23rd NCPEDP-LTIMindtree
Helen Keller Awards 2022

Opening the Door to an Equitable and Inclusive Society
A person who is severely impaired never knows his hidden sources of strength until he is treated like a normal human being and encouraged to shape his own life

- Helen Keller
Employment for persons with disabilities has always been a bottleneck when talking of diversity and inclusion in places of work. The need to create and sustain opportunities in employment and entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities in both urban and rural areas is more critical than ever. By providing reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities, organisations can create an inclusive workforce culture that does not discriminate based on disability. The NCPEDP-LTIMindtree Helen Keller Awards are one such effort to promote the idea of an inclusive and self-reliant India.

In the post-COVID world, the need to create and sustain opportunities in employment and entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities in both urban and rural areas is more critical than ever. By providing reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities, organisations can create an inclusive workforce culture that does not discriminate based on disability. The NCPEDP-LTIMindtree Helen Keller Awards are one such effort to promote the idea of an inclusive and self-reliant India.

My heartiest congratulations to all the awardees who have been doing commendable work in promoting employment for persons with disabilities. I also extend my warmest wishes to all those who nominated themselves for the awards this year for their noteworthy contribution. Together, we can and will change the narrative of disability in the country.
Debashis Chatterjee
Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
LTI Mindtree

At LTI Mindtree, equity, diversity, and inclusion are much more than catchwords and checkboxes. They are core to who we are as an organization and our vision of the change we aspire to make. They are a way of life, a state of mind, a will to be.

As an organization, our purpose is to unleash possibilities and help shape a bigger, brighter, bolder future for businesses as well as communities. The future is about dreams and dreams are a fundamental right for everyone, regardless of who they are, what they do or where they live. To dream is to be human — and since dreams don’t discriminate, we firmly believe we shouldn’t either.

This belief is at the heart of our commitment to inclusive, barrier-free and sustainable ecosystems where every individual can achieve their full potential and contribute to a better world.

In NCPEDP, we have a partner who shares this goal and is doing commendable work in promoting equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The NCPEDP-LTI Mindtree Helen Keller Awards are an expression of our conviction that by bringing impactful social equity initiatives to the fore, we can broaden social change and quicken the pace of inclusion and sustainable growth.

Employment is directly tied to economic independence and a sense of self-worth. That is why mainstreaming persons with disabilities through employment is among the most effective forms of empowerment and socio-economic progress.

By turning our shared values into a collective force for positive change, we are confident that NCPEDP and LTI Mindtree will be able to help ever larger sections of society discover ever greater opportunities to thrive and prosper.
As the Helen Keller Awards enters this year into its 23rd edition, I am delighted to see so many individuals and organisations that have embraced the cause to promote employment for persons with disabilities. When these awards were launched in 1999 our objective was to recognize those who have contributed to creating employment for the disabled and also encourage and share best practices with others. A large number of nominations demonstrate that we are making good progress.

While there is increasing appreciation of the need to have a diverse and inclusive workspace— the task ahead is large. We have to make the workspace and its culture accommodative to everyone's needs. We still have a major task in educating and skilling the disabled and enhancing their employability. In a post-COVID world, with the advent and flexibility of digital-enabled Work from Anywhere environment—more new job roles are possible without the disabled person having to commute every day or relocate/migrate from their support system at home.

The time is now for all stakeholders—public and private, rural and urban, big and small, to come together and act in synergy to not only raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities but also cultivate workspaces and effective policies that are responsive to their needs. The work done by the Awardees is testimony of their successful leveraging of the immense capabilities of the disabled.

On behalf of NCPEDP, I congratulate all the awardees of this year’s NCPEDP-LTI Mindtree Helen Keller Awards 2022 for their sustained efforts to help positively impact the lives of persons with disabilities and for becoming role models to inspire others.
The NCPEDP-I TiMindtree
Helen Keller Awards 2022

The story of the Helen Keller Awards dates back to 1999, making this the twenty-third year of the Awards—a celebratory milestone of its journey. For the past 2 decades, the Awards have not only led to a recognition of the exceptional work being done by corporates, NGOs and individuals—but have also emerged as a credible way to map the progress being made year by year towards greater dignity and empowerment of India’s 70 million disabled citizens.

