



A Brief Review of Disability Rights and Welfare in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

Differently-abled people are one group that often gets into trouble due to the less attention from society. Providing equal opportunities for all people is a highly considered fact worldwide; to establish equity and equality in society, all countries urge to care about people who have become marginalised from the mainstream for many reasons. It is essential to provide facilities focusing on disabilities to enhance well-being to maintain equity and equality. Concerning this prime objective, as a welfare State of Sri Lanka has a great responsibility to cater to basic needs to meet of disable people. The State and Non-State sectors also provide many facilities to establish universal equity. Therefore, disabled people should be given more welfare programmes to uplift their living conditions to protect social security. Also, there should be special attention to empower those who have become different able concerning those who are the part of society to obtain their services to the development of society. The Sri Lankan government has introduced many attractive approaches to enable people's potentiality. It is important to identify such programmes that have been influenced on beneficiaries to identify what extent the government has made attempts to rescue from the marginality in society. Accordingly, this paper has discussed the condition of Disabilities in Sri Lanka. This paper focuses on examining the current status of welfare programs that have been executed to enhance the living conditions of disabled people in Sri Lanka.

Key Words : *Disability, Disability Rights, Welfare programs for disabled people*

INTRODUCTION

There is no specific definition regarding the disabled, but various definitions can be identified concerning the disabled. UPIAS was a disabled people's organisation, created in the 1970s, and among its leaders were Paul Hunt and Vic Finkelstein. Disability is described in the document as follows:

In our view, it is society that disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society. To understand this, it is necessary to grasp the distinction between the physical impairment and the social situation, called 'disability', of people with such impairment. Thus we define impairment as lacking part of or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body; and disability as the disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities. Physical disability is, therefore, a particular form of social oppression (UPIAS, Fundamental Principles of Disability (n 12) 20).

Disability is an inevitable fact of life for nearly everyone; almost everyone will be partially or permanently disabled at any stage in their lives. Those who live until old age will face growing difficulties in living. Disability is multifaceted, and the approaches to alleviate its drawbacks are many and systematic, depending on the situation (World report on Disability, World Health Organization, 2011). The World Health Organization (WHO) Defines Disability as: Disabilities is a broad concept that encompasses impairments, movement limits, and participation constraints. A disability is a problem with a person's body function or structure; an operation constraint is a problem with a person's ability to perform a task or action. A participation exclusion is a problem with a person's ability to participate in life conditions. As a result, disability is a dynamic condition that reflects the relationship between a person's body and the environment in which he or she exists (<https://www.disabled-world.com/definitions/disability-definitions.php>).

There can be identified six functional disabilities as follows:

- Cognitive (serious difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions)
 - Hearing (serious difficulty hearing or deafness)
 - Mobility (serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs)
 - Vision (serious difficulty seeing or blindness)
 - Self-care (difficulty dressing or bathing) and
 - Independent living (difficulty doing errands alone)
- (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/dhds/overview.html>)

Methodology

The prime intention of the study was to examine the status of the welfare programs for differently able people in Sri Lanka. In line with that, empirical research studies, secondary resources were used and **the qualitative systematic review method has been applied to reach the objective of this article.**

Results and Discussion

Current Status of Disability in World

According to the WHO, there are a few notable figures with disabilities worldwide: Blindness and vision disability are 1.3 billion individuals worldwide. This equates to 17% of the world's population. Deafness and hearing loss affects 466 million people are worldwide. This equates to about 6% of the world's population. Almost 200 million people worldwide have an intellectual disability (IQ below 75). This equates to about 2.6 per cent of the global population daily. Seventy-five million people need a wheelchair. This is equivalent to 1% of the world's population(<https://www.inclusivitycitymaker.com>). One billion people, or 15% of the world's population, are disabled, with the rate of disability being highest in developed nations. Severe disabilities affect one-fifth of the current global population, or between 110 million and 190 million individuals (<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability>). About 600 million individuals, or more than 10% of the global population, are believed to be disabled today. Nearly 400 million live in developed countries (Jayewardene, 2015).

Disability in Sri Lanka

People with disabilities account for around 15% of the global population, making them the world's highest and poorest minority. Eighty per cent of people with disabilities are thought to exist in developed countries (UN Enable. Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities). Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) account for a significant portion of Sri Lanka's diverse community. The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) conducted a population census in 2011 that identified 8.7% of the total population as Persons with Disabilities. However, significant questions exist about the meaning and requirements for defining and collecting Persons with Disabilities during the census (UN Universal Periodic Review –Sri Lanka 2017). Sri Lanka has over 1.6 million people with disabilities, according to the most recent Census of Population Data (2012) (<https://undpsrilanka.exposure.co/disability>).

