



Disabled People matter! Disability groups launch a first-of-its kind Manifesto asking for a seat on the policy table

New Delhi, February 29, 2024: In a first-of-its-kind initiative in the country, a Manifesto - Manifesto For and By Citizens with Disabilities - was launched on Thursday by disability rights groups, led by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) in collaboration with the National Disability Network (NDN), urging political parties to prioritise and address the issues of disabled community in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Emphasising the need for equal treatment, disability rights advocates called on political parties to prioritise the agenda of persons with disabilities and to seriously consider persons with disabilities as a decisive voting bloc.

“As the Lok Sabha Elections 2024 draw near, citizens with Disabilities, which form 7% of the population of India and there are more than 1 crore registered voters, as per the Election Commission, it is essential that the voices of persons with disabilities are heard in the discussions around the 2024 General Elections. This is not only because they represent sizable votes but, more importantly, because they are a large consumer of goods and services and thus contributors to socio-economic development and GDP,” said Arman Ali, Executive Director of NCPEDP.

The disability manifesto represents the culmination of extensive national and regional consultations with a diverse array of stakeholders, encapsulating the pressing concerns and demands of the disabled community across India. NCPEDP, in collaboration with the National Disability Network (NDN) and the National Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (NCRPD), invited inputs from more than 10,000 people with & without disabilities across the country. Based on these inputs, the ground-breaking Disability Manifesto of India, comprising 10 critical demands and representing the voices of people across the country, was formulated.

The manifesto emphasises the critical need for political parties to prioritise mainstreaming of people with disabilities in their 5- year action plans for the upcoming elections. The Disability Manifesto addresses a wide spectrum of issues ranging from budgetary allocation to health insurance, accessibility, social security, socio-political inclusion, economic participation, climate change, gender equality, sports, and education.

Here are the key demands of the manifesto:

- 1. Budgetary Allocation** - Allocate 5% of the total budget allocation for persons with disabilities; release disability budget statement.
- 2. Health Insurance** – Announce a policy that promotes affordable and accessible health insurance & protects people with disabilities from non-discrimination. Announce a scheme which is lines with Ayushman Bharat for persons with Disabilities.
- 3. Accessibility** - Make all public and private spaces/products/services accessible for disabled people by 2026. Introduce compliance guidelines for businesses.



4. **Social Security** – Increase the monthly pension to Rs. 5000/- for disabled people under the National Social Assistance Program; prioritise disability linkage in social security schemes.

5. **Socio-Political Inclusion** - Amend Article 15 to include the word disability; provide 5% reservation in governance; reservation & nomination of people with disabilities in Rajya Sabha by the President of India.

6. **Economic Participation** – Fill backlog vacancies by 2027; introduce “Access to Work” scheme; for providing Reasonable Accommodation ensure disability inclusion in MSME programs.

7. **Climate Change** - Form dedicated Climate Change Mission for vulnerable communities; ensure real-time data collection for disabled in disaster management.

8. **Gender Equality** - Establish a sub-scheme for digital literacy and smartphone access for girls & women with disabilities; Announce policies that promote equal participation & protect women and girls with disabilities against violence and abuse

9. **Sports** - Establish state-of-the-art Sports Infrastructure based on the principles of Universal Design for para- athletes.

10. **Education** - Implement data-driven strategy for enhanced enrolment and completion of mainstream education for disabled children by 2029. Ensure enrolment rate in higher education to be in line with National Gross Average i.e., 23.4%.

Ali asserted, "It's high time we move beyond disability-specific concerns. Employment, accessibility, and education are non-negotiable, but we must also engage with mainstream issues. Only by becoming a unified voice can we hope to be truly heard. We would also urge the political parties to not only have a specific section of persons with disabilities in the manifestos but include disability specific concerns in all schemes & policies announced in their manifestos."

The manifesto launch conference was attended by Rama Chari from Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC); Rajiv Rajan, Executive Director Ekta Chennai based disability rights activist; Pradeep Raj from Association for Disabled People; Radhika Alkazi from AASTHA; Representative from National Association for Deaf (NAD); and Representatives from All India Confederation of the Blind among others.

Disability Manifesto serves as a clarion call to political parties to prioritise the rights and needs of persons with disabilities in their policy agendas. It highlights the challenges faced by the disabled people and demands a more inclusive and equitable society, where every citizen can actively participate and contribute to the nation-building.

Media Contact:

Nazneen Shekh
NCPEDP
+91 99994 30305

Pragya Lal
+91 9999982074