Over many years, these Awards have come to be recognised as the most prestigious Indian benchmark for honouring people and organizations that have worked towards a barrier-free, non-discriminatory and inclusive India. Though over the years many individuals and organizations have been honoured, two factors remain constant—one, the encouraging increase in the number of nominations that we receive each year; and two, the truly diverse nature of work being done by the Awardees (and indeed, all the nominees) in their respective fields. Both these facts amply suggest that India is well on her way of recognizing disability as an issue that needs to be addressed.

As we celebrate this change, it is also appropriate to remind ourselves that the fight for equal rights, access and opportunity for people with disabilities is an ongoing one. There is still much that needs to be done.

Nevertheless, please join us in felicitating the 18 Awardees of 2022, as we share their inspiring and motivating journeys. Heartiest congratulations to them for overcoming myriad difficulties in making our country—its institutions and workplaces more accommodating and inclusive.
Selection Committee

Arun Seth (Jury Chairman) - Board member, Narayana Health and Jubilant Pharmova
Arun Seth took early retirement from his corporate career to focus on bringing the benefits of IT/Telecom to real-world businesses in the energy, health, fintech, medtech, education, hospitality etc. via a vibrant innovative entrepreneurial ecosystem and a focus on giving back to society. He had been very active with Government and regulations on shaping Telecoms Policy and IT policy being an elected member of NASSCOM for more than a decade. Currently an independent Director on FMRT, IITK and on the board of listed cos Jubilant Pharmova Ltd, Jubilant Ingrevia Ltd, Narayana Hrudalaya.

Deepak Prabhu Matti - Senior CSR Leader, LTIMindtree
Deepak is a senior CSR leader at LTIMindtree. In this role, Deepak enables CSR grants for NGOs working in the focus areas of Education, Health & Wellness, Livelihood training and Environment conservation. In his previous role, Deepak was the global head of Cognizant Outreach (employee volunteering program) and led the core committee for Cognizant Foundation in Karnataka.

Dr. Maneesh Mishra - VP- Strategy, National Skill Development Cooperation
Dr Maneesh has extensive experience in consulting, training, program management sustainability and CSR. He leads the prestigious World Bank Skill India Mission Operation (SIMO) project at the ministry of skills and entrepreneurship. He has been part of the team that developed the capacity-building ecosystem of UIDAI -Unique Identification Authority of India, one of the biggest identity projects in the world. He has written several research papers, case studies and newspaper articles. He is a senior member of the Global institute of food, health, and nutrition, University of Cambridge and is a visiting faculty at IIMs.

Dr. Ravindra Singh - CEO, Skill Council for Persons with Disability
Experienced Head Of Quality Assurance and CSR Implementation, with a demonstrated history of working in the mining & metals industry. Skilled in Talent Management, Business Development, Organizational Development, Employee Engagement, and Business Strategy. Strong quality assurance professional Post Graduate from Delhi University and Certified CSR Professional from IICA.

Rachna Singh - National Project Coordinator – Sparking Disability Inclusive Rural Transformation, ILO
Rachna is spearheading disability inclusion at United Nations International Labour Organisation (ILO) in India and is responsible for mainstreaming disability in ILO’s work. She is an active member of the Disability Champions Network at ILO Geneva and advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in the world of work. Rachana has worked with various international and UN agencies such as UNFPA, UNICEF and UNWOMEN in different states across India on human rights, health, gender, adolescents and disability.

Rajan Sehgal - CMD, NHFDC
Chairman-cum-Managing Director, National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC), in the rank of Joint Secretary to the Government of India, under the aegis of Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. The Corporation provides credit linkage, skilling and marketing support to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
CATEGORIES

ROLE MODEL PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Persons with Disabilities from within the disability sector and outside who have been active as ambassadors of the cause of employment for people with disabilities and are a positive role model for others.