Types of Difficulties-2012 (population aged five years and over)

Difficulties	Difficulty Number	Rate per 1000persons		
		Total	Male	Female
Total with difficulties	1,617,924	87	77	96
seeing	996,939	54	47	60
Walking	734,213	39	31	47
Hearing	389,077	21	19	23
Cognition	343,689	18	16	21
Self-care	197,575	11	10	11
Communication	180,833	10	10	10

(Source: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/meetings/2016/bangkok--disability-measurement-and-statistics/Session-6/Sri%20Lanka.pdf>)

The above table depicts that how many number of people are from different-abled in Sri Lankan society. The highest number of people are representing from the visibility issue among overall difficulties persons and it has taken place highly considerable amount compare with other difficulties, is 996,939.

Disability Rights and Welfare programs in Sri Lanka

All the people who live in society are enjoying rights offered by the government. Also, governments make an agreement with International Convention to provide facilities and maintain the democracy of their countries. Sri Lankan government has also made congruence to follow international conventions in order to establish the well-being of disabilities. For instance, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) In March 2007.

Sri Lankan constitution provides allocation to establish social security under clause 01 of Article 12 of the constitution specifies that “all persons are equal before the law and are entitled to equal protection of the law” (Sri Lanka Disability Information Sheet- May 2014). National action plan for the protection and promotion of human rights -2011/ 2016 has also taken steps to protect disabled people. This act focuses on avoiding discrimination against disabilities on education opportunities, employment and access to the built environment.

The following provisions have also made sure to protect the rights of disabled persons.

- Visually handicapped trust fund Act

- National Policy on Disability in Sri Lanka
- Widows and Orphans pension scheme under ordinance No.13 of 1906
- Disability Rights Bill -2006
- The National Policy on Disability in Sri Lanka
- Public Administration on circular No. 27/28
- The cabinet approved sign Language as an accepted language on 08/09/2011

Department of social services provides community-based rehabilitation programs to rehabilitate persons with disabilities, integrate them into society, and provide services in their own homes. In addition to Department of Social Welfare, Probation and Child Care also provides many facilities and supports for people with disabilities to uplift their living conditions providing financial aids for Infrastructure, entrance facilities, washroom facilities, Water (For the low income gaining disabled people), Providing self-employment aids (For the low income gaining disabled people), Providing self-employment training, Providing aid equipment (For the low income gaining disabled people), Wheel Chairs, Crutches, Tricycles, Commode chair, Artificial legs and arms, Walking frames, Hearing aids, White Canes, Lenses, Spectacles, Other special equipment, Celebrating the international day of people with disabilities, Establishing and maintaining of disabled peoples' cooperative society, providing counselling services and carrying out services in collaboration with the Chief Secretariat for the handicap.

Children with special needs education is one area that should be focused on providing equal opportunity for differently-abled that children. Sri Lankan society provides many facilities to cater to education and other education opportunities. UNICEF (2016) (Census of Population & Housing -2012). reported that 23.5% of children aged 5-14 with disabilities and 55.4% of the disabled population aged 15-19. There are 24,518 children with special educational needs in primary classrooms, and 24,266 are in grades 6-13 in regular schools in Sri Lanka (<https://moe.gov.lk/School-Census-of-Sri-Lanka>). In national and regional schools across the country. 704 special education units are serving 7513 students with special needs. In addition to there are 26 assisted special schools governed by boards of management, grades and three schools under the Ministry of Education to provide learning facilities to students with particular education need.

(https://www.statistic.gov.lk/Resource/en/Education/School_Census/School).

Conclusion

The Sri Lankan government and other approved agencies have established numerous welfare facilities and they have made special arrangements to protect disabled people's human rights. Even though several measures have been taken to protect

disabled persons, there are still barriers in the way of their working practices. As a result, more emphasis should be placed on providing well-defined services to specific groups of individuals to improve their quality of life. Regardless of those people's limitations, what kind of talents they possess should be determined. The need for services that are more suited to a specific group of people should be implemented.

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Web Resources:

https://moe.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Annual_School-Census-of_Sri-Lanka.pdf

https://www.statistic.gov.lk/Resource/en/Education/School_Census/School_Census_report_2019

<https://undpsrilanka.exposure.co/disability-inclusion>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/dhds/overview.html>

<https://www.disabled-world.com/definitions/disability-definitions.php>

<https://www.inclusivecitymaker.com/disabled-people-in-the-world-in-2019-facts-and-figures>

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability>