

Leonard Cheshire Disability South Asia Regional Office

This e-newsletter from **Leonard Cheshire Disability South Asia Regional Office (LCD SARO)** aims to keep you abreast of LCD's activities in the South Asia region covering four countries: Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Leonard Cheshire Disability (LCD) supports thousands of disabled people both in the United Kingdom (UK) and in more than 50 other countries through the Leonard Cheshire Disability Global Alliance, a network of over 250 independent Cheshire organisations.

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Dear Friends,

The journey continues..... and we are presenting an update of the work of Leonard Cheshire Disability that is happening across the South Asia region.

Hope this will be of interest to you and inspire you to stay with us with commitment and passion in our journey ahead. The smiles in the faces of those with whom we are working keeps us to move forward and the generous support and valuable inputs from each one of you kindles the light in our day to day work.

It is always a pleasure to celebrate the successes and keep the morale high. Our partners have been the pillars of growth and spaces of innovation. Read through, enjoy and revert with your comments. It will be valued and nurtured.

Expecting the same co-operation and support from each one of you!

Warm Regards,



Revathy Rugmini K S
Regional Representative

Features

Over 4800 disabled people employed as part of 'Access to Livelihoods' project



Saroja, a self employed disabled woman from Coimbatore

LCD SARO has successfully completed phase II of the Accenture supported project “Access to Livelihoods” in India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The 3 year project ended in March 2014 and made a huge impact on the lives of people with disabilities. The project was implemented through 12 Livelihoods Resource Centres (LRCs) in different locations in South Asia.

Major highlights are:

- Over **4800 disabled people** received employment opportunities in self-and waged employment. They were given intensive training on life skills through foundation training, an entrepreneurship development programme (EDP), and vocational training in retail, IT/BPO, hospitality and several other areas.
- **43 formalised partnerships** were established by National LRCs set up in the 4 countries. These partnerships were made with corporates, government departments, industry associations, retail chains, training institutes, the hospitality industry, microfinance institutions, universities, NGOs, disabled people’s organisations etc. These linkages helped the LRCs with identifying people with disabilities, training, placement and follow ups.
- In addition to the above, over **900 informal partnerships** were established to support the LRC processes.
- **126 events** were delivered across the different locations including job fairs, networking events with employers, banks and microfinance institutions. The job fairs and networking events helped the LRCs to create more awareness among stakeholders about the project activities and matters related to the livelihoods of

Sri Lanka LRC became a member of the National Steering Committee formed by the country’s Ministry of Labour, Affairs and Manpower and the Ministry of Social Service. The LRC also influenced the government to establish a secretariat to ensure quality employment for people with disabilities.

Bangladesh Livelihood Resource Centre, through CSID, entered a formal partnership with Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC), an autonomous division under the Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology, Government of Bangladesh. This has led to training for 214 people with disabilities free of charge and secured several jobs, mainly in the IT sector.

people with disabilities. Job fairs proved to be one of the best ways to provide employment for people with disabilities in large numbers.

- ‘**Jobability**’ a job portal for disabled people (www.jobability.org) was developed to match disabled job seekers with job vacancies, placements and training opportunities provided by employers and other organisations.
- Several media sensitisation workshops and disability awareness programmes were organised to increase awareness on disability and livelihoods.

A sensitization programme organised for microfinance institutions and banks by **Nagapattinam LRC** resulted in the mobilization of more than Rs 6 million (\$100,000) for disabled candidates to start their own enterprises.

As part of the advocacy efforts made by Pakistan LRC, The British Council in Pakistan has made a new commitment to guarantee 20% of placements on their national internship programme for people with disabilities.

Bangalore LRC provided training in sign language to Kentucky Fried Chicken’s middle-level managers to help them understand the needs of staff who are hearing impaired.

‘Employing people with disabilities is part of our long term sustainability strategy, it is not a charity initiative’ says Mr. R Hari, General Manager, Lemon Tree Hotels



**Mr. R. Hari, General Manager,
HR, The Lemon Tree**

“As an equal opportunity employer, we provide people with disabilities with the same opportunities as others, to help them realise their full potential. This initiative is part of our sustainability strategy and has been built into the business model and the DNA of the company” says Mr. R. Hari, General Manager, Human Resources of The Lemon Tree Hotel Company.

Lemon Tree Hotels - the fastest growing chain of upscale, midscale and economy hotels in India - is a successful employer of people with disabilities. The Lemon Tree Group has employed 250 employees with disabilities, including those with speech, visual, hearing and physical impairments, across their chain of 25 hotels in 15 cities.

As part of the Access to Livelihoods project, Lemon Tree has employed 6 people with disabilities from the Delhi LRC. These employees were trained for two months in communications and life skills, which helped them to secure the roles.

