

An Overview on the

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ODISHA INCLUSIVE odish SUMMIT-2024

held on

6th December 2024

at

New Auditorium, Ramadevi Women's University Bhubaneswar



ODISHA RISING FOUNDATION

Bhubaneswar

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Foreword

Dear Fellow Advocates of Inclusivity,

It is with immense pride and heartfelt gratitude, I present this comprehensive report on the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 which was organised on 6th of December 2024 at Ramadevi Women's University to commemorate International Day for Person's Disabilities. This summit marked a significant milestone in our collective journey towards building an inclusive society that values and empowers every individual, regardless of their abilities.

The Odisha Rising Foundation (ORF) has always believed that inclusivity is not merely an ideal but a necessity for a just and equitable society. Through the Odisha Inclusive Summit, we aimed to create a platform where the voices of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) could be amplified, their challenges acknowledged, and actionable solutions collaboratively identified. This report encapsulates the essence of the discussions, insights, and ideas shared during the summit. It reflects the dedication and passion of over 300 participants—from government representatives, academicians, industry leaders, journalists, NGOs, and PwDs—who joined hands to champion the cause of inclusivity.

As you navigate through this report, I encourage you to reflect on the profound commitment required to make inclusivity a reality. Our journey does not end with this summit; instead, it propels us forward, reminding us of the collective responsibility we share to empower PWDs and create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

On behalf of ORF, I extend my deepest appreciation to all the dignitaries, especially SSEPD Department, Government of Odisha, speakers, partners, and attendees who contributed to the success of this summit. Your unwavering support is a beacon of hope and inspiration for the road ahead.

Let us continue this journey together, promoting innovation, collaboration, and compassion to build an inclusive Odisha and a better world for all.



With gratitude and determination,

Shri Akhaya Sagar

Chairman and Co-founder Odisha Rising Foundation

Message

Dear Esteemed Readers,

It is with great pride and joy that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all who contributed to the success of the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024. This summit, and the report it has produced, stands as a shining example of our collective resolve to create a society where inclusivity is not just an aspiration but a lived reality.

I am deeply inspired by the innovative approaches discussed during the summit, including leveraging technology and promoting collaboration among stakeholders. These efforts are vital in ensuring equal opportunities in education, employment, and social integration for PWDs. Let us remember that true inclusivity requires not only policy reforms but also a fundamental shift in societal attitudes, rooted in empathy and respect.

I commend the Odisha Rising Foundation for their visionary leadership in organizing this impactful event. Together, let us continue working towards a future where every individual, irrespective of their abilities, can contribute meaningfully and live with dignity.

With warm regards and best wishes, Shri Suresh Pujari

Honorable Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management Department Government of Odisha

Dear esteemed readers,

It is with profound honor and heartfelt gratitude that I extend my appreciation to everyone who contributed to the success of the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024. This remarkable initiative exemplifies our shared commitment to building a society where every individual, regardless of their abilities, can live with dignity, independence, and respect.

Throughout my tenure working closely with persons with disabilities (PWDs), I have witnessed their resilience, talent, and unyielding spirit. They are an integral part of our society, and it is our collective responsibility to ensure they are empowered and included. While policies like the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017, have laid a strong foundation, there is much more to be done. Inclusivity cannot be achieved solely through reservations or policies—it requires us to challenge stereotypes, practice empathy, and create an environment where everyone has equal opportunities to thrive.

The Odisha Inclusive Summit has provided a platform for critical discussions, collaboration, and the exchange of innovative ideas. It has brought together voices from across sectors to champion the rights of PWDs and chart a path toward a more equitable society. I am particularly inspired by the cultural performances by differently-abled individuals and special children, which beautifully highlighted their exceptional abilities and potential.

I sincerely thank the Odisha Rising Foundation and all stakeholders for organizing such a significant event and for their unwavering dedication to this cause. Let us continue working together to make inclusivity not just a goal but a reality for every individual.



With deep gratitude and hope, Smt. Sulochana Das Mayor, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Dear Fellow Advocates of Inclusivity,

It is with immense pleasure that I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all contributors and supporters of the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024. This inspiring initiative serves as a testament to our collective commitment to building a society that is inclusive, equitable, and respectful of the rights and potential of every individual, especially persons with disabilities (PWDs).

