



ENGAGE NEWS

Coming together to strengthen the Christian response to disability in India . . .

ENGAGE DISABILITY

NCCI and CHAI to Co-Host ED Secretariat

Effective from 1 Jan 2020 until the next National Conference of ED, National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) will co-host the Secretariat along with Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI).

ED expresses its thanks to the outgoing Chair Rev Dr. Mathew Abraham, Director General of CHAI, who has ably led the network and effectively hosted the Secretariat at CHAI since the last National Conference in Nov 2017.



Rev Asir Ebenezer

ED welcomes Rev Asir Ebenezer, General Secretary, National Council of Churches in India who takes the baton from Fr Mathew as the Chair of ED.



Rev Dr Mathew Abraham C.Ss.R, MD

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic that crippled regular life the world over, the transition of Secretariat between CHAI and NCCI was kept on hold for things to become more stable.

ED Focus for 2020 - 21

During meetings in this quarter, the Core Group of Engage Disability and hub Coordinators of ED identified areas of focus for the work of the ED network in 2020-21 as follows:

- Identifying and sharing resources or networks that facilitate livelihood initiatives for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)
- Considering the pandemic, provisions for training resources and opportunities to be delivered in electronic /online formats
- Collating and disseminating statistics related to PWDs from WHO and various other reliable sources
- Providing stories and videos about achievements of persons with disabilities for the encouragement of those in the network
- Building data regarding PWDs in various regions through hubs and churches
- Creating/ disseminating information on Constitutional Rights/benefits provided by the government of India, and other agencies for PWDs
- Organising city-based pastors' fellowships for disability inclusion and development of new hubs

ED thanks outgoing Network Coordinator



Mr Chiranjeevi Aruri

Mr Chiranjeevi Aruri, the first Network Coordinator of Engage Disability served since 2018 when the Secretariat was hosted in CHAI office in Secunderabad.

ED thanks Mr Chranjeevi for taking forward many ED activities and administering the regular work of the network over the past two years. We wish him well as he completes his term with ED and continues to serve at the CHAI Headquarters.

ED RESOURCE:

DISABILITY INCLUSION TOOLKIT
Engaging with Disability in the church



ENGAGE DISABILITY Vision

All Christian communities in India engage with and accompany people with disabilities to experience abundant life together.

Objectives

To create a Christian network to share information and resources at a local and national level

To equip the Christian community to evolve in their accompaniment of people with disabilities and their families

To be the Christian voice on disability in dialogue and consultations with the government, health sector, NGO community, theological institutions and the general public

NEWS FROM ED HUBS

Hubs are the nerve centres of the network

The ED hubs are the heart of the ED Network and it is their activities and work that happens in the hub level that multiplies the impact of the ED Network.

The prevailing pandemic conditions meant hubs could not meet regularly. The Bangalore, Chennai, Chittoor and Delhi hubs have had difficulties meeting together although individuals belonging to the hubs have been actively involved in Covid-19 relief and rehabilitation work relating to persons with disabilities. In this sense the impact of the work of ED hubs and partners in the ED network has therefore continued in the accompaniment of persons with disabilities.

Some hubs turned restrictions of the pandemic into an opportunity to meet regularly virtually and to sustain fellowship through other electronic means.

The Dehradun hub

Two virtual meetings on zoom were held and the hub sustained fellowship between hub members through regular visits and calls.

The regular activities of the Dehradun hub include visits to pastors to mobilise them in various ways: providing rehabilitation service to a woman with spinal cord injury through the local church; and working alongside churches who provided COVID relief to families with disabilities.

The short online course on "Beyond Suffering" for pastors in partnership with Joni and Friends, and Networking with the local disabled peoples' organisation (DPO) are also an ongoing work of the Dehradun hub. The plans of the Dehradun hub in the coming months include conducting Luke 14 dinners with the local pastors and families and to continually visit families and people with disabilities and mobilize resources according to their need.

The **impact of ED initiatives in this hub and its vicinity is that pastors have become more sensitive to the needs of the disabled community** and have been able to share and avail resources from each other. The pastors continue to conduct the "Beyond suffering" courses in their respective congregations.

Significant impact of ED hubs

The Dehradun hub reported two experiences that stood out as examples of the hub creating change. Here are the stories:

Hub Identifies Disability Champion During Pandemic

A pastor by name Bhopal, himself a person with a spinal cord injury, was actively involved in providing relief to those in need during the pandemic.

He networked with a local NGO to avail medical facilities for individuals with psychosocial disabilities.

Truly an instance of the person with disability becoming a Samaritan and champion in these unprecedented times!

Hub Facilitates Rehab and Livelihood

In another instance reported by Dehradun hub, the local church identified a woman with spinal cord injury whose health was deteriorating due to pressure ulcers.

Thanks to the initiative of those impacted by the ED hub, she was admitted in the hospital at Herbertpur. The team in the hospital took good care of her and saved her from a near death experience.

The local church and ED members also took the initiative to provide her with a tailoring machine to start a livelihood.