“Some techniques used by Lemon Tree include unique tools that facilitate speech and hearing impaired staff to interact with the hotel guests. An example being a unique numbered menu so that coffee shop guests can write down the number of the menu item ordered along with the quantity”, says Hari.

“We provide continuous training in the areas of food & beverage service, housekeeping and kitchen stewarding. We also sensitize all co-workers about how to work with and understand disabled colleagues and also train them to use the Indian Sign Language (ISL)”.

Hari said, “We are proud that our top 25 performers in the company include some employees with disabilities. We have also noticed that the attrition rate of disabled employees is much lower than the company average. Moreover, we have received positive feedback from guests regarding our employees with disabilities, and this is one of the most satisfying aspects of this initiative.”

Towards an inclusive teacher training curriculum



To ensure that teacher training and the national curriculum is sensitive to the needs of disabled children, LCD, through our partner Gana Unnayan Kendra (GUK), has started working towards the development of appropriate teacher training and the national curriculum in Bangladesh. This is being done through our inclusive education project in Nilphamari, which is supported by the European Union.

As a first step, the project initiated are view of teacher training and the national curriculum in discussion with concerned government officials.

The purpose of the review was to assess the educational needs of children with disabilities in the existing primary education system, make the curriculum inclusive for all children, and promote an equal focus on all disability types in the mainstream education system.

The review findings were shared with National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE). Based on our discussions, the Director General and other senior officials from NAPE visited our inclusive education programme in Nilphamari from June 6th to 8th. After seeing the success of the project, NAPE has expressed an interest

in considering the review of the curriculum made by the project and bringing changes to the teacher training curriculum.

Strengthening parents to support their disabled children at school



Realising the role of parents is a vital part of our inclusive education programme. The project staff of Mumbai Cheshire Home regularly conduct parents' meetings in the community. Supported by LCD, the parents' meetings are part of our inclusive education project in Mumbai and Serampore in Kolkata.

The aims of the monthly parents' meetings are to understand the challenges faced by the parents in enrolling and retaining children with disabilities in schools and find suitable solutions collectively through sharing experiences. This also promotes bonding and a sense of camaraderie amongst the parents,

who are expected to continue to safeguard the rights of their children. Around 300 parents take part in the meetings.

Sapna Tilve is an inspiration for many other mothers of children with disabilities. Sapna has a disabled son, Baliram Santosh Tilve, who is studying in class 9. If you ask her what she does, she says "I take care of my son". She received rejections from many schools during Balram's admission due to his disability. But she didn't lose hope. With the help of the project staff, she lobbied for his admission. Today she not only inspires other mothers, but also encourages them to participate in parents' meeting and gives them her support whenever required.

Strength of community initiative:

The inclusive education team in Kolkata held several meetings with the Mondalpara community and convinced them of the need for good roads so that disabled children can easily go to school. The people of the Mondalpara community went to the local municipal council and requested for the roads to be repaired. The local councillor was convinced and the roads are now much improved.

Accolades

‘Young Voices’ member appointed as ‘Global Youth Ambassador’

LCD’s ‘s Young Voices member Ms Ashwini Angadi, a visually impaired young woman, has been appointed as a “World At School Global Youth Ambassador” for 2014-15. As Global Youth Ambassador, Ms. Ashwini will be part of the global movement of young leaders working to get every child into school and learning.

Young Voices is a global network of over 1200 young people with disabilities in 21 countries. The groups speak out for the rights of people with disabilities, meet regularly to talk and learn about their rights, and carry out campaigns to access their rights.

The Global Ambassadors were announced at the ‘2015 Countdown Summit’ organised in Washington DC by ‘A World at School’, in collaboration with the Office of the UN Special Envoy for Global Education and leading civil society organisations, along with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.



Young Voice members-Special invitees for Queen’s reception



Yellamma (right) meeting the Queen

Three Young Voice members- Ms. Yellamma Gangadhar from Bangalore Cheshire Home and Mr. Shailender and Mr. Prince from Young Voices, Delhi were the special invitees of a reception hosted by Her Majesty the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh on 29th May 2014 at St James’s Palace, London.

The event celebrated LCD’s work towards a world where every person is equally valued. Ms. Yellamma said: ‘When I met the Queen I felt very excited. I would like to take this opportunity to thank people all over the world for supporting

Leonard Cheshire Disability – it is such a fantastic charity that has transformed the lives of disabled people.’

Resources

A 'Talking Library' exclusively for Visually Impaired Persons

Launched on 27th of March 2014, an audio library called 'Talking Library' was set up by the LRC Project in Nagapattinam. It is the first of its kind in Tamil Nadu. It offers multi-dimensional facilities to Visually Impaired Persons. The library provides access to a large collection of audio books on various subjects including: literature, general knowledge, acts and policies, school and college education, general reading, magazines, etc. The Audio Library is also unique as it uses 'DAISY Technology' which is relatively new in Tamil Nadu. DAISY Technology helps to prepare a single source document on a computer. From this source document, all accessible formats such as Braille, audio books, large print books or e-text books can be prepared in a matter of minutes.



