

Giant Leaps

Forward...

BUILDING A
WORLD OF
EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF SWABHIMAN

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This edition of the quarterly newsletter, covers the vibrant activities, impactful events, and insightful discussions from January to March 2025. This period has been rich with engagements promoting inclusivity, advocacy, accessibility, and the rights of persons with disabilities across various platforms, both locally and globally. Here's a look at some of the key highlights:

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Prachi River Restoration Campaign

18-24/02/2025: Collaboration with the NSS Regional Office, Bhubaneswar, successfully coordinated the Prachi River Restoration Campaign in January and February 2025. The campaign aimed to raise awareness on environmental conservation and promote inclusive volunteerism by engaging students from various coastal colleges across Odisha. As part of the initiative, a sensitisation session was conducted on 09/02/2025 at the office premises. The orientation was attended by 29 students (12 girls and 17 boys) from five colleges alongside the Prachi River. The session focused on volunteerism, environmental responsibility, and social inclusion. Eminent speakers such as Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, Tanmayee Sahu, and several NSS Program Officers inspired the youth to contribute actively to conservation efforts.

The campaign culminated in a seven-day awareness walk along the banks of the Prachi River, traversing the districts of Khordha, Puri, and Cuttack. Thirty male student volunteers from Debrai College, Nayapalli and Mahapurusha Achyutananda College,

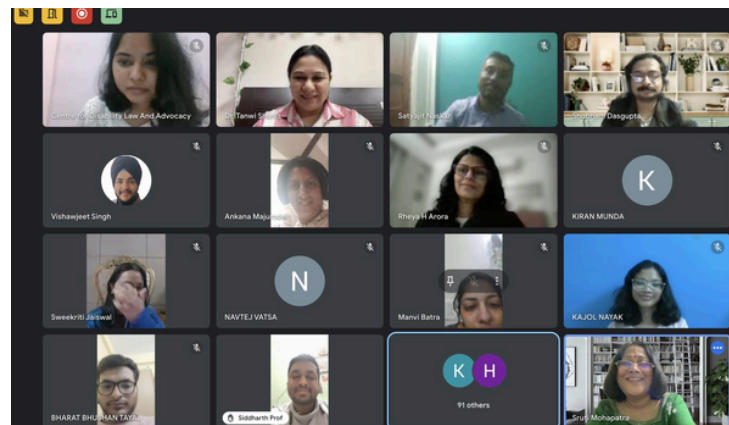


1 Cuttack, participated in this transformative journey. The walk highlighted the environmental, cultural, and ecological importance of the Prachi River while promoting the values of inclusion by ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities, women, and youth.

Key contributors to the campaign included members of the Prachi Parikrama Trust, Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, Satyajit Behera, and Biswajit Brahma, whose leadership and commitment played a vital role in making the campaign a success. This collective effort served as a model for Odisha's youth-led, inclusive environmental advocacy.

Interactive Session on Disability Laws and Advocacy

23/01/2025: An interactive session on Disability Laws and Advocacy was held, at National Law University, Cuttack. Led by Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, the session featured a powerful and insightful talk that encouraged students and faculty to engage with and

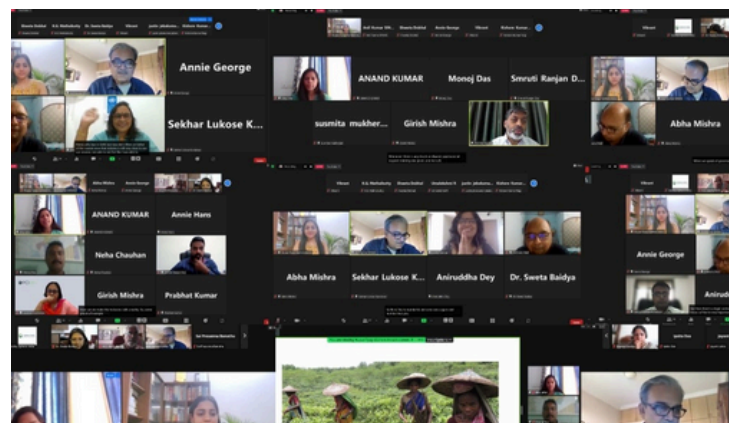


contribute to the field of disability law and social justice. The event saw the participation of approximately 160 attendees, reflecting strong interest and engagement on the subject of disability rights. Dr. Mohapatra began the session by sharing her inspiring journey and highlighting the importance of resilience, while offering insights into disability laws in India, implementation challenges, and strategies for using law as a tool for justice and inclusion.

