

Emerging Concept of Women Leaders with Disabilities

Considering the estimation of 2010 within the global population 'more than a billion people are living with some form of disability, or about 15% of the world's population'(WHO, WB 2011:7). Women outnumber men, as in the developing countries, women constitute up to three quarters of all persons with disabilities. Between 65% and 70% of these women with disabilities live in rural areas.

Pakistan has a population of 1.8million of which persons with disabilities make up 10 percent. Of this population women and children account for (please put percentage). They are living in the most vulnerable conditions which makes everyday living a challenge in itself. In this situation, persons with disabilities are excluded from the mainstream of education, health and development. Women with disabilities are disadvantaged in several key areas when compared with other women, men with disabilities, and the society as a whole. These women face a triple handicap and discrimination due to their disability, gender and developing world status. At the same time, Stigma remains in society at large, within communities, and even, in many cases of uneducated segments of society, within families who see disabled women as a loss of productive potential and a drain on family resources. So, while on the one hand, the strong cultural family network ensures their financial security, on the other, the stigma often results in their remaining invisible members of society.

Women with disabilities have always been considered as direct or indirect beneficiaries in Pakistan and never been engaged as leaders. The significant human rights-based approach has a great deal to say about disability inequalities. Disability Movement begins with the recognition that each of us views societal concepts and institutions from a different lens depending on our consciousness and place in society. The lack of understanding of rights of persons with disabilities as human rights is reflected in the fact that few governments are committed in domestic and foreign policy, to persons with disabilities equality as basic human right. Among non-governmental human rights organizations persons with disabilities are rarely a priority and even disabled people's organizations have seen women with disabilities not as separate area to focus. This separation of persons with disabilities rights from human rights has perpetuated the secondary status of persons with disabilities specially women with disabilities and highlights the importance of recognizing specific women's human rights concerns. The existing policies overlooked the issues of violation and its link between barriers faced by women with disabilities in everyday life.

The emerging concept of leadership role of women with disabilities and obliging all stakeholders is the key to diverse their focus on women's empowerment and leadership rather than undermining them as only beneficiaries, which lay the foundations for future research to address these issues.

In solidarity with the international human rights procedures and substantive law to advance human rights claims, which helped to promote the enjoyment of human rights by women, concentrating on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with the primary emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights of women, and women's rights and personal law designed to be nationwide. Despite all these initiatives, the particular vulnerabilities and contributions

of different groups within the population such as women with disabilities are overlooked. If particular attention is not paid towards their inclusion and participation in the development and humanitarian response, these persons will remain largely “invisible” and will not be in a position to access basic human rights.

This rationale led to the need of young women with disabilities’ active participation in political and public life as a condition for the very implementation of the state’s core treaties addressing the rights of women with disabilities and to create strong link between CUNCRPD with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Declaration (2000). There is a dire need to provide a means of empowering all people to make decisions about their own lives rather than being the passive objects of choices made on their behalf and to exercise the vibrant concept of human rights.

Despite all the efforts and work of Government, UN and other stakeholders a huge gap observed in technical and strategic documents, this overlooked response cause many problems for uncounted population and their families. The organisations of disabled people (DPOs) are rarely consulted or included at any level of planning and implementing programmes, since local DPOs can better guide the situation of women with disabilities, since women and their families find it very difficult to report about the domestic violence, or sexually harassment and finding difficulty in accessing information, these circumstances made women vulnerable to violence, exploitation and sexual abuse while their vulnerability is even higher than man with disabilities.

There is a lack of awareness and knowledge about disability and the needs of persons with disabilities among mainstream agencies. As a result persons with disabilities are not prioritised or effectively included or supported within development programmes, which can only be bridge by exploring the strategies to raise women with disabilities voices in the human rights from their own perspective of diversified needs. Disabled people’s organizations took the lead in responding to the discrimination and prejudice, and set an example of joint work with the international community on global level. This works with organizations in countries around the world, exchanging information and experiences and lobbying for change at the international level. These efforts can also inform the process of monitoring the implementation of the UNCRPD, in which DPOs need to engage actively.