


*Report of*

UNITED VOICES  
FOR  
disABILITY EQUITY

 **Swabhiman**  
(State Disability Information and Resource Centre)

# ABOUT SWABHIMAN

The need for an independent organisation capable of providing information relating to any aspect of disability was the subject of discussion among activists in this field for many years. It was in response to this that a Disability Information and Resource Centre, SWABHIMAN, came up.

SWABHIMAN believes that a healthy society must be an inclusive society. The Government's commitment to secure comprehensive and enforceable civil rights for disabled people is a necessary part of creating that inclusive society. To underline the fact that persons with disability are also productive element and equal partners in society SWABHIMAN was born on 1st of December 2001.

SWABHIMAN is all about working towards self-determination, equal opportunities and self-respect of the disabled people. Ascertaining accessibility that covers a wide spectrum of needs - physical, mental, architectural, travel, educational, vocational and recreational.....



## **Swabhiman's Vision**

People with disabilities are EQUAL PARTNERS IN ALL RESPECTS AND ALL FIELDS.

## **Swabhiman's Mission**

To strengthen the disability movement through research, training, advocacy and public education for full and equal participation of people with disabilities in the country's mainstream.

## **Swabhiman Believes**

In the right to equality of opportunity.

In the right to living with dignity.

In the right to information.

That disability is a human rights issue.

## **Swabhiman Values**

Differences in people.

Positive thinking.

Walking together.

# Introduction

A long journey from 1996 to till 2010 in the state of Orissa. 10.21 lakh people with disability were yet to have a disability commission and full time disability commissioner to hear the injustices they suffer, to lend a ear to their grievances and to alleviate their sufferings. Many battles had been fought by different organizations, individuals and networks for the above cause but either they could not reach the center of power or when they did mere wordy assurances were given. But this time .....

From 21 district more than 220 persons with disability, their family members and organizations, assembled in VRC under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, Chief Executive of Swabhiman and convener of Orissa State Disability Network (OSDN), which saw the formation of a Independent Disability Commission with a full time Disability Commissioner in Orissa on 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2010.



As per the PWD (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 the government mandates appointment of a disability commissioner (Clause 60, section (1) states - Every State Government may, by notification appoint a Commissioner for persons with disabilities for the purpose of this Act.) But despite 15 years having passed government was turning deaf ears to all petitions, appeals, memorandum and rallies. And then all PWDs and organizations came together and UNITED THEY WON!

## Journey to Formation of Commission...



g Assembly session for immediate redressal of the problems people with disabilities (PWDs). Committees were formed to the CM and leader of opposition for submission of andum. Leaders and representatives of the Orissa State disability Orissa Vikalanga Manch, All Orissa Association for the Welfare of Handicapped, Orissa Disabled Persons' Network, Orissa Association Parent's Association, Orissa Association for the Deaf, OLS, National Society- Orissa Chapter, and Orissa State Disability Network attended the meeting.

On 21<sup>st</sup> February almost all organizations working in Orissa, across disabilities, across districts and across networks united and demanded an Independent Disability Commission with full time Commissioner. Under the aegis of United Equality (UVDE), a by Dr. Sruti Mohapatra, disabled and people met and filli demanded post ensuin ng up of the before the

Letter Sent by SWABHIMAN to NGOS  
 It has been a long journey from 1996, since the PWD Act was passed by Parliament in 1995. It mandated the establishment of DISABILITY COMMISSIONERS and appointment of DISABILITY COMMISSIONERS. We are yet to have the basic mechanism in place to address our needs. Neither is the government sensitive to our issues nor does it listen to our demands.  
 18 states in India have independent DISABILITY COMMISSIONERS.  
 Our appeals have fallen to deaf ears. Let us come together, cutting across disabilities, districts and organizations. More than 100 participants (persons with disabilities) from across Orissa will converge to discuss and debate to present a memorandum to the state government for the IMMEDIATE FORMATION OF A DISABILITY COMMISSION in Orissa.  
 Date : 21<sup>st</sup> February  
 Time : 10.00 am to 5.00 pm  
 Venue : VRC, Bhubaneswar

o f meet memor Network, Orthopaedically for the Blind, Father Forum of All India Leprosy



A team consisting of P.K.Mishra (parent), Sudipta Mishra (CP), Sannyasi Behera (VI), Satyanarayan Mishra (OH), M.M.Prusty (parent), Mr. Prusty (MR), Reeta Jena (Parent - Autism), Sruti Mohapatra (OH) and Asit Behera (Swabhiman staff) met both the Chief minister and the leader of opposition and handed over the memorandum. Leader of opposition was well apprised of and he assured to raise the issue on the floors of the Assembly and the CM agreed to appoint the commissioner for disabled immediately the issue on the floors of the Assembly and the Chief Minister assured of a commission soon. A 11 member delegation met the Chief Minister on 6th March 2010 at 6 pm at Secretariat for a final round of discussion.