Awardees

Prof. Anil Kumar Aneja
Tejalben Prakashchandra Mehta
Dr. Paul Muddha
Ranjini Ramanujam

“Faith is a mockery if it does not teach us that we can build a more complete and beautiful world.”

- Helen Keller
Prof. Anil Kumar Aneja  
Delhi

Prof. Anil Aneja has carved a niche for himself by excelling both in mainstream education and disability sector. He has a distinguished career of 35 years in academics and presently serves as Head, Department of English and Founding Director, Centre for Disability Studies, University of Delhi. Prof. Aneja has also been working in the disability sector in voluntary capacity for more than 27 years now and currently serves as the President, All India Confederation of the Blind, a premier national organization of the blind. He was awarded the National Award for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in 2014. He was also conferred the State Award in the Category ‘Best Individual Working in the field of Social Work’, Govt. of NCT of Delhi. He has been invited to several countries and has many significant publications to his credit.
Tejalben Prakashchandra Mehta joined as a Clerk in UCO Bank and is presently posted as Assistant Manager (Scale 1 Offic) in Ahmedabad. She believes that Training & Development is equally important for employees with disabilities for improving their productivity and enhancing their knowledge. She has conducted training sessions for visually impaired employees and sighted colleagues in UCO Bank, in addition to her existing and regular job role. These training sessions help empower the employees with visual impairment and improve the perceptions among the sighted colleagues towards the capabilities of persons with disabilities. She has prepared numerous short tutorials on Banking and computer-related topics and circulated them on social media for upgrading the skill of visually impaired employees. She has also been actively involved in organizing the conference of visually impaired employees for their benefit and inclusively participated in the CSR activities of UCO Bank.
Dr. Paul Muddha
Bangalore
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Dr Paul Muddha is the Founder-Trustee of Snehadeep Trust for the Disabled which imparts skill training for visually impaired youth for gainful employment. Principal goals of the Snehadeep Trust for the Disabled are to provide food, shelter, training, education and assistance with personality development to the visually impaired and physically challenged. In the past few years, the organization has grown in numbers and has extended its activities. He has been contributing to the disability sector for the past 23 years. He also leads the football tournament for such youth and the organisation has reached around 19000 individuals. He was the first visually challenged employee to become an officer and then a manager and at present, senior manager of the Canara bank. He has also been the recipient of the ‘Best Physically Challenged Employee’ award in the year 2004 under disabled category from the President of India, Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam.
Born Deaf, Ranjini Ramanujam cannot hear normal sounds, she learnt lipreading, studied in a regular college and graduated. One of few Deaf to manage an inclusive team of 16 including, 3 deaf, her work in Infosys (BPM) involves Finance, workforce management, CSR & Training initiative for PWD. She has added value to many projects and has been a Go to Person for resolving problems.

As a DRIF member, contributed significantly to make Deaf-friendly Education policies. Responsible for British Council India starting the ‘Business Communication Skill’ course for the Deaf for the first time in India. As a collaborator for the Museum of Arts and Photography (MAP), gave insightful suggestions to improve accessibility. Guided students in their research projects, and supported 4 trainees financially. Mentored 2 deaf Badminton players to represent the State team. She also has the unique distinction of winning Medals for India in Badminton and Chess and the honour of receiving National Awards in Profession and Sports.

Ranjini Ramanujam  
Bangalore  
ranjini_ramanujam@infosys.com
CATEGORY B

Role Model Supporter of Increased Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

Individuals from within the disability sector or outside who have contributed substantially to the cause of promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities over an extended period of time.

Awardees

C. Govindakrishnan
Preeti Siwach
Dr. M.D Abul Hasan Sahani
Faisal Ashraf Nomani

While they were saying it couldn’t be done, it was done.