During my tenure as the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, I have witnessed both the resilience and challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. Their aspirations are a powerful reminder of the need for a society that values every individual equally. Inclusivity is not merely a policy goal—it is a mindset, a commitment to removing barriers, and an acknowledgment of the inherent potential within everyone.

This summit is a pivotal step toward addressing the gaps in accessibility, education, and employment for PWDs. It is also an opportunity to celebrate the strides we have made, while reflecting on the work that remains. I commend the Odisha Rising Foundation for their unwavering dedication and for organizing this impactful event that inspires hope and drives action.

Together, let us continue to champion inclusivity and ensure that our collective efforts create a society where every individual, regardless of their abilities, has the opportunity to lead a dignified and fulfilling life.

Warm regards, Smt. Bratati Harichandan, IAS (Retd.) State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities

Dear Visionaries for an Inclusive Odisha,

I congratulate Odisha Rising Foundation for organising the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024, an event that stands as a beacon of hope and progress for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) across the state. This summit has been a testament to the collective will and commitment of all stakeholders—government, civil society, industry leaders, and individuals—toward building a future where inclusivity is not just an aspiration but a lived reality.

At the SSEPD Department, we have long championed the cause of empowering PWDs through innovative policies, community engagement, and transformative initiatives. The Odisha Inclusive Summit provided an exceptional platform to share insights, exchange ideas, and promote partnerships that will drive systemic change. Together, we can continue to break barriers, redefine possibilities, and shape a society that values and celebrates diversity in every form.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Odisha Rising Foundation for their tireless work in organizing this summit and for their enduring commitment to the welfare of PWDs. Let us move forward with renewed determination to create a brighter, more inclusive Odisha.



With respect and resolve,
Smt. Niyati Pattnaik, OAS
Director, SSEPD Department, Government of Odisha

Acknowledgement

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the individuals, organizations, and institutions whose invaluable support made the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 a resounding success. This landmark event would not have been possible without the collective efforts and unwavering commitment of our sponsors, partners, and well-wishers.

We sincerely acknowledge the SSEPD Department, Government of Odisha, for partnering with us and offering their continuous guidance and support. Their collaboration has been pivotal in shaping the vision and execution of this summit, reinforcing the commitment of the state government to the cause of inclusivity.

We are deeply thankful to V-Guard Industries Limited and Odisha Coal and Power Limited for their generous sponsorship support, which significantly contributed to the success of the summit. Their support underscores the importance of corporate involvement in fostering inclusivity and empowering Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

We are profoundly grateful to Ramadevi Women's University for their gracious gesture in providing us with their state-of-the-art auditorium. This gesture reflects their dedication to inclusivity and their ongoing efforts to promote equality and empowerment through education and social initiatives.

Lastly, we extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the speakers, dignitaries, panelists, performers, volunteers and participants who enriched this summit with their insights, contributions, and enthusiasm. Your presence and active engagement have been instrumental in driving meaningful dialogue and actionable solutions toward a more inclusive Odisha.

Together, let us continue this journey toward equity, dignity, and empowerment for all.

Special Thanks to Our Collaborators



Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department Government of Odisha



V-Guard Industries Limited



Ramadevi Women's University



Odisha Coal & Power Limited

Executive Summary

The Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 (OIS), organized by the Odisha Rising Foundation (ORF), was held on December 6th at Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar, as a culmination of a series of activities celebrating the International Day for Persons with Disabilities. The summit aimed to promote a deeper understanding of inclusivity and create actionable strategies to integrate persons with disabilities into mainstream society.

The event featured distinguished dignitaries, including Shri Suresh Pujari, Honorable Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management, Government of Odisha, and Prof. Aparajita Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of Ramadevi Women's University, who delivered the keynote address. Other notable participants included Smt. Bratati Harichandan IAS (Retd.), State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, and Smt. Niyati Pattnaik, Director of SSEPD, Government of Odisha, and Smt. Sulochana Das, Mayor of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation.

The summit served as a platform for open dialogue on critical issues such as accessibility, societal attitudes, education, and technological innovation. Through speeches, panel discussions, and personal stories, participants shed light on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and proposed sustainable solutions to promote their empowerment.