## Brief of 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting - Except from Deliberations

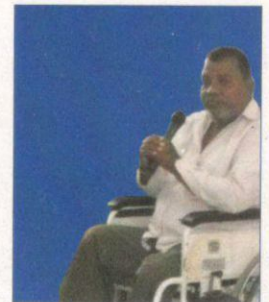


Sri. Bijay Kumar Parida, General Secretary OAD, his fingers talking for him, lamented how the PWDs in Orissa have been marginalized, subjugated and under the strong grip of an inferiority feeling as they are treated like second class citizen in their own state. Despite of their ability and knowledge PWDs, especially deaf youth are not getting jobs. He stressed on the rigors PWDs face to enter secretariat and meet the WCD secretary or go to WCD department for their problems.

Sri Madhabananda Ray, General Secretary of AOOHWA, highlighted the efforts made by him and various organizations in getting a commission set up in Orissa. He lamented on the apathetic attitude of government towards the issues of persons with disabilities.



Mr. Sannyasi Behera, General Secretary of OAB, was aggrieved by the deafness and callousness in the rape case of a visually challenged girl. Hardly had she been able to grab the attention of government that the same incident was reported as the cause of death of a four year disabled girl in Dhenkanal, on the eve of world disability day, in the year 2009.



Sri Umesh Phurohit, active member of OVM, and representative of ODPN, said our campaign is not only till the appointment of the disability commissioner but it will continue for long. Therefore we need to build alliance between the organizations, associations, networks by forgetting everything else. He gave many examples of the efforts made by OVM and others for the formation of the commission.





K. Anand Roy described how OVM tried to draw the attention of the government by repeated 'post card abhiyan' in the last 3-4 years. He also elaborated how the callous government did not send a representative to receive their memorandum on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009. Although a rally of 1000 PWDs came to the state capital on that day, no ministers or secretary deemed it fit to listen to the rallying party.

Sri Umesh Nayak, General Secretary, Indian Leprosy Forum, Orissa branch, discussed the minimal amount being doled out to disabled persons in Orissa. He said Orissa is still providing a minimal of Rs 200 a month as disability pension while Goa is giving Rs. 1500, Delhi and UP Rs. 900 and Rs. 700 in MP and Kerala. He welcomed the alliance and said we can win our case only if we are united.

The visionary of this movement, Dr Sruti Mohapatra, said

### Memorandum To Chief Minister

To 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2010  
 The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Bhubaneswar  
 Orissa  
 Secretariat  
 Bhubaneswar

*It has been a long journey from 1996. We are yet to have the basic mechanism in place to address our needs i.e the Disability Commission and a full time disability commissioner. Yesterday from 21 districts more than 220 persons with disabilities, their family members, organization joined hands to demand setting up of a disability commission in Orissa. All organizations/associations and networks were represented by the heads. It was unanimously decided to present a memorandum and request you for the formation of the Disability Commission by the end of the coming assembly session. Unanimously the house agreed on the following three demands-*

1. *INDEPENDENT DISABILITY COMMISSION WITH FULL TIME COMMISSIONER,*
2. *OFFICE OF THE COMMISSION OUTSIDE THE PREMISES OF SECRETARIAT WITH BARRIER FREE ACCESS.*
3. *A PERSON WITH DISABILITY/PARENT AS THE COMMISSIONER.*

*Sir, if the demands are not met with by the end of the coming assembly session ten lakh people with disabilities, their family members and organizations working in this sector will come on the streets to protest against the insensitivity of Orissa Government. Sir, the government is violating our HUMAN RIGHTS as per UNCRPD.*

*With Regards*  
*(10.21 lakh persons with disability in Orissa)*  
*Annexure: Signatures of all participants of the meeting*

attitude of WCD dept in the appointment of the anganwadi worker in the district of Nuapada, the appointment case of Susanta who got a job in NALCO but



management did not allow him and subsequently WCD commissioner also failed to protect his job, etc. made her to realize that appointment of a full time commissioner was urgent.

Sri Ajay Jena, the parent of mentally challenged children, Sri Arun Kumar Behera a visually challenged person from Kendrapada, Reeta Jena from CATCH, Pradip Agarwal from Nuapada, K.C.Pandab from Rourkela, Rashmi Sahoo from Rourkela, Sambit Das, Sudipta Mishra and many others from different part of Orissa opined that they all wanted the immediate formation of Disability Commission in Orissa. Unanimous voice was 'WCD dept has many role to play hence disability gets less priority. We don't want any special and unusual favor or privilege; we want to be able to attend our neighborhood school, work, and go to movies etc. We want to be treated as normal people, we are not aspiring for charity but our right.'