The interactive nature of the session, marked by vibrant discussions and numerous questions from the audience, extended the session well beyond the scheduled time. Participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage directly with a leader in the field and gain first-hand insight into the realities of disability advocacy.

Webinar on Disaster Management and Inclusion

22/01/2025: A webinar on Disaster Management and Inclusion was organized by Sphere India Academy, with Dr. Sruti Mohapatra as one of the prominent speakers along with Kumar Shiwendra, Dorodi Sharma, Er. Awdhesh Kumar, Devika Jayssell, and Nupur Tyagi. During the session all the speakers spoke on important perspectives on inclusive disaster management practices. It centered on the promotion of disability-inclusive approaches within Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and underscored the need to embed inclusion into disaster preparedness and response systems.



Dr. Mohapatra highlighted the specific challenges faced by persons with disabilities during disasters and advocated for accessible, innovative solutions. She stressed the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration including policymakers, organizations, and communities for creating effective and inclusive DRR frameworks.

Disability and Equality Training by CDPF

09-13/03/2025: Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, Vice Chair of CDPF, played a pivotal role in designing the Disability and Equality training program for youth with disabilities across India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Held in New Delhi, the program focused on empowerment, advocacy, and networking. Swabhimani nominated seven youth with disabilities from Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and Odisha to participate.



Celebration of World Down Syndrome Day and Poetry Day

21/03/2025: To mark World Down Syndrome Day and World Poetry Day, a special event titled “Poetry with a Difference” was held at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, celebrating inclusion through the powerful medium of poetry. The program aligned with the theme “Improve Our Support Systems,” emphasizing the need for inclusive care, education, and opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome.

Pabitra Mohan Kara moderated the session, explaining the symbolism behind the date 21st day of the 3rd month representing the triplication of the 21st chromosome. He noted that the United Nations



has officially observed this day since 2012. Rabindra Kumar Swain of Ketaki Foundation set the context, underlining the importance of greater awareness and support. Tanmayee Sahu, Program Manager at Swabhimani, spoke about leveraging art, literature, and poetry to promote disability inclusion.

The event featured heartfelt recitations by renowned poets and mothers of children with Down syndrome, confronting stigma and expressing messages of hope, struggle, and acceptance. Highlights included poems such as "Kuch Loog" by Bharati Parida, "Manusya Rupa" by Ashutosh Rath, "Purusha Pakhya" by Kedar Mishra, and "A Mother's Message to Her Daughter" by Swapna Mishra, among others.

The program powerfully demonstrated how poetry can raise awareness, foster empathy, and advocate for stronger, more inclusive support systems in society.

Advocacy for Inclusive Education: Shaping the Curriculum Framework

As part of Odisha's commitment to aligning educational practices with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the State Government constituted a State Steering Committee on State Curriculum Frameworks (SCFs) on January 16/01/2025. The 15-member committee was tasked with creating SCFs that integrate global educational standards while retaining local relevance. Dr. Sruti Mohapatra's appointment to the committee signifies a focused effort to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for children with disabilities.

Furthering this commitment, a National Workshop on NEP 2020 Implementation was held in Odisha from 21-23/01/2025. Dr. Mohapatra participated as the sole representative from the social sector within the committee. She emphasized the rights of children with disabilities and advocated for inclusive, sensitive, and equitable education strategies during multi-stakeholder discussions on NEP implementation.

The progress continued with the Second Meeting of the State Steering Committee, held on February



7/02/2025, at SCERT, Odisha. The session was attended by 13 committee members, including Dr. Mohapatra. Key discussions focused on structuring the State Curricular Framework, clarifying member roles, and setting timelines for the framework's development.