Hub, through local church, facilitates provision of rehab and livelihood to woman affected by spinal cord injury



Pr Bhopal on his scooter providing relief



NEWS FROM ED HUBS

Hubs are the nerve centres of the network

The Hyderabad hub

The Hyderabad hub continues to have monthly online hub meetings through zoom. Their fellowship during the pandemic has also been kept intact through conference calls for prayers and scheduled phone calls to ensure hub members, especially those with disabilities, were kept in focus.

Rev Asir Ebenezer, the new Chair of ED joined the August meeting of the ED hub. The activities of the Hyderabad hub during this period includes mobilising funds for medical expenses of persons with disabilities belonging to the hub and distribution of groceries kits to PWDs belonging to both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states.

The hub also helped organise the wedding of the son of Mr. Patrick, a person with disability, who married a woman with partial visual impairment.

Some of the ongoing networking of the Hyderabad hub include networking with the local seminary Andhra Christian Theological College, local pastors' fellowships, and with local Telugu television channels to create disability inclusion awareness.

The Hyderabad hub is closely connected with one of the ED associates - the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) - on an ongoing basis. The Telugu translation of the Engage Disability Toolkit is also part of the ongoing work of the Hyderabad hub which is at the proof reading stage at this point.

A training program 'Equip' - A Biblical perspective on disability, by which members are benefited and blessed, is another ongoing involvement of the Hyderabad hub.

Continuing online prayers during the pandemic, completion of the translation of ED toolkit, and planning for the Family Retreat in Hyderabad are some of the plans of the Hyderabad hub for the coming months.

ED Special Days Campaigns

In this quarter

ED members were encouraged to observe the following days related to disability or with a focus on disability:

OCTOBER

- 06. World Cerebral Palsy Day
- 08. World Sight Day
- 10. World Mental Health Day
- 11. International Day of the Girl Child
- 15. White Cane Day
- 24. World Polio Day

IEC material created by ED disseminated through ED's social media platforms and mailing lists

ENGAGE EVENTS

Hub Coordinators Meeting

11 Oct 2020

The ED network rests on and is sustained primarily by the work of the regional hubs. Many hubs were planned at the close of 2017 National Conference of Engage Disability. As a measure to revive hubs that couldn't take off since, and as a way to build fellowship between existing hub coordinators and key persons, a virtual meeting of ED hub coordinators took place on the zoom platform.

With around 30 participants of whom 26 were hub coordinators or key persons in hubs, the meeting was a space for sharing of best practices by more active hubs, and an opportunity for hubs that have faced difficulties to find models for how hubs can begin to work as they listened to more active hubs. It also was a time for hub coordinators and key persons to express their challenges, share their suggestions for greater collaboration between ED secretariat and hubs, and be encouraged by news of upcoming events planned in the network.

Hubs represented at the meeting were Chittoor (Andhra Pradesh), Chennai (Tamil Nadu North), Bangalore (Karnataka), Dehradun (North India), Delhi (Central India), Hyderabad (Telangana), East India (Odisha & Bihar), Kerala, North East India (Dimapur & Manipur), Nagpur (Central India), Madurai (Tamil Nadu South) and Vellore (Tamil Nadu North).

Rev Asir Ebenezer, Chair of ED, Dr Nathan Grills, Convenor of ED, Ms. Jubin Varghese, Vice Chair of ED, and Jessica Richard, National Coordinator participated in and facilitated the meeting.

Covid Related Work Across ED Network

ED hub members and ED member organisations stepped up to identify and cater to needs of persons with disabilities during COVID-19. Although it is not possible to report on all that those in the ED network have been doing, we share some news that was shared with the ED network in various ways.

Jesus Enables Ministries, one of the members in the ED network in Chennai, has been involved in distribution of Corona relief provisions that can help feed a family of four for 2 weeks, to over 1000 families of PWDs during the past months.

The El-Shaddai Church in Delhi has facilitated distribution of over 500 relief kits and blankets in Delhi to families and individuals living with chronic illnesses such as TB, HIV, and Corona infected families, widows, orphans, persons with disabilities, members of the LGBT community.

Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI) organized a webinar on "Managing Children with Disabilities at Home in Time of COVID-19" on 09th October, 2020 which benefited many in the ED network who were able to participate. CHAI is also organizing another webinar on "Guidelines for CBR/CBID workers in the COVID-19 Pandemic" on 3 Nov 2020, information about which has been passed on to the ED network.

National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) distributed food stuff to 40 families of children with disabilities during the pandemic. NCCI also provided two sewing machines to "Better World Shelter for Women with Disabilities" in Chennai, where women with disabilities initiated a project to make masks by themselves to supply the Greater Chennai Corporation workers. NCCI provided assistance to cover the electricity bill for a visually impaired pastor who also ministers to a congregation consisting of persons with visual impairment.

News from the ED Network

Nagpur Pastors Meeting on Disability Leads to Formation of new ED Hub

A virtual meeting on disability inclusion was organized by NCCI – IDEA and EFI for Nagpur city pastors on 23 Sep 2020 in which 65 people attended.