- Helen Keller
C. Govindakrishnan is the founder of Nethrodaya, a social service organization offering various services to the visually impaired and people with disabilities in general, in Tamil Nadu. Being visually impaired since birth, the early struggles of his parents and his as a student, fuelled his passion to serve people with visual impairment. The inception of Nethrodaya on 2nd October 2002 is the physical embodiment of this passion and the symbol of the spirit of the people with visual impairment that he wishes to showcase to the world. His work over the past 20 years is proof that with inclusive programs that support and empower persons with disabilities and their families, they too can be independent and productive members of their communities. With this mission, he strived to meticulously conceive and execute services that deliver a multi-pronged impact, empowering persons with disabilities in every aspect of their life. Through special education, training, self-employment schemes, rehabilitation, housing, nutritional security, and financial and medical assistance services, he has been privileged to serve and assist thousands of PWDs and their families over the past 20 years which is his true body of work.
During her long-spanning career, Preeti Siwach has worked with individuals with Autism in different capacities from early intervention and counselling to vocational and employment training. She works with people across the spectrum and ages; helping families understand their members with autism and fostering an environment of dignity and respect. Working as a Master Trainer and Job coach, Preeti supports persons with disabilities (PWDs) in gaining open employment and while assisting employers to understand their PWD employees. Her work involves her acting as a bridge between employers and neurodivergent employees so that they can support each other. Ms Siwach has trained hundreds of parents and professionals across India and neighbouring countries through workshops and webinars. She trains and manages a team at Action for Autism (AFA) which caters to the diverse needs of autistic individuals by providing vocational training, employment readiness training, on-the-job training and supported employment.
Dr. M.D Abul Hasan Sahani, Founder Director, of the Institute for the Handicapped and Backward People, a non-profit organization working in the disability field. He lives with Muscular dystrophy since the age of 15. Through his organisation, he is working with 750 children with disabilities. While working in the sector, he realised that in all development processes—disabled people, children and women’s participation must be ensured. He believes that community involvement and active participation are essential for the sustainability of the programmes and holistic development. Institute for the Handicapped and Backward People invests in the potentials of these individuals through community development initiatives targeting Food Security, Economic Development, Primary Health and Basic Education, Emergency management initiatives and providing aid to disaster survivors. Their goals are employment generation, ensuring equal opportunity and full participation rights. He has won numerous awards in the past but the main award is to make them stand with their heads held high and lead a dignified life.
Faisal holds a postgraduate degree in Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy from Jamia Millia Islamia University. Also called a bike tinkerer, field researcher, employment counsellor, disability rights activist, sit-down comedian and speaker. Currently working with Randstad India in the Talent Acquisition Team where he is also a part of diversity hiring. Prior to Randstad, he was working in diversity hiring for almost 7 years with different organizations like Cheshire Home Delhi and v-shesh. Through these organizations, he supported around 500 persons with disabilities by providing them with suitable job opportunities across the sectors. He has done several pioneering projects which culminated in successful placements of around 500 candidates with disabilities in industries like Retail, Hospitality, ITs, Banking etc. Followed step-by-step approach consisting of - JobMapping, training and interview preparation of candidates, sensitization of HR/Recruitment Managers on inclusive recruitment and onboarding.
CATEGORY C
Role Model Companies/NGOs/Institutions

Organisations from the disability sector or outside who have shown their commitment towards promoting equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Awardees
Amazon India Operations (ASSPL & ATSPL)
Union Bank of India
Noida Deaf Society
Joygram Social Welfare Society
The National Association of Disabled’s Enterprises

