. As most disabilities occur from the age 45 onwards, people with disabilities will have a residence when they become disabled. Although there are many aspects of home designs which have improved in recent years there are many features which make the hostile environment for people with mobility handicaps and indeed for the users of those dwellings.

Steps at the front or main entrances not only create hazards for wheelchair users but create difficulties for parents and others to take prams in and out; for children using bicycles and for people carrying heavy objects. A ramp in many cases have replaced the steps and made easier for all home users. Lavatories are some times upstairs and difficult for many people to reach. Narrow doors and tight turning circles makes maneuvering difficulties to wheel chair users. There are some of the impediments that people with disabilities have to face and a policy in Housing exclusively for the disabled is not implemented in Sri Lanka. Ministry of Social Welfare has a programme to provide financial assistance up to the maximum of Rs.50000/- for the persons with disabilities to build a suitable house.

12. REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation is the most important concept that should be applied for the provision of equal opportunity for disabled persons in the society. Disable person means a person who is unable to perform physical or mental or social task which normal person could perform. In terms of the U.N, definition rehabilitation is the social adjustment of a disabled individual within the framework of the community to which he is the social adjustment of a disabled individual within the framework of the community to which he is to be restored as an active and self sufficient participant. Accordingly there are three goals to be achieved in rehabilitation process.

1. Making them independent in their day to day activities, dressing eating, washing etc.
- 2.Integration of them in to society and making them participants of social functions.
- 3.Providing them with equal opportunities in education, employment etc.

The Ministry of Social Services and other institution engaged in social development provide following four components in rehabilitation process.

1. Medical rehabilitation
2. Education rehabilitation
3. Vocational rehabilitation
4. Social rehabilitation

Medical Rehabilitation

Medical treatment is provided to all disabled persons free of charge in Government Hospitals and medical institutions. A special hospital for rehabilitation has been set up nearest to Colombo. Here the patients needed long –term treatments are given all facilities for medical rehabilitation. Including occupational therapy and vocational training in addition to this rehabilitation Hospital there are orthopedic sections in Colombo General Hospital and Base hospitals in Districts.

Provision of Assistive Devices

In order to strengthen medical rehabilitation the National Secretariat for the Person with Disabilities and the Department of Social Services provide them with Assistive devices such as wheel chairs, tricycles, calipers, artificial limbs, crutches and other orthopedic, appliances to the patients who need them. The provision of assistive devices is a grater part of the rehabilitation process, Considerable portion of the disabled community suffers without ability to obtain necessary Assistive devices because of poverty. The National secretariat implements a continuous programme to provide assistive devices for disable persons all over the country. Under the programme of the mobile services the National Center distributes items like spectacles, hearing aids, wheel chairs, tricycles, crutches, and elbows for poor disabled persons in far remote areas in the country.

It is important to make sure the availability of these aids and appliances for the patients. In this field some community organizations joint ventures with the Non Governmental organizations established production centers. The government has given assistance for these manufactures likewise duty exception to import materials and some imported assistive devices. Standards and guidelines for assistive devices were prepared in the end of the last year by the National Secretariat, with the assistance of the Rehabilitation Hospital, producers and suppliers of devices and relevant NGOs. The National rehabilitation hospital implements a systematic programme for given instructions and to train disabled persons to use assistive devices.

Educational Rehabilitation

General education facilities were provided equally for all disabled school going aged children freely allowing them to develop their inborn talents and personality. Sri Lanka could be treated as one of the pioneers in introducing free education in 1945 ensuring equal opportunities for all in education. Special schools for the blind and the hearing impaired were set up in different parts of the country, with the assistance of voluntary social service organizations and religious bodies. These schools are with residential facilities order to enable students from remote areas of the country to receive education. The state gives a maintenance grant to these schools for their up keep. This system brings about a happy blend of voluntary efforts with the state support and the community support in full.

Integrated system of education

As the above mentioned separate education system tends to isolate disabled children from rest of the student population. Integrated system was introduced from 1968 whereby the handicapped students were integrated with the normal students. This was done by organizing special units in normal schools for blind and hearing impaired children. These units enable the students to attend schools from their homes as day scholars and the process of rehabilitating is activated in the community it self. At present there are about 50 special schools and integrated units in the island today.

Vocational rehabilitation

After the general education is over those who qualify for higher education are provided with facilities to enter the institutions of higher education, and others are diverted to vocational training. This training is considered to be most important as the final stage of the road to total rehabilitation of the disabled and considerable attention is paid to the formulation and implementation of the programme of vocational rehabilitation.

Vocational Training

The department of Social Services implements the institutional based vocational training programme designed for the persons who suffer from visual, hearing, speech, and intellectual disabilities. There are 6 Vocational Training Centers established in four District in the country directly under the Department of Social Services and a new Center is being constructed specially for the persons with intellectually disabled. 7 of other Training Centers maintained by the number of voluntary organizations are assisted by the annual financial grant given by the Department of Social Services.