Participation in Sugamya Yatra Campaign

07/02/2025: The Sugamya Yatra 2025, a nationwide initiative to raise awareness about accessibility challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), was flagged off from the State Headquarters in Bhubaneswar. Satyajit Behera, Accessibility Expert from Swabhiman, actively participated, sharing insights on existing gaps and emphasizing the implementation of universal design principles. The event saw participation from government officials, civil society organizations, and community members.



Eastern Regional Consultation 2025

14/02/2025: The Eastern Regional Consultation 2025, held in Bhubaneswar, brought together 58 participants including 35 persons with disabilities (PwDs) from Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and Chhattisgarh. Organized by Swabhiman and NCPEDP, the event aimed to assess the current status of PwDs in Eastern India and strengthen advocacy efforts around five key themes: access to justice, inclusive education, accessibility, political participation, and healthcare. Dr. Sruti Mohapatra opened the consultation by presenting insights from national and international reports, highlighting barriers to justice, employment, and disaster preparedness for PwDs. Distinguished guests included Bratati Harichandan (Commissioner, SCPD, Odisha), Sanyashi Behera (Deputy Secretary, SSEPD Department), Dr. Tanwi Shams (NLU Odisha), Ranjit Mahapatra (Director, Sadhana), Rajeev Raturi (Disability Rights Activist), and Mihir Mohanty (Dhwani Foundation).

Panel discussions exposed major gaps in access and inclusion across sectors. Speakers emphasized the lack of accessible legal systems, underutilization of special courts, and exclusion of PwDs from local governance. Recommendations included appointing



sign language interpreters and counselors in police stations, full utilization of disability welfare funds, and mainstreaming inclusive education through curriculum reform and adequate teacher training. On accessibility, the need for an autonomous monitoring body and stronger enforcement of Supreme Court directives, including the Rajiv Raturi vs. Union of India judgment, was highlighted. Political participation was addressed with calls for electoral quotas, tracking of manifesto commitments, and the inclusion of disability status in official election forms.

The health panel emphasized the urgent inclusion of PwDs in schemes like Ayushman Bharat without age or income restrictions. Panelists such as Devarnav Sharma, Akshay Jain, Dr. Sunil Kumar Singh, Arvind Sharma, Priyatam Singh, and Shaista Perwin contributed key insights. Across sessions, the consultation stressed the use of disaggregated data, cross-sector collaboration, and grassroots advocacy. It concluded with a unified call for inclusive governance and policy reform to ensure the rights, dignity, and full participation of persons with disabilities across Eastern India.

Pre-Budget Citizens' Consultation

22/01/2025: At CYSD, Bhubaneswar, a consultation was held to gather inputs from civil society on the



State Budget for 2025–26. Tanmayee Sahu from Swabhiman emphasized embedding inclusion in all aspects of development to ensure sustainability. The consultation influenced state policies and budgets through endorsed recommendations.

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Setup of Regional Desk of CDPF

Swabhiman established the Regional Desk of CDPF at its Bhubaneswar office, appointing Rudra Narayan Behera, a youth with disability, as an intern. The desk focuses on networking with organizations and individuals working on disability issues in India.

Advocacy with Department of Health and Family Welfare

03/02/2025: An advocacy initiative was undertaken with Ms. Aswathy S, Secretary, Department of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Odisha, to include the specialty of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PMR) under the Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana Scheme. Spinal cord injury often leads to multiple complications requiring intervention from various specialties such as orthopaedics, nephrology, dermatology, and others. However, PMR is now widely recognized as a comprehensive specialty capable of addressing these complex issues within a single department. Several government medical colleges in Odisha have already established PMR facilities. The advocacy aimed to ensure that these specialized services are incorporated into the Gopabandhu Jana Arogya Yojana Scheme, improving access to holistic and coordinated care for individuals with spinal cord injury.

OSdN Strategy Meeting

25/02/2025: 18 OSdN member organizations met online to finalize a collective advocacy strategy for 2025. Drawing on inputs from the earlier regional consultation, members contributed to a position paper on curricular inclusion for students with

disabilities. Feedback was compiled by Ranjit Mohapatra (Sadhana Organisation) and shared with Dr. Sruti Mohapatra for final submission to the government, reflecting OSdN's united push for inclusive education.