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement”
- Helen Keller
Amazon India Operations has embarked on the journey of sustainably deploying People with Disabilities (PWDs) as frontline associates at their Operations sites which include Fulfilment & Sort centers, Delivery stations from 2017. We have been leveraging structured communication, safety and engagement mechanisms such as i) Training and encouraging Team leaders to communicate with People with hearing disabilities in Indian Sign language (ISL) and leveraging “Signable” - an online interpreter to allow for seamless and scalable interaction ii) Strengthening the connect through engagement practices such as daily GEMBA, Birthday celebrations, periodic focus group discussions iv) Enhancing functional capability and to ensure seamless learning we have created 10 hrs. (134 Videos) of e-learning content in ISL v) In collaboration with ‘Youth for Jobs’, Amazon has performed an extensive Infrastructure & job audit to understand the jobs which can be assigned to different cohorts of PWDs with a plan to continuously build and make our workplaces more accessible.
Union Bank of India was established on 11 November 1919, with its headquarters in Mumbai. Today it has a network of 8729 branches, and 11092 ATMs serving over 120 million customers with 76000+ employees. Union Bank of India, is a committed employer for diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. Bank has established and further developed an inclusive work environment in which access and equal opportunities are provided for the growth and career advancement of employees with disabilities (EwDs) to lead productive, safe and dignified lives. The bank is ensuring employees with disabilities perform to the fullest of their abilities in the workplace as part of its equal opportunity program, regular sensitization through disability events celebrations, e-Learning training modules on disability awareness, accessible training material, specially designed training for EwDs, providing reasonable accommodations, assistive technologies, additional travel conveyance and financial assistance schemes. The bank is enhancing digital accessibility for employees and customers through its ambitious project Union Access. Union Bank is First Bank to launch a talking ATM for visually impaired persons. Bank also launched Union Sparsh, a specially designed debit card for visually impaired persons.
Noida Deaf Society started in 2005 with the aim of providing Vocational training and employment opportunities to the Deaf youth as its main thrust area with just 5 students. 17 years ago, NDS broke social stigmas and barriers and became a pioneering organization using Indian Sign Language as the medium of communication & training, developed a pool of capable Deaf trainers and successfully reached out to over 1400 Deaf children and youth every year.

Since its inception in 2005, the Noida Deaf Society has impacted over 53,000 direct and indirect beneficiaries so far including Deaf children, youth, their parents and siblings, team members from Government & corporate, mainstream school teachers, special educators and students etc. Besides this, NDS is working across states within the Government aided/Private Deaf schools and bringing a change in the Deaf Education System. NDS believes in the power of communities and diverse local teams. NDS has 51 Deaf trainers and managers who along with their non-Deaf counterparts are taking ownership of the growth of NDS and are harbingers of change in the community.
Joygram Social welfare Society is a voluntary social organization established under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act 1961. It was established in 2012 as a non-political, non-profit and non-religious organization. It started working from a remote village in West Bengal and is currently doing various social work with the disabled in different blocks of different districts of West Bengal. Joygram Social Welfare Society started an educational institution called Gyan-Pradeep Pratibandhi Ashram & School for children with special needs in 2014. This institution imparts education to students in two ways - Door-to-door imparting education through the CBR system, and Bringing education to schools. There are currently 55 students in this educational institution. They are making persons with disability financially self-reliant through mushroom cultivation training, sewing training, and computer training.
The National Association of Disabled’s Enterprises

Mumbai

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The National Association of Disabled’s Enterprises is a Govt. registered Charitable Institution situated at Vikhroli, Mumbai and running a Vocational Training Centre-cum-Cooperative based Employment project providing benefits to around 150 People with disabilities per batch since 1987. They undertake manufacturing of various products like umbrellas, garments and bags, printing and stationery items, handicrafts and gift articles, Assembly of mechanical and electrical parts and packing Jobs, etc.
CATEGORY

Role Model Entrepreneurs with Disabilities

Entrepreneurs with disabilities from within the disability sector as well as outside who have managed to set up businesses and sustained them over a period of time. The efforts of these individuals have positively impacted not only their lives but also the lives of others involved.

Awardees

Dr. Kalashri Barve
Ajay Gupta
Amit Sridar
Sooraj P.A.
Meenu Mani Arora

The true test of a character is to face hard conditions with the determination to make them better.