Key highlights

- Transforming Societal Mindsets: Emphasis on addressing not only physical barriers but also the psychological and emotional isolation faced by persons with disabilities.
- Innovative Educational Opportunities: Discussions on leveraging technology and innovative teaching methodologies to enhance learning experiences for persons with disabilities.
- Proposals for Progressive Initiatives: Suggestions for establishing emergency helpline numbers, digital platforms for resource access, and career counseling programs tailored for persons with disabilities.
- **Empowering Cultural Program:** A heartwarming cultural performance by differently-abled individuals and special children, showcasing their talents and celebrating their unique abilities.
- **Inspiring Personal Narratives:** Stories like that of Phoola, who found empowerment through an inclusive environment, and Rachana, who shared her aspirations as a national-level cricket player, resonated with attendees.
- **Employment Generation:** Discussions emphasized the need to generate employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, fostering financial independence and dignity.
- **Healthcare Access:** Advocacy for creating more accessible healthcare facilities and specialized services for persons with disabilities, ensuring their holistic well-being.

The Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 was a call to action for all stakeholders—government bodies, educational institutions, corporates, and individuals—to work collectively toward a more inclusive society. By amplifying the voices of persons with disabilities, showcasing their potential, and celebrating their talents, the summit laid a strong foundation for building a future where inclusivity is not just a vision but a reality.

Event Overview

The Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 (OIS), held on December 6th at the New Auditorium, Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar, was a landmark initiative by the Odisha Rising Foundation (ORF) to promote inclusivity and empower Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). The summit addressed the challenges faced by PWDs and highlighted the importance of their integration into mainstream society.

With over 300 attendees, including government officials, NGOs, industry leaders, educators, and advocates, the event fostered collaboration and dialogue. Distinguished dignitaries delivered inspiring speeches, and interactive discussions explored actionable solutions. A cultural program by differently-abled individuals and special children added a celebratory and poignant touch to the proceedings.

The summit underscored the collective commitment to championing the rights of PWDs, reaffirming ORF's dedication to promoting an inclusive and equitable future.

Key Objectives and Focus Areas of Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024

Empowering Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) through Innovation and Technology

- 1. The summit highlights the role of innovation and technology in addressing the unique challenges faced by PWDs.
- 2. Emphasis is placed on leveraging assistive technologies, digital tools, and adaptive devices to enhance accessibility and independence.
- 3. Discussion on how technology can help bridge gaps in education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for PWDs.

Promoting Accessibility in Public Spaces and Services

- 1. Promoting the implementation of universal design principles to ensure inclusivity in infrastructure and public services.
- 2. Addressing the need for accessible transportation, communication systems, and community spaces that cater to the needs of PWDs.
- 3. Highlighting success stories and best practices in creating accessible environments for all.

Promoting Independence and Equal Opportunities

- 1. The summit aims to empower PWDs by creating pathways to self-reliance and independence.
- 2. Focus on skill development programs, vocational training, and entrepreneurship opportunities tailored to the strengths of PWDs.
- 3. Encouraging entrepreneurship opportunities and supporting PWDs in establishing their ventures.
- 4. Advocating for equitable access to resources and opportunities in various sectors, including education, employment, and healthcare.

Building Collaboration among Stakeholders

- 1. The event serves as a platform for policymakers, industry leaders, NGOs, educators, and advocates to collaborate.
- 2. Encouraging multi-sector partnerships to implement sustainable solutions for inclusivity.
- 3. Fostering dialogue and shared learning among stakeholders to create actionable frameworks for change.

Enhancing Inclusivity in Education

- 1. Focused discussions on improving accessibility in schools, colleges, and universities.
- 2. Exploring the role of adaptive learning technologies, inclusive curricula, and teacher training programs.
- 3. Addressing systemic barriers to ensure equal educational opportunities for PWDs.

Driving Inclusivity in Employment

- 1. Advocating for inclusive hiring practices and workplace adaptations to support PWDs.
- 2. Promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives aimed at empowering PWDs.
- 3. Showcasing examples of organizations successfully integrating PWDs into their workforce.

Shaping a More Accessible Future for PWDs in Odisha

- 1. Developing actionable plans and commitments to create an inclusive and equitable society.
- 2. Emphasizing community involvement in shaping policies and practices that promote inclusivity.
- 3. Inspiring collective action to ensure that PWDs can lead lives of dignity and purpose.

Accessing More Schemes of Government and Corporates

Promoting awareness and accessibility of welfare schemes and benefits for PWDs.