JOB OPORTUNITIES

Job placement of disabled has become a serious challenge. The negative attitude that prevail in the society towards the disabled, accessibility and transport difficulties, poor understanding of abilities and aspirations of disabled persons are seem to be as negative factors of providing job opportunities. Amidst of this situation the government has already taken action to provide them with equal opportunities to obtain higher education and the path of vocational training.

Following measures have been taken to encourage public and the private sector to provide job opportunities.

- The Ministry of Public administration has issued a circular to allocate 3% of job opportunities of the public service for disabled.
- The Ministry of Social Services requested to open an Industry in the Industrial Promotion Zone to provide jobs for disabled
- Department of Social Services has requested to the Industrial Promotion Board to provide jobs for trained disabled persons providing necessary information of trainers.

- Two days International Symposium was conducted by the Department Social Services in collaboration with the Japan Association for Promotion of Employment of the Disabled in order to create awareness with the participation of NGOs and the private sector.
- The ministry with the assistance of The National Council has paid special attention to change the negative attitudes and to highlight the different abilities of disabled people.

Social Rehabilitation.

Social rehabilitation means to create favourable social environment and take all the necessary steps for the provision of disabled persons to live in the same community as other normal persons equally enjoying common social status. In this exercise The Ministry and other relevant institutions have taken following steps.

- Organization of awareness programmes and special events such as international day programmes for disabled persons 3rd December each year

Published special themes to highlight the abilities of disabled and to change negative attitudes of the society towards the persons with disabilities some of special themes are

- * **1996, A society for all**
- * **1995, Accessibility to built environment**
- 1997, Education for us**
- 1998, Employment for us too**
- 1999, We are differently baled.**

- Organization of annual national sports festivals for disabled persons.

13. Integration of activities

Activities of the Ministry and other Institutions in the area of social development are being functioned as a combined effort. The Ministry as the national focal point coordinates all the national and local level activities through its Departments, Institutions and, with the assistance of Provincial Councils and District and Divisional Secretariats. On the other way the National Secretariat works as the facilitator of all the institutions involved in services in this sector. The National Council represented all the important sectors, provided basic human requirements and does its work in corporate with all the parties.

14. Sports and Recreation

The Government of Sri Lanka has accepted the importance of sports activities for persons with disabilities and provide every possible facility for such activities as much as possible and encourage Sport Meets for Disables Such Sports Meets are conducted by Department of Social Services in association with the Ministry of Sports and they have excelled in several competitive events and have earned trophies and certificates both locally and internationally. Such Meets are arranged in association with the assistance of NGOs like National Federation of Sports for the Disabled, Sri Lanka Association of Deaf Children, National Council for the Blind, The Ratmalana School for Blind, The Association of Disabled Soldiers etc. Some of our disabled athletes who took part in Olympic Games and other regional competitions have won medals and trophies every year. Ministry of Social Welfare have encouraged sports for the disabled and have decided to start well-organised Sports Meets for the disabled at National level from 1998 onwards, and these meets have been big events . The first National Sports Meet for the disabled was successfully conducted on 29 th November 1998. Number of Voluntary Organisations hold Sports Meets, Art, Dance and Drama competitions annually, providing the handicapped children, an opportunity to demonstrate their sports and cultural capabilities and improve on them so, that they may feel wanted and accepted by the Social and also that the people will realize the the handicapped are part and parcel of the Society.

15. Negative attitudes and barriers.

There are some negative attitudes that prevail in the society toward the disable community. Such negative attitudes and several other social and physical barriers were constrained in rehabilitation effort. Some of these barriers were caused to keep disabled persons away from social and economical opportunities. Removing those barriers, which excludes disabled persons from social and economical opportunities is a very important task to be attended by the state and the private sector. Followings are the common obstacles faced by the disabled community

- Stigma of disability.
- Poor understanding of the abilities and aspirations of the disabled persons.
- Unequal access to education and training
- Lack of rehabilitation services
- Lack of suitable vocational training facilities
- Inaccessibility in transport and entrance in to buildings.
- Lack of assistive devises and support services
- Lack of employable abilities and skills.
- Lack of access to self-employment opportunities
- Low self-esteem and over protective families.

Although disabled persons are not able to do certain things like normal persons they have various other potentials and innovative capabilities. Protective and rehabilitative measures to be taken to provide them equal opportunities and to make barrier free access in economic and social environment. The principle of equality and the provision of equal social opportunities for disabled persons is a policy accepted and declared by the United Nations. Sri Lanka being a signatory to that declaration, responsible to protect the rights of this back ward and disadvantaged community and provide them with all the other basic human opportunities equally.

16. Reliable Data Base

Sri Lanka has no reliable data collection on person with disabilities. From time to time some people have collected data here and there on disabled persons for specific purposes which lack of scientific or systematic sampling procedures. There is no description of data about the persons with disabilities developed in the data collected by the Census conducted in 1981. The CBR programme conducted a sample survey to collect data on disabled persons living in selected villages. But it is also not a complete data base on disabled persons, without a reliable data base, it is difficult to understand the different situations of disabilities of the population and other information necessary for rehabilitation and other requirements.