## History of Movement for Formation of Disability Commission

Sl. No.	Date or Year and Month	Nature of Activity Dharana/Rally/Post Card Campaign/ Media Advocacy/ Letters to Government	Name of Leader of Activity	Number of People Involved	Outcome
1.	1994	Political Interface	Sri B.K. Parida (OAD)	350	Public Sensitization
2.	1997	Rally	Sri M.N. Ray (AOOHWA)	200	Memorandum submitted to Government
3.	1997	Letters to Government	Sri M.N. Ray along with OAB & OAD	10	Met CM & he assured of a commission soon
4.	1998	Political Interface	Sri B. Mahala (OAD)	200	Public Sensitization
5.	1999	Post Card Campaign &	Mr. Binodbihari Sahu OAB	5000	Public Sensitization
6.	2003	Post Card Campaign	Dr. Sruti Mohapatra OSDN	5000	Pressure on Chief Minister
7.	2004	First Political Convention	Dr. Sruti Mohapatra OSDN	1200	Leaders of all political parties interacted with PWDs.
8.	2004	Question in Assembly	Sri B. Mahala (OAD)	150	Public Sensitization
9.	2004	Rally	Dr. Sruti Mohapatra & Late Mr. Ashok Hans OSDN	500	Public Awareness and Memorandum to Governor
10.	2004	Met Political Party Leaders	Dr. Sruti Mohapatra Swabhimani	Alone	BJD & CPI(M) included issues in manifesto
11.	2005	Question in Assembly through MLAs	Sri Sanyasi Behera OAB		Pressure created in legislature



12.	2005	Political Interface	Sri Sanyasi Behera OAB	50	Public Sensitization
13.	2007	15 <sup>th</sup> National	Sri A.K. Jena President(OSCCPA)	50	Awareness Sensitization
14.	2007	Question in Assembly through MLAs	Dr. Sruti Mohapatra OSDN		Discussion in assembly
15.	2008	Conventional Meeting	Sri A.K. Jena President(OSCCPA)	20	Submitted memorandum to Secretary(WCD)
16.	2009	Political Interface	Mr. Sanyasi Behera	30	Public Sensitization
17.	2009	Rally & Dharana	Umesh Purohit and K. Anand (ODPN)	1000	Public Awareness
18.	2009	Rally	Mr. Sanyasi Behera OAB	600	Met the CM & Memorandum Submitted. Assurance.
19.	2010	Meeting	Mr. A.K. Jena OSCCPA	50	Submitted 25 point charter of demand including for commission.
20	2010	Letter to Chief Minister and Governor	Dr. Sruti Mohapatra Swabhimani	1	Pressure on Government
21	2010	Meeting	ODPN	50	Commissioner cum Secretary W & CD Dept. was appraised of the problem.
22	2010	Meeting	Dr. Sruti Mohapatra	10	Decided to bring all organizations and PWD together for commission formation.

OSDN – Orissa State Disability Network

OAB – Orissa Association for the Blind

OAD – Orissa Association for the Deaf

AOOHWA – All Orissa Orthopedically Handicapped Welfare Association

OVM – Orissa Vikalanga Mancha

ODPN – Orissa Disabled People's Network



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# Govt insensitivity brought to light

**By Swabhiman News Service**

**BHUBANESWAR, 21 FEB** The insensitivity of the Orissa Patnaal government was brought to the fore by people with disabilities from across 21 districts of the state were angry. We remain unacknowledged, unknown and uninterested for, they said while roiling out the government for complete callousness exhibited by government officials towards persons with disabilities.

There are 12 lakh persons with disabilities in the state and all of them demand action of a Disability Commission, Jawahar the Ministry, however, the R&CD department has many more disabilities to be taken care of. The government is not doing anything to address the needs of persons with disabilities.



Social activist M. Shaif Mohapatra with PWD persons in Bhubaneswar on Sunday, 11 Feb

# Disabled people demand justice FULL-TIME COMMISSIONER, HIKE IN AID SOUGHT

Disabled people demand justice. They are demanding a full-time commissioner for the Orissa State Disability Commission. They also want a hike in the aid given to them. The Orissa State Disability Commission is a statutory body established in 1995. It is headed by a chairperson and has a secretary and several members. The commission is responsible for the implementation of the Orissa Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. The commission has been criticized for its inaction and lack of funds. The disabled people are demanding a full-time commissioner to look after the affairs of the commission. They also want a hike in the aid given to them. The Orissa State Disability Commission is a statutory body established in 1995. It is headed by a chairperson and has a secretary and several members. The commission is responsible for the implementation of the Orissa Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. The commission has been criticized for its inaction and lack of funds. The disabled people are demanding a full-time commissioner to look after the affairs of the commission. They also want a hike in the aid given to them.

# Differently-abled to stage dharna during Budget session Demand accessible separate dept outside Secretariat

Disabled people are planning to stage a dharna (protest) during the Budget session of the Orissa State Assembly. They are demanding an accessible separate department outside the Secretariat. The Orissa State Disability Commission is a statutory body established in 1995. It is headed by a chairperson and has a secretary and several members. The commission is responsible for the implementation of the Orissa Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. The commission has been criticized for its inaction and lack of funds. The disabled people are demanding a full-time commissioner to look after the affairs of the commission. They also want a hike in the aid given to them. The Orissa State Disability Commission is a statutory body established in 1995. It is headed by a chairperson and has a secretary and several members. The commission is responsible for the implementation of the Orissa Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995. The commission has been criticized for its inaction and lack of funds. The disabled people are demanding a full-time commissioner to look after the affairs of the commission. They also want a hike in the aid given to them.



Supported by :  
**Orissa State Disability Network**  
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