Talk on Barriers to Political Participation for Disabled

11/03/2025: At the inaugural edition of “Empowering Inclusion A Dialogue on Disability, Politics and Economic Justice,” organized by NCPEDP, meaningful conversations unfolded on the current state of disability rights and the urgent reforms needed to advance inclusion. Among the key voices at the event was Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, who



played a prominent role in the second panel discussion titled “Barriers to Political Participation for Disabled.” Her insights were shared alongside notable figures such as Shri Anish Gawande, National Spokesperson of NCP-SP, P.T. Baburaj, Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities (Kerala), and Arman Ali, Executive Director of NCPEDP.

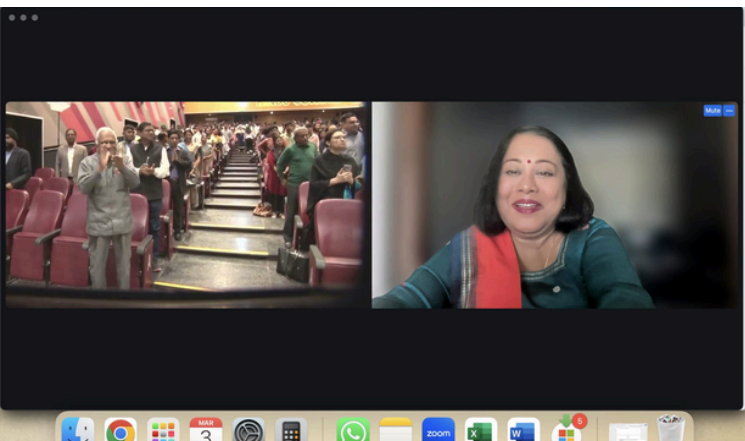
Dr. Mohapatra's contributions focused on the systemic obstacles that continue to hinder political engagement for persons with disabilities and the need for structural change to ensure inclusive governance. Her expertise and advocacy brought critical attention to the intersection of disability and democratic participation.

The event marked a significant milestone, with Hon'ble Members of Parliament including Shashi Tharoor, Pratap Chandra Sarangi, and Smt. Dr. Fauzia Khan lending their support through presence and commitment. With participation from policymakers, experts, and civil society leaders, the dialogue aimed to embed disability as a core element of national development, foster inclusive decision-making, and strengthen the political leadership of persons with disabilities. Dr. Mohapatra's involvement exemplified the spirit of the event bringing lived experience and expert insight into policy discourse at the highest levels.



Addressed Students of Hindu College

03/03/2025: Dr. Sruti Mohapatra addressed students of Hindu College, New Delhi Hindu College which marked the 100th birth anniversary celebration of Late Shri Lalit Kumar Jain, an alumni of Hindu College. She spoke on Success Against All Odds. Her address meandering through facing challenges, looking for innovative solutions, setting up realistic goals, working towards the goal with patience and hardwork, not allowing others to define your success, touched the right chords in the listeners, evident in the fact that the audience gave her a loud and spontaneous standing ovation.



A Memorable Encounter: Dr. Sruti Mohapatra Meets the President of India at Rashtrapati Bhawan

21/03/2025: A memorable meeting at Rashtrapati Bhawan. The grand 200,000-square-foot residence, with its blend of Indian and British architecture, iconic dome, and Mughal Gardens, was awe-inspiring. While waiting, Dr. Sruti Mohapatra admired the ornate furnishings before meeting the President of India, a true "daughter of the soil."

With a warm smile, the President began, "Would you like to speak in Odia?" Their engaging conversation covered Dr. Mohapatra's family, Guruji, education, accident, disability activism, Anjali festival, Prachi river, and political representation of persons with disabilities. Time flew. Before parting, the President invited



Dr. Mohapatra to attend the Purple Fest. She left deeply moved by the President's humility, compassion, and ability to truly listen.

Breaking Barriers: Dr. Sruti Mohapatra's Inspiring Address

08/03/2025: Dr. Sruti Mohapatra addressed students and faculty of Sri Sri University on the occasion of International Women's Day. Participating in a panel discussion, she expounded on the challenges of double discrimination of being a woman, being disabled and of traversing a difficult path to become a leader on her own right.