Events

International Conference on 'Access to Livelihoods' for people with disabilities

Leonard Cheshire Disability held an international conference on 13th February 2014 in New Delhi as part of the 'Access to Livelihoods' project. The conference brought together multiple stakeholders and sectors from the 13 project locations in South and East Asia to share their learning, best practices and achievements in providing inclusive economic opportunities to persons with disabilities.

This event showcased the globally recognised



Livelihoods Resource Centre (LRC) approach, established under the Access to Livelihoods programme. The aims of the event were to promote a shared understanding of disability and inclusive livelihoods issues and to provide networking opportunities for participants.

The conference was attended by over 100 distinguished participants from the 5 project countries (Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Philippines and India), including organisations working for persons with disabilities, bilateral and multilateral organisations, project beneficiaries and employers, corporate and industry associations, LRCs and Cheshire Home representatives.

The media: a partner in the disability movement

A media sensitization workshop: ‘The media: a partner in the disability movement’ was organised by Mumbai Cheshire Homes on 19th April 2014. The event was organised as part of a project supported by the World Jewish Relief (WJR) fund.

A total of 42 participants, including 34 media personnel, people with disabilities who have been supported by the WJR project and employers of people with disabilities actively participated in the event.

The event was pitched as a ‘celebration of the successes of people with disabilities’ and explored how media should find adequate time slots and print space to cover success stories that would lead to improved attitudes of the community towards persons with disabilities and their capabilities and skills.



Ms. Dhanya Rajeshwaran, Vice President - Human Resources, Accenture speaking during the inaugural session



The audience was enthralled with the stories of challenges being overcome by disabled people and asked several questions.

For the audience, it was a memorable day away from routine work. Several of them said they would take this back to their work and look at how they could cover such socially relevant issues.

LCD representation at ILO Global Business and Disability Network meeting

Ms. Revathy Rugmini, Regional Representative, LCD SARO, was invited to attend the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Global Business and Disability Network meeting held on 28 April 2014 in Bangalore. Ms. Rugmini spoke about LCD's 'jobability portal' for disabled people (www.jobability.org) during a panel discussion on innovative ideas to promote disability inclusion in the workplace.

Recommendations of the working group for upgrading Vocational Rehabilitation Centres

LCD was invited by the Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India to be one of the members of the working group for upgrading Vocational Rehabilitation Centres. The recommendations made by LCD have been incorporated by the Ministry.

European Union, India invites LCD for inputs on disability

The delegation of the European Union to India invited Ms. Revathy Rugmini of LCD SARO to provide inputs into the 'EU roadmap for engagement with civil society - India'. The meeting was held on 22nd May 2014 in New Delhi. LCD contributed towards discussions on inclusive education, livelihoods and youth advocacy.

Cheshire News

Renovation of Coorg Cheshire Home

The renovated Coorg Cheshire Home was inaugurated by Mr. Rana Philip, Chairman, National Council, Cheshire Homes India on 26th March 2014.

Supported by Human Dignity Foundation, the renovation of the existing rehabilitation centre and the vocational training centre in Coorg aims to provide a range of rehabilitation, educational and vocational training services to children and young adults with disabilities.

Renovation of the rehabilitation centre includes construction of three rooms and a toilet with



accessible features such as wide doors, accessible electrification, a water and sanitation system, pathways designed for children with sensory impairments, attractive colour paintings with strap lines, construction of ramps and signage for visually impaired people. The project also includes renovation of the physiotherapy room, library and office, digging of borewells and a rainwater harvesting system.

The vocational training facilities for young adults with disabilities will be upgraded equipped with a unit to recycle paper and to manufacture handmade paper. This will also be used as a resource centre for training.

Upgrade of Madurai Cheshire Home

Supported by Lord Patriarch Banks Charity, the existing Madurai Cheshire Home in Tamil Nadu has been renovated and a new physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre has been constructed. The facilities in the building are now ready to provide services such as physiotherapy, yoga and counselling support for disabled people and their family members.

Before the project started, the Cheshire Home's building for 27 residents with disabilities had become incredibly run down. It was constructed over 40 years ago and has since undergone minimal maintenance due to lack of funds. The renovation of the building includes new flooring, accessible toilets, electrification, structural repair etc. The renovated building will help in providing daily physical health rehabilitation support such as: regular physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, counselling and support for everyday living for people with disabilities living in and around the Cheshire Home.



Newly constructed physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre

Contact Us

Leonard Cheshire Disability South Asia Regional Office is based in Bangalore, India. We support disability and inclusive development projects and Cheshire services in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

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