**Centres of Excellence, Train the trainers, Employing disabled persons as trainers**

- **Shanti Raghavan**

Enable India's vision is the economic independence and dignity for persons with disability. Enable India works with more than 200 companies across India creating demand for employing persons with disability and working on employability of candidates with disability. To ensure effective placement and retention, Enable India provides workplace solutions by which persons with disability can work effectively and also providing other support services for companies and candidates. This holistic model has led to more jobs available for disabled around the country and more importantly respect and dignity for persons with disability.

ICT is an integral part of our delivery in many ways, be it in our delivery of services to companies and candidates or in the delivery by trainers and in the training material.

Scalability of this vision is possible largely because of ICT and excellent human resources,

Three examples will be discussed below to illustrate the points

**Case Study 1: ERP Software for delivery of service**

The ERP software developed for Enable India addresses many operational challenges and allows us to be responsive to all our stakeholders (companies, candidates, NGOs) and allows us to use the capacity of human resources other than our staff even if they have limited general knowledge of the domain of livelihoods and the various disabilities and even if they have limited knowledge of the actual companies and candidates with whom Enable India works. The ERP is innovative because it also helps us sustain and scale our operations with the required quality, productivity and cost efficiency.

Background: Non disabled candidates have many options to get jobs. For PWD, we collaborate with companies, analyse the jobs, provide workplace solutions by which candidate does the job successfully. Since all the jobs do not have solutions and those jobs may not always have vacancies – when a job is available, we need to ensure they get through. To ensure placement of even one candidate, we run multiple programs such as candidate induction, candidate development, company services (providing initial handholding to the PWD, access audits, policies and procedures, workplace solution for each PWD, sign language interpretation, general sensitization and peer awareness for every PWD who joins a team and more), candidate services (workplace solution training/debugging, mentoring, grievance handling, career guidance, counseling and more).

Impact:– We are now more responsive to companies because of the powerful search tool to find the right candidates for a vacancy and because the workflow is in built in the software. We can distribute tasks to balance load between resources and use non expert resources for tasks within the workflow easily. All the different types of data are linked to each other, so we get a comprehensive view of our data. The ERP is now a decision support system as well.
ERP allows scaling and facilitate centres of excellence to emerge and develop.

**Case Study 2: Software for employability of disabled**
There are many skills that have been developed for disabled.
2a: Many hearing impaired have been doing well in back office jobs due to skills development. However there is always a dearth of expert resources who understand the company needs and the candidate needs. Very often, people assume that a sign language interpreter can deliver training to the hearing impaired. On the contrary, the hearing impaired trainer is an actor, good at drawing, sign language and is good at providing easy examples which can be understood with less language skills. To ensure that the skills development is standardized and possible even by non expert resources, Enable India is developing a Flash based e-learning to ensure training for hearing impaired.

2b: One basic skill which is required for most jobs is good written English with good spellings. Spellings do not get reinforced for a visually impaired and hence many have extremely weak spellings and do their true capability may not shine through. The simple spelling kit developed for visually impaired by Enable India has an admin tool where different spellings can be entered with relevant sentences attached to the word (this helps provide the context of the spelling). This tool has basic spellings, business communication spellings, spellings based on professions (medical transcription), names of companies and more.

**Case Study 3: Software for VI trainers**
Role models who are persons with disability serve as a great inspiration to other persons with disability. Perhaps even more than role models, trainers who are persons with disability are extremely important for the development of persons with disability. Trainers with disability can relate to their students well and are users of the same technology, assistive aids and solutions and understand the needs and challenges of their students. At Enable India, the computer trainers for visually impaired are visually impaired themselves and they give more than 300 practical exercises which help the students become perfect in their concepts and helps them work effectively in their jobs.

Correction of these exercises is hard, tedious and time consuming but very important. This is because computers helps visually impaired “see” and hence they can aspire for any job if they have the right skills.
To ensure scalability of computer training of visually impaired around the country, one software which is being currently developed is for the automation of the exercises. i.e the software will ask the student to perform computer operations and check the actions done by the student and provide instant feedback regarding the operations performed. This will enable students to know if they can practically use computers well or not. trainers to spend more time with the candidates in teaching rather than in corrections. It will also enable us reach those candidates who are skilled but who cannot come to a training centre to learn computers thoroughly.
Such software allows scalability of this vital training.