Sports Development and Para-Olympics

Focusing on the growth of para-sports and nurturing PWD athletes for national and international platforms.

Strengthening Councils of PWDs in Odisha

Enhancing the role of councils to better represent and advocate for PWD rights and issues.

Better Healthcare Facilities

Ensuring accessible and specialized healthcare services for PWDs.

Empowerment of Caregivers

Providing support, training, and resources for caregivers to better assist and empower PWDs.

Inaugural Session

The Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 commenced with a mesmerizing Odissi dance performance by the talented students of Suryajyoti Kala Kendra, Bhubaneswar. This graceful classical dance, deeply rooted in Odisha's cultural heritage, set the tone for the summit by embodying the spirit of inclusivity and harmony. The performance captivated the audience and served as a heartfelt tribute to the rich traditions of the state, perfectly aligning with the summit's vision of promoting unity and empowerment.







"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences."

— Audre Lorde

Inaugural Session

The summit commenced with an inspiring inaugural session featuring distinguished guests. The Chief Guest, Shri Suresh Pujari, Honorable Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management Department, Government of Odisha, set the tone for the event with his insightful remarks. The keynote address was delivered by Prof. Aparajita Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar. The Guests of Honor included Smt. Bratati Harichandan IAS (Retd.), State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities; Smt. Niyati Pattnaik, OAS, Director of SSEPD, Government of Odisha; and Smt. Sulochana Das, Mayor of Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation.

During the inauguration ceremony, certificates of completion were awarded to the first batch of the sign language course, which included 30 students, marking a significant milestone in fostering inclusive communication and empowerment.













Address by Shri Akhaya Sagar

Chairman, Odisha Rising Foundation

The welcome address was delivered by Shri Akhaya Sagar, Chairman and Co-founder of Odisha Rising Foundation. During his address, Mr. Akhaya Sagar emphasized the need to amplify the voices of persons with disabilities, which often go unheard despite various institutional efforts. He highlighted the Odisha Inclusive Summit as a platform initiated by ORF to ensure these voices are heard and appropriate actions are initiated. Stressing the importance of societal mindset shifts, he urged stakeholders to focus not only on physical accessibility but also on changing societal attitudes.



Mr. Sagar elaborated on the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in navigating public spaces and accessing basic amenities. He underscored the need for an empathetic approach by policymakers, employers, and educators to truly integrate individuals with disabilities into the mainstream. According to Mr. Sagar, inclusivity should be a collective goal where every individual is given the opportunity to thrive.

It doesn't matter how many summits and events we organize for the differently-abled; it will still not be enough because they have been isolated from society for so long. The reason why we have organized this summit is to bring them into the mainstream. Usually, people do not take care of such individuals. They do not get enough attention, nor do they receive adequate medical facilities. ORF has been working for such individuals at different levels to integrate them into the mainstream society. Through OIS, we aim to promote inclusivity. Differently-abled individuals have been trying to reach out to us and the government, but their voices haven't been heard well. Today, we have tried to become their voice and help them convey their message to the public at large.

He warmly welcomed and thanked all the dignitaries on the dais for attending the event, including partners, special children, parents, panelists, and staff; and concluded with a call to action, encouraging everyone to actively participate in building an inclusive Odisha.

"Divyangjans do not need charity; they need equal opportunities to thrive."
- Akhaya Sagar



Speech by Shri Suresh Pujari

Honorable Minister of Revenue and Disaster Management Department Government of Odisha



Shri Suresh Pujari addressed the evolving perception of the term "disability," noting that the word itself has been discouraged following guidance from the Prime Minister. He explained that society often underestimates the capabilities of persons with disabilities, and it is essential to change this perception. In his view, a person is truly disabled only when they cannot contribute meaningfully to society, irrespective of their physical or mental conditions.

Shri Suresh Pujari spoke about inspiring individuals who overcame disabilities to achieve greatness. Using examples like Thomas Edison and the inspiring sacrifices of Ramadevi, he illustrated how challenges can be overcome with determination and support. He also highlighted the role of advanced technologies, such as assistive devices and Al-driven solutions, in transforming the lives of persons with disabilities. He emphasized the importance of promoting inclusivity for a brighter and more progressive India, urging organizations and policymakers to embrace innovative approaches.