Celebrates Saraswati Puja

02/02/2025: Saraswati Puja was celebrated enthusiastically on February 02, 2025, at the Swabhiman premises. The Swabhiman team and Volunteers gathered at the office to commemorate the day and seek the blessings of the Goddess of knowledge, music, art, and culture. The rituals were conducted by Pandit Ji, who not only performed the puja but also enlightened everyone on the importance of worshipping the Goddess of knowledge. The event concluded with the distribution of prasad to all those present.



Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2025

On the eve of the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas 2025 at Bhubaneswar, Hon'ble CM Shri Mohan Charan Majhi met and addressed the gathering, emphasizing the crucial role of civil society in the development process. "Civil society is a vital stakeholder in

shaping our progress,” said the Hon'ble CM



Workshop on Accessibility & Inclusion for PwDs

15/01/2025: Satyajit Behera, Officer Accessibility, Networking and Outreach, and Akankshya, Architecture, participated in a workshop on accessibility & inclusion for PwDs held on 15/01/2025 at Conference Hall, office of EIC (Civil) Niraman Soudha, Bhubaneswar in presence of the Disability Commissioner and officials of SSEPD Department.

The workshop was conducted by the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities of the Government of Odisha.



Scholar Enrichment Sessions

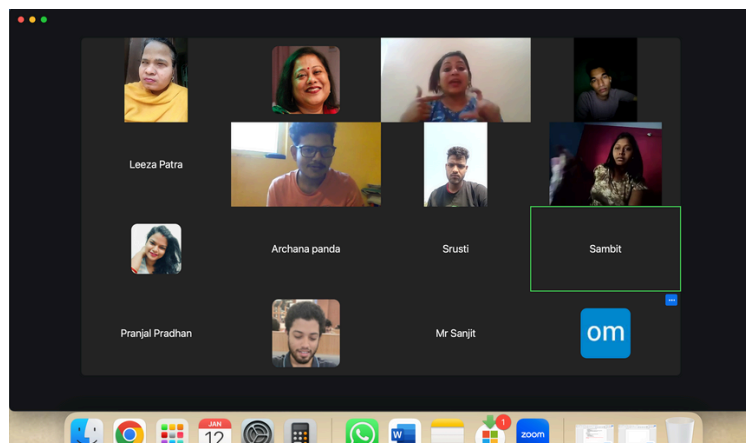
January to March 2025: As part of the Anjali Scholarship Program, four Scholar Enrichment Sessions were conducted between January and March 10/03/2025, aimed at preparing students with disabilities for competitive examinations and guiding them toward meaningful career goals. A total of 33 selected scholars actively participated in these sessions.

The sessions were held on the following dates:

- 12/01/2025 – Economic Current Affairs by Mr. Sambit Das, a visually impaired banker, who provided insights into current economic trends and their implications.
- 01/02/2025 – Career Opportunities After Intermediate and Graduation by Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, focusing on career planning and goal setting.

- 23/02/ 2025 – Indian Politics (Part 1) by Mr. Sambit Das, offering an overview of the political landscape and governance in India.
- 08/03/2025 – Career Opportunities Post-HSC and Graduation by Mr. Sarthak Pattnaik, covering competitive exams, vocational training, and higher education options.

These enrichment sessions served as a platform for knowledge building, mentorship, and empowerment, equipping scholars with the necessary tools and information to make informed academic and professional choices.



Compliance Management Training

Leeza Chainy actively participated in a series of 3 days of three Compliance & Finance Manager (CFM) training programs organized by Dhvani Foundation from January to March 2025. These three trainings, held in Bhubaneswar and Jatni, were part of the Niranthara Classic Program and focused on strengthening compliance, governance, and financial management practices among partner NGOs.

In January, the sessions covered 25 compliance parameters, legacy data entry, income tax filing, and use of digital tools like Google Forms and Sheets. In February, the training highlighted DARPAN registration, CSR-1, POSH policies, and organizing statutory documents. In March, the focus shifted to financial management systems, planning, budgeting, and practical documentation methods.

Leeza Chainy showed consistent dedication and involvement throughout the trainings, contributing to group discussions and practical exercises. Her active participation enhanced her skills in compliance and governance, enabling her to support institutional systems more effectively within her organization.





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