- Helen Keller
Dr. Kalashri Barve  
Mumbai  
kalashribarve@gmail.com

Dr. Kalashri Barve an artist from Mumbai’s Sir J.J School of Art, is now the MD of Kalavisharad Productions. A film director, writer, author, production designer, artist (painting) and a philosopher, is recognized and rewarded with national and international awards. In her role as an art director and director of films and documentaries, writes and conceptualises the script and after consulting with the producers and other team members, executes the film with the necessary set to leave an impactful message for society. She has earned several national and international recognitions for her work.
Ajay Gupta
Delhi
ajay.bachpan@yahoo.com

Ajay Gupta started his entrepreneurial journey by founding the Bachpan Play School chain in 2004 and ventured into formal education with the Academic Heights Public School chain in 2009. Today, there are 1100+ Bachpan and 110+ AHPS schools across India. Social impact has always been an important concern for him. By co-founding Rishihood (in 2015), India’s first social-impact university which is completely accessible to people with and without disabilities, he did his bit for society as well as completed the educational curve from Play-group to post-graduation. His social enterprise, Hum Honge Kamyab Foundation, is also a step in this direction of increasing accessibility and inclusivity for one and all. As a person with disability himself, this cause has his unyielding resolve.
Amit Sridar comes with a total of 25 years of work experience. He has completed Network Engineering from Microsoft and is a specialist in Mechanical Electronics, IOT and Management. An Inventor with patents in Automation, he became the managing director at the age of 28 with Qshield Technologies, USA. He has experience working on all branches of Information Technology as a freelancer for development and recruitment. He also leads Misan Foundation which is engaged in facilitating recruitment for Diversity and Inclusion. In an effort to challenge the existing societal norms, through this NGO, he wants to equip people of various disability types with the skills they need for the job market and assist them in getting placed as well.
Sooraj P.A. *Delhi*
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Founder of Eco Made, Sooraj is a social entrepreneur put up with the intention to promote the entrepreneurship development of people with disabilities by providing them with leadership and skills development. The organisation also promotes products manufactured by differently-abled like eco-friendly recycled paper products like paper seed pens, seed calendars, seed dairies, files and folders, notepads, tags, invitations etc at their home itself. Over the years, Ecomade has made used recycled paper an effective alternative to plastic. Some of their best-selling products are Paper Seed Pens, Paper Pencils, File, and other Stationery Products. Their latest innovation is to develop 0% plastic pens with steel refills with no parts made of Plastic.
Meenu Mani Arora
Delhi
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Meenu is a woman with Cerebral Palsy. She runs a non-governmental organization along with her husband Samuel Mani called Yes! We Can. They started a group as an avenue towards finding answers to various real-life questions. At Yes! We can, they are working to create a better world for the people with disabilities who are marginalized and underprivileged sections of our society. The first and foremost objective of the organization is the visibility of people with disabilities in society so that facilities provided for them can be used by them. Yes Bakers and Confectioneries, is an initiative taken by Yes! We Can to empower women with disability to work independently and help them support their families. All the bakery and confectionery items are customized according to the customer’s choice. Hygiene and cleanliness are maintained. Being an operational NGO, we like to implement those empowering projects which can impact their daily lives.
The Disabled-Friendly Corporate Logo

The Disabled-Friendly Corporate Logo was designed in 1999, when the Helen Keller Awards were first instituted. The brief for the design was simple – it was to portray the partnership between the Indian corporate sector and the disabled citizens of India. What emerged was a simple, yet striking, graphic representation in blue and yellow – the international colours of disability. The logo symbolises an ideal relationship between companies and people with disabilities. Visually, it portrays two sides of the same coin, or in other words a yin and yang relationship. It seeks to reinforce the fact that people with disabilities bring to the table qualities such as commitment, productivity, talent and loyalty. It also tries to spread awareness amongst corporates that they should practice non-discrimination at the workplace, and ensure that it is barrier-free.

The fact that many companies and organisations have realised the economic benefits of employing people with disabilities, is evident from the increasing number of nominations that we receive each year. And while many of these corporates are implementing policies that are already in place globally, it is highly encouraging that others have developed and instituted their own disabled-friendly corporate policies.

As a supporter of the disability sector, we urge you to do your bit by influencing policy at your own workplace, opposing instances of discrimination, and persuading others to offer equal opportunity to people with disabilities.
Brochure Concept

This design talks about opening doors to more opportunities for disabled people in workplaces. The purple globe represents disabled people and the rising sun marks the beginning of a new inclusive era. This concept also depicts how reasonable accommodation can open the doors to a more equitable world.

This visual rightly portrays Helen Keller’s quote - Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.