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Inclusive framework for addressing sexual and reproductive health needs of persons with disabilities

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Statement of the Problem: It has been globally recognized that persons with disabilities (defined as “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments”) have the same Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs as other people. However, it has been found that SRH services are often inaccessible to persons with disabilities in many countries and continents; primarily due to (a) discouraging attitudes of health care providers, and (b) lack of physical access. Often marginalized in many societies, their SRH needs are often overlooked. **Objectives and Methodology:** This research aims to outline framework of action for full inclusion of SRH services for persons with disabilities. Key action areas have been touched upon. The author has used Secondary data (largely ‘qualitative’), and method of data analysis is descriptive. **Findings:** All involved stakeholders (both in governmental and non-governmental sectors) need to move SRH services towards full inclusion of persons with disabilities. This requires action in following three (key) areas:

1. Establishing partnerships with organizations of persons with disabilities: There is need to establish networking with local advocacy organizations working for welfare for persons with disabilities. Such organizations can help identify people and groups to contact in community or country.
2. Advocacy for awareness creation: Stakeholders should raise awareness within their own organizations about SRH rights of

persons with disabilities. Also, they need to understand the importance of including disability issues in all policies and programmes.³ Ensuring that all SRH programs reach and serve persons with disabilities: This requires mainstreaming in all programs. Modest adaptations can ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities. This paper briefly concludes that persons with disabilities represent a significant portion of the world’s population; they are part of every community. SRH personnel should be committed to work towards overcoming stigma and uphold the rights of persons with disabilities.

Biography

Santosh Kumar is an Independent Researcher (Scholar), having retired (on June 30, 2020) from Population Education Resource Centre, Department of Lifelong Learning & Extension, S.N.D.T. Women's University, Mumbai, India. He underwent training in demography, with award of Government of India Fellowship, during 1986-1987 from the IIPS, Mumbai. Also, He acquired Ph. D. from University of Patna in 1999. His other qualifications include Post-Master's Diploma in Adult & Continuing Education, Certificate Course on Hospital and Health Care Management, and Diploma in Human Resource Development. He have authored (some co-authored) 5 booklets, 4 books, 23 book chapters, 105 journal articles, 2 monographs, 7 research studies, & 104 papers for national & international conferences (some with bursary). He have been awarded with Certificate of Excellence in Reviewing for 2017, 2018, 2021, 2022, & 2024; and conferred with Excellence of Research Award for outstanding contribution & recognition in the field of agriculture in the year 2021.