Address by Smt. Sulochana Das

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Mayor, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation

Smt. Sulochana Das expressed her gratitude to Odisha Rising Foundation for its relentless efforts in making Odisha inclusive and fostering equality for all individuals. Reflecting on her tenure as the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, she recounted her firsthand experiences of the disparities and discrimination faced by the differently-abled. While she appreciated the initiatives undertaken by the government and various NGOs, she emphasized that these individuals are equally talented and deserving of dignity and respect.

Smt. Sulochana Das highlighted that society often disregards persons with disabilities, but we must recognize their potential and create a supportive environment.

She pointed out that anyone could become disabled due to unforeseen circumstances such as accidents or health issues, and during old age, many of us may also rely on others. Therefore, she stressed the importance of fostering empathy and rejecting any form of disrespect or discrimination.

She also emphasized that reservations and policies alone are not sufficient; there is a pressing need for proactive initiatives to uplift persons with disabilities. She urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards creating a society where everyone can live with dignity and respect.

Views of Smt. Bratati Harichandan IAS (Retd.)

State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities

Smt. Bratati Harichandan underscored the shared duty of society to support individuals who face challenges due to disabilities. She highlighted Odisha's position as one of the leading states in promoting inclusivity and recognized the equal rights of all citizens, including those with disabilities. According to her, the government has made significant strides in implementing rules and regulations in health, education, and dignified living for persons with disabilities.



She praised notable achievements such as the establishment of special and integrated schools, as well as the renovation of public buildings to incorporate inclusive features.

These initiatives have created more opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in society. However, she also pointed out that there is still much work to be done to fully realize the vision of inclusivity.

Smt. Bratati Harichandan elaborated on the societal mindset that needs to evolve, stating that disabilities are not curses but conditions that can be managed with the right support and resources. She emphasized the importance of science and advanced technologies in addressing disabilities and improving the quality of life for affected individuals. Additionally, she called for a greater focus on accessibility features in public spaces and institutions, as well as expanding the 5% reservation in education and 4% in employment for persons with disabilities.

Speech by Smt. Niyati Pattnaik, OAS Director SSEPD, Government of Odisha

Smt. Niyati Pattnaik commended the outstanding work of Odisha Rising Foundation (ORF) in the disability sector. She highlighted ORF's achievement in training 30 interpreters in sign language and their relentless efforts toward empowering persons with disabilities (PwDs).



She also announced that the SSEPD Department had recently felicitated Shri Akhaya Sagar, Chairman of ORF, with the prestigious State Award for Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in the category of Best Achievement in Rehabilitation of PwDs.

Smt. Niyati Pattnaik further emphasized the successful partnership between the SSEPD Department and ORF, which has been ongoing for some time. She expressed the department's interest in future collaborations and proposed that ORF could serve as a nodal NGO for extending their presence across various districts of Odisha.

Thoughts by Shri Sannyashai Behera, OAS

Deputy Secretary, SSEPD Department Government of Odisha

Shri Sannyashai Ku. Behera shared insightful perspectives on the practical challenges of implementing policies for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). He emphasized the importance of adopting a governance approach that considers nuanced realities at various levels. Drawing from his experience with the SSEPD department, he highlighted the need to ensure that well-crafted policies translate into actionable, inclusive measures.



He also raised important concerns about the accessibility of the digital and technological landscape for individuals with disabilities. He urged public sector organizations to adopt inclusive practices. He questioned the delays in fostering a more inclusive environment and expressed appreciation for ORF's efforts in organizing the Inclusive Summit 2023, which he believed was a vital step toward driving change.

Thoughts by Smt. Aparajita Choudhary

Vice Chancellor, Ramadevi Women's University

Smt. Aparajita Choudhary underscored the significance of inclusivity and holistic development, particularly in educational institutions like Ramadevi Women's University. She highlighted the university's efforts in empowering girls and promoting inclusivity as a core value.

Smt. Choudhary emphasized the necessity of understanding and supporting individuals not only through physical infrastructure but also by addressing mental and emotional growth.



She announced the development of a new hostel with advanced accessibility features for students with disabilities and a certificate course designed specifically for them. She further stressed the importance of building a community that values and supports the unique talents of every individual, urging educational institutions to lead by example. Her message centered on the importance of karma, inclusivity, and collective progress. She expressed her gratitude to Odisha Rising Foundation for making Ramadevi Women's University a part of this historic initiative.