Ms. Asiemi, Programme Assistant, NCCI IDEA, and Rev Amit Manwantkar, Regional Coordinator of EFI, Religious Liberty Commission, anchored and facilitated the meeting in which Rev Asir, NCCI General Secretary and Chair of ED, and Jessica Richard, National Coordinator of ED also participated.

ED Network member from Eyeway, Mr George Abraham, shared the message from John 9:3 on the response of Jesus to a person with disability and called on the churches to enter into a journey of that kind of inclusion wherein we are open to being ministered unto by persons with disabilities and are able to appreciate the contributions that PWDs bring to the body of Christ. He highlighted the need for disability inclusion in churches and its importance in the life of both the churches and that of the PWDs. Jessica Richard introduced the ED network, its vision, working, and resources to the group.

An outcome of this meeting was that a new ED hub has been initiated in Nagpur and two persons nominated as hub coordinators – Pr Satish Tashkande, a person with visual impairment, to be assisted by Mr Moses Gour from NCCI. The group also planned to join the Disability Christmas organized annually by the NCCI that is led by PWDs.

Disability Helpline @NCCI IDEA 7028-400-222

Inaugurated on Dec 3, 2019 by NCCI's Indian Disability Ecumenical Accompaniment, it proved a great help to many PWDs in Covid times and continues to be available.

Other news this quarter

Global Access Conference

A good number of ED network members across India participated in the online "Global Access Conference" organized by Joni and Friends, around the theme "Come to the table ...: Where disabilities and possibilities meet".

A virtual discussion group on response of churches in India to disability was organized on 14th and 15th as part of this conference. These two-hour sessions were led by Ms Jubin Varghese, Vice Chair, ED, who was also one of the resource persons at the Conference that was held online from 14-17 Oct 2020.

This discussion group had good participation from members of the ED network in India and Nepal who shared with passion, wisdom, and compassion both success stories and challenges related to disability inclusion.

Networking with Civil Society Initiatives

"UN Envision 2030 SDGs" (and disability) Process in Tamil Nadu is initiated by Human Rights Foundation (HRF), Disability Rights Alliance (DRA) and Equals.

The past two years of Voluntary National Reporting on Sustainable Development Goals to the UN from India did not include a disability perspective or voice. HRF in collaboration with Equals and DRA, partners that the CSI DISHA and NCCI have worked with, invited a team of PWDs, and other stakeholders working in disability inclusion to be part of the core groups for the SDG review process with specific reference to disability.

In this reporting issues of disability will be mainstreamed into the sectors of health and nutrition, education (with children as a subset), and employment. The ED National Coordinator participated in the initial discussion on 18 August 2020, and continues to be part of the processes that will culminate in a virtual conference between 6-10, November 2020.

Welcome to the New National Coordinator

Jessica Prakash-Richard, was appointed as National Coordinator effective from 1 August 2020.

Jessica brings with her the experience of coordinating the Campaigns and Advocacy of Church of South India's Diaconal wing, CSI SEVA, where she oversaw child rights, gender and disability campaigns. She also coordinated a pan-Asian organisation related to women and theology called Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology before serving the CSI. She brings to this role her expertise in writing, editing, gender advocacy and coordination of church-based advocacy initiatives related to disability.



She was part of the host team of the ED National Conference in 2017 hosted by CSI - SEVA, and has been part of the ED Core Group over the past three years. We welcome Jessica into this new role and wish her well in carrying the work of Engage Disability forward in the coming years.

Upcoming Observances: ED Special Days Campaigns

The following are observances that ED and/ or ED network members observe or organize in the next quarter:

- 14 Nov 2020: Children's Day (ED focus on Children with Disabilities)
- 20 Nov 2020: National Education Day (ED focus on Inclusive Education)
- 22 Nov 2020: Disability Advocacy Sunday: Observed Annually across member churches of the NCCI. See <https://ncci1914.com/> for more news
- 1 Dec 2020: World AIDS Day (ED focus on Intersection of HIV and Disabilities)
- 3 Dec 2020: International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- 10 Dec 2020: Human Rights Day (ED focus on human rights of PWDs)
- 04 Jan 2021: World Braille Day
- 24 Jan 2021: International Day of Education & National Girl Child Day
- 25 Jan 2021: National Voters Day (ED focus on voting accessibility for PWDs)
- 31 Jan 2021: World Leprosy Day

ED FACEBOOK PAGE

The ED FB page is @engagedisabilityindia. Please follow and share IEC material & information posted in the page with your circles.

ENQUIRIES

For more information on ED and related activities contact: engagedisability@gmail.com or Jessica Richard at +91-9894096396

UPCOMING ED EVENTS

- Virtual Core Group Meeting: 20 Nov 2020
- Virtual Hub coordinators Meeting: 5 Dec 2020
- Virtual Regional Meetings across India: Dates to be decided
- Family Retreat in Hyderabad Hub: Date to be decided
- Regional Meeting in North East India: Date to be decided

Engage Disability National Conference: September 2021

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