17. Integrated action plan

There is no integrated action plan for the purpose of the protection of rights and welfare of disabled persons. Several Ministries and institutions do their services individually without given aims and targets stipulated in an integrated action plan prepared by a focal point.

18. Poverty of the disabled Community.

Poverty is another striking problem for the promotion of living standard of disabled persons. Majority of disabled people in Sri Lanka is poor, and they have less ability to obtain proper education and necessary assistive devices and physical aids need to reduce their disability. Under this situation disabled persons are tend to live begging. Poor family members of disabled persons faced serious difficulties in looking after the persons with disabilities.

19. Negative attitudes of the people often linked to discriminations

Some people have negative attitudes, so as the disabled are lower community group, and they tend to make discriminations to disabled persons in social activities. As a result of such negative ideas people do not want to understand different abilities existing with disabled persons, This manner of negative attitudes is unfavourably affected in job placement activities of disabled persons.

Accessibility environment

In Sri Lanka there are no architectural and other accessibility facilities built for easy access of disabled persons, in majority of public buildings, roads, transport system and in other utilities. Non availability of accessibility facilities in public places is a grate barrier in uplifting of the living condition of disabled persons. It is also an obstacle in providing equal opportunities in the society.

20. Public Awareness.

In 1998 a National public awareness campaign commemorated the mid-point of the Decade and publicized the start of the second half of the Decade, though various means such as issuing first day postal covers and commemorative stamps promoting the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities, organizing ar6 and performing art festivals, sports and competitions of people with disabilities and organizing national and sub-national mass media campaigns, including private sector, folk media and grassroot activities, noting the International Day of Disable Persons, 3rd December. We have also promoted awareness and sensitivity among young people towards peoples with disabilities through producing information materials on people with disabilities, involving prominent personalities, and encouraging young people to perform volunteer work with disabilities.

Sri Lanka has done much in giving publicity to eradicate negative attitudes toward the disabled. Also done much in giving publicity to the World Programme of Action and ESCAP agenda of action through the print and electronic media. Action was taken to create awareness through workshops, seminars and national festivals like New Year Day and also through Sports meets for disabled.

National Mental Health Week which was declared by H.E. the President of Sri Lanka was implemented successfully by the Ministry of Social Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine from 10-16 Oct. 1977. This is the first event of this nature conducted in an Asian country. The follow-up of activities on awareness, counseling and therapy etc. are conducted by Health Officers, Social Service Officers and voluntary organizations.

The issue

According to the W.H.O. estimation, in Sri Lanka 10% of the population is handicapped in some way or other as in other developing countries in the Asian region. On this basis there ought to be 1.8 million persons with some sort of disability. But every one of these may not require rehabilitation services. The house to house surveys done in the rural areas where pilot based community based rehabilitation projects have been implemented, revealed that only 5% to 7% of the people are disabled. If we take 7% of the population to be disabled there should be 1,281,000 persons with disability. This is fairly a higher figure for a small country like Sri Lanka and it will greatly affected the socio-economic development of the country, and therefore tremendous effort has to be taken to make this huge amount of population economically productive and socially effective.

As a developing country Sri Lanka has also suffered some economic draw back and high priority has to be given to the activities of economic development and therefore rehabilitation and social welfare of disabled persons tends to receive low priority in allocating funds in the national budgets. The rehabilitation centers conducted by the Department or NGO were were highly in sufficient and too poor in quality to meet the tremendous need of rehabilitation of disabled persons. As revealed by surveys, 47% of disable community in Sri Lanka is under 14 years of age.

Moreover, because the majority of Sri Lankans live in rural, or at least suburban, communities'' urban facilities were inaccessible and inappropriate.

21. CONCLUSION

In comparison with the total population the number of disabled community in Sri Lanka is a considerable amount. Although the disabled persons have certain disabilities, they have some abilities, talents and human needs as other normal persons in the society. Under the principle of the protection of human rights and provision of equal opportunities, it is a national responsibility to protect the rights of disabled persons and to provide them equal opportunities to obtain basic human needs without any discrimination.

However the disabled community is being disadvantaged by some obstacles created on negative attitudes of the public and physical and social barriers created by the disability. These social barriers are caused to keep disabled persons away from enjoying equal opportunities. Changing those negative attitudes and highlighting their different abilities to be done through effective awareness programme.

The responsibility of the Government and other relevant parties is to make proper accessible environment and helping them providing assistive devices and other facilities need to rehabilitate this disadvantaged community group. Sri Lanka Government aligned with the UN and other international conventions has approached the problem favourably. Through policy formulation, providing legal framework and taking suitable steps effectively.

At present day by day various types of requests and proposals are received by the Ministry of Social Welfare from the persons with disabilities for their development since there is a remarkable awakening in them about their place in the society and abilities they can perform. This proves that they believe and trust the efforts of the Government.