Panel Discussion I (Education Sector): Leveraging Innovation and Technology to Enhance Education and Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

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Panelists and Key Insights:

Dr. Gayatri Pattnaik, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, B.J.B Autonomous College

Dr. Pattnaik pointed out that anyone could become disabled due to unforeseen circumstances such as accidents or health issues, and during old age, many of us may also rely on others. Therefore, she stressed the importance of fostering empathy and rejecting any form of disrespect or discrimination.

She also emphasized that reservations and policies alone are not sufficient; there is a pressing need for proactive initiatives to uplift persons with disabilities. She urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards creating a society where everyone can live with dignity and respect.



Dr. Sasmita Kar, Rama Devi Women's University



Drawing from her experience as Superintendent of the Ramadevi Hostel for over two years, Dr.Kar shared that many individuals with disabilities often feel isolated due to societal attitudes. She emphasized that they seek appreciation, recognition, and love rather than sympathy. She advocated for integrating students with disabilities into mainstream settings, which can foster a sense of belonging and empowerment. She highlighted that facilities, coupled with sensitivity and affection, can lead to remarkable achievements.

Dr. Kar also shared stories of students who, when provided with the right environment, went on to achieve great success in academics and extracurricular activities. She called for more awareness programs and community initiatives to bridge the gap between students with disabilities and their peers.



Dr. Damodar Jena, Dean- KIIT School of Rural Management, KIIT University

Dr. Jena presented his research on disability, categorizing individuals into three groups based on comfort and confidence levels. He advocated for a cluster approach to map and match skills and emphasized the need for corporate-level initiatives with adequate resources to drive meaningful change.

He discussed the importance of personalized career counseling and skill development programs tailored to the unique strengths of individuals with disabilities. Dr. Jena called for collaborations between corporates and NGOs to create sustainable employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.





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Panel Discussion II (Corporate Sector): The Role of Innovative Technology and Accessibility Solutions in Enhancing Employability for Persons with Disabilities

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Panelists and Key Insights:

Mr. Manish Pandey, Head of Cyber Security Deliver for Europe, ANZ, APAC regions, Infosys

Mr. Pandey emphasized that a person's abilities should not be limited by their physical disabilities, stating that a great mind can achieve anything, regardless of physical challenges. He stressed the importance of aligning efforts with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals, particularly in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

He shared an example from his work in Odisha, where he supports the Lighthouse Foundation in Juttney and the NASCAR Foundation's digital literacy programs, which have helped over 300 youths, including those with disabilities, secure jobs. He urged persons with disabilities to stay informed and aware of available resources in the market. He also called for funding and proposals to create the right talent.



Mr. Satish Pradhan, Asst Vice President & Center Head, Cognizant Technology



Mr. Pradhan argued that persons with disabilities often outperform able-bodied employees when given the right support, especially through technological advancements. He emphasized that businesses should recognize the value of employing persons with disabilities, not just as a social obligation, but as a strategic advantage. Satish advocated for investing in cognitive foundations and supporting NGOs that specialize in cognitive function work. He believes that scaling up efforts in health and literacy is essential to empowering persons with disabilities to succeed in both personal and professional spheres.

Ms. Rashmi Sahoo, Director- Ruchi Foodline and Founder of Frozit

Ms.Rashmi emphasized recognizing the skills and qualities of individuals with disabilities instead of focusing on their limitations. She stressed the importance of technology in empowering persons with disabilities, helping them overcome barriers and participate fully in society. Rasmi called for inclusivity in society, urging collaboration between businesses, governments, and NGOs to create an ecosystem where persons with disabilities can thrive. She highlighted the need for awareness and education to break down societal barriers and promote inclusion, ensuring that individuals with disabilities are not marginalized but embraced as valuable contributors to society.



Mr. Shubham Purohit, Lead CSR, TP Central Odisha



Mr. Purohit discussed his company's efforts to create a more inclusive work environment by adapting their models to accommodate persons with disabilities. He explained that this shift has been a huge success, benefiting both employees with disabilities and the company as a whole. Shubham stressed the importance of promoting platforms that bring together experts, NGOs, and academic institutions to discuss and address the challenges of inclusion. He highlighted the need for collaboration across sectors to ensure that persons with disabilities have the tools and resources they need to succeed and contribute to society.





Panel Discussion III (Social Sector): Empowering Persons with Disabilities in Odisha

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Panelists and Key Insights:

Dr. Jharana Swain, Principal Counsellor, Family Court Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Dr. Swain shared her concerns about the increasing mental health issues among children with disabilities, including rising suicide rates and substance abuse. She argued that society, particularly parents, have failed to provide the necessary attention and time to their children, leading to these challenges. Dr.Jharana highlighted that children with disabilities often face neglect and are seen as burdens by their families, which leads to a breakdown in support. She called for the Child Welfare Committee to have a better understanding of its responsibilities, urging the government to take action to address these concerns. Jharana also emphasized the importance of citizen responsibility, advocating for greater awareness and volunteerism to support these children. According to her, listening to and addressing their needs can make a significant difference in their lives.



Ms. Supriya Dash, Sr. News Anchor-cum-Producer, Naxatra News



Ms.Dash spoke about the deeper meaning of inclusivity, emphasizing that if we truly understand its essence, there would be no need for frequent programs or awareness campaigns. She highlighted that many children with disabilities face difficulties in accessing help, particularly due to the lack of identity certificates, making it harder for them to avail of government facilities. Supriya called for greater awareness about the government programs available, arguing that media outlets should take responsibility in answering questions related to inclusivity. She also pointed out the need to expand the facilities provided by the government, especially for individuals with disabilities. Her vision is to move away from the "us vs them" mindset, advocating for a more integrated and supportive society where inclusivity is not a special condition, but a norm.

Ms. Soumya Dash, Founder & Director, Blissful Yoga Centre & Chairman, Satyabhamadevi College for Hearing Impaired

Ms. Dash shared an empowering perspective, stating that everyone is created with unique abilities that should be identified and nurtured, rather than focusing on their disabilities. She emphasized that care, love, and counseling can transform lives, serving as a powerful motivation for individuals with disabilities to achieve greater success in society. Somya argued that a person should not be defined by their disability, but rather by their capabilities, which may be on par with or even surpass those of able-bodied individuals. She highlighted the need for proper counseling to help individuals with disabilities unlock their potential and contribute meaningfully to society.



Ms. Kuni Mohanta, Indus Action



Ms. Mohanta raised the issue of the existing infrastructure for children with disabilities, particularly in private schools that already serve able-bodied children. He questioned whether there are special emergency contact numbers, similar to those for fire stations or police, dedicated to people with disabilities. Kunis stressed the importance of having such emergency numbers to ensure that individuals with disabilities are not overlooked during crises. This would eliminate many hurdles they face in urgent situations. He emphasized the necessity of addressing these gaps in services to ensure a more inclusive and responsive system for those in need.



Personal Journeys of Blind Students Phula Soren & Rachana Jena:

Phula Soren who is the captain of Odisha women's blind cricket team and the Vice Captain of Indian women's blind cricket team, expressed gratitude toward her college for the unwavering support she received, noting that it has never made her feel disabled. She shared that the inclusive environment at the college has played a key role in fostering her self-confidence and personal growth.

Rachana, a player in Odisha women's blind cricket team shared her dream of representing Odisha on the international stage. Her journey highlights the power of inclusivity and the importance of creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities to pursue their passions and achieve excellence.





Phula Soren
Vice Captain - Indian women's blind cricket team
Captain - Odisha women's blind cricket team



Rachana Jena All Rounder Odisha women's blind cricket team

Awards and Recognitions

The Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 celebrated the invaluable contributions of its sponsors and partner organizations by presenting them with Certificates of Appreciation. These awards serve as a token of gratitude and recognition for their unwavering support and dedication to fostering inclusivity and empowerment for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs).

Certificates of Appreciation

Sponsors

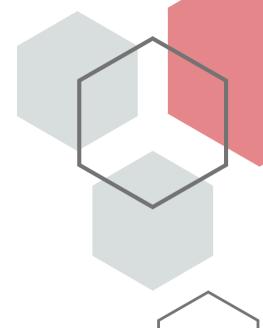
- V-Guard Industries Limited
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- · Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar

Partner Organizations

- Open Learning System, Bhubaneswar
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- Ramadevi Sishu Vihar, Cuttack
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- Maa Bhagabati Seva Sangha, Puri
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- EKTA, Koraput
- Manas, Koraput

These awards reflect the summit's appreciation for the efforts of all collaborators who have joined hands to make Odisha more inclusive and equitable. Their continued partnership strengthens the foundation for transformative change and sets a benchmark for future endeavors.





Cultural Program by Differently-Abled Children

The cultural program at the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 showcased the incredible talents of differently-abled individuals, highlighting their artistic capabilities and inspiring the audience.

- Dance: Intellectually disabled children from Chetana, Bhubaneswar performed a vibrant dance, reflecting the cultural richness and diversity of Odisha. Their energetic performance received a heartfelt standing ovation.
- Musical Performances: Two blind girls from Ramadevi Women's University, Bhubaneswar, captivated the audience with their melodious singing, adding an emotional and soulful touch to the program.

This segment was a powerful reminder of the boundless potential and creativity of persons with disabilities, emphasizing the importance of creating platforms for them to shine.







Recommendations by the Participants

The panel discussion during the Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 highlighted several actionable recommendations to foster inclusivity and support for persons with disabilities. These are outlined below:

Innovative Educational Approaches

 Leveraging innovative teaching methodologies and technological interventions, such as adaptive learning platforms and assistive devices, to create an inclusive educational environment for persons with disabilities.

Integration into Mainstream Settings

• Encouraging the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream educational and social settings to foster a sense of belonging and empowerment.

Corporate and NGO Collaborations

 Promoting collaborations between corporates and NGOs to create sustainable employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Personalized career counseling and skill development programs tailored to individual strengths were also emphasized.

Awareness Programs and Media Involvement

• Increasing awareness about government-provided facilities for persons with disabilities through media campaigns. Comprehensive training programs for educators and community leaders were also suggested to promote inclusivity at the grassroots level.

Emergency Support Services

• Introducing dedicated helpline numbers for persons with disabilities to ensure immediate assistance during emergencies, alongside a centralized digital platform to access resources, services, and opportunities.

Parental and Community Support

• Encouraging parental involvement and emotional support for children with disabilities, coupled with community-driven initiatives to foster a compassionate society.

Talent Identification and Mentorship

• Identifying and nurturing the unique talents of persons with disabilities through customized learning programs and mentorship opportunities.

Basic Sign Language Training

• Providing basic sign language training to officials across various sectors, such as police, judiciary, and healthcare, to improve communication with persons with hearing disabilities.

Techno-based Skill Training

• Introducing technology-driven skill training programs for persons with disabilities to enhance their employability and independence in a tech-driven world.

'Abilitea' Bazars in Every District

• Expanding the concept of 'Abilitea' Bazars, which showcase and market products made by persons with disabilities and sold by them as well, to all districts in Odisha to promote economic independence and entrepreneurship.

These recommendations emphasize the need for a holistic, inclusive approach to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and to create a society that values their contributions.

Conclusion

The Odisha Inclusive Summit 2024 concluded on a high note with the staff and volunteers of Odisha Rising Foundation (ORF) delivering a heartfelt rendition of the National Anthem of India in sign language. This powerful moment embodied the spirit of unity and inclusivity that defined the entire event.

The success of the summit was made possible by the dedication and unwavering efforts of the entire ORF team. Their meticulous planning, seamless coordination, and heartfelt commitment ensured the smooth execution of the event and left a lasting impact on all participants. Their invaluable contributions stand as a testament to ORF's mission of empowering and creating an inclusive society for all.

The program concluded with a thoughtful and sincere Vote of Thanks delivered by the Head - Strategy & Directions, Mr. Ch. Aishya Prakash, acknowledging the efforts of all stakeholders and the meaningful participation of attendees.



Media Coverage



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Dharitri, 8th Decemember 2024

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Prameya, 7th Decemember 2024



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Samaj, 7th Decemember 2024

ODISHA INCLUSIVE SUMMIT 2024

Call for action to integrate differently-abled persons



Orissa Post, 8th Decemember 2024

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Nandini, 9th Decemember 2024

Photo Gallery















Photo Gallery



















ODISHA RISING FOUNDATION

Advancing the Growth Stories of Odisha to the Globe

Plot No - 439/4396, Damana PO/PS - Chandrasekharpur, Nandankanan Road, Bhubaneswar - 751016, Odisha Landmark - Behind Moonlight Club, Near Odisha Chitralaya









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