



JAVED ABIDI FELLOWSHIP

**“TRUTH AT TIMES IS
DECIDED BY 5 RANDOM
PERSONS SELECTED AT
RANDOM”**



**NCPEDP -
JAVED ABIDI
FELLOWSHIP**

Prepared by
KUMAR MAHAVIR

[Click here to view the accessible version of the report](#)

Table of Contents

Background	2
Progress Overview	4
• November 2021 to April 2022	4
• May 2022 to October 2022	6
• November 2022 to April 2023	8
• May 2023 to October 2023	9
Achievements	10
Experience in the Fellowship	11
Resources	12



BACKGROUND

I remember in my childhood while staying in Bhagalpur, where I was born, my own siblings used to go to school while I was not going to school, which was the first time I was treated differently. I realized over time the differential treatment and it was at age of 8 when I started to crib with my father “ I don't want to study with you in your university. Instead I was to go to school like my cousin brother and siblings' '. It was when our family shifted to Deoghar, and after denial from schools like St. Francis, that I joined the newly opened school, Deoghar Central School”.

He got through the tests and joined the school, where he realized that he would need to climb stairs and the Principal facilitated his classes on the ground floor. Even Though he joined school late, informal schooling provided by his father helped him get early promotion to successive classes. There was no looking back with him excelling at education and scoring 90% in matriculation.

He then continued his education from Coimbatore, supported by his elder brother at Vivekalaya Higher Secondary School. “Till this time I was only working on differential treatment to attain education but after moving to Coimbatore, I started to realize the barriers in continuing education in science. The exercises in labs used to be inaccessible for me and teachers used to say “don't worry we'll take care of your assessment” which sounded more of oblation towards my disability than motivational support to recognise my learning capabilities. I always ended up scoring a decent 85% in intermediate as well.”

The demotivating ecosystem made him realize his own limits which will not help pursue dream of his father to study medicine but pursue a subject in higher education which will not confine his capabilities, thereby pursuing political science from IGNOU(Indira Gandhi National Open University) in 2014 and thereby pursuing Masters in Urban Policy and Governance from TISS(Tata institute of Social Sciences) in 2018.

At age of 12, in Deoghar, his family decided to get a disability certificate to gain access to scholarship given he was passionate about his education. “I still remember the day when I went to Sadar Hospital with my father where we were groped by middlemen helping get certification. Although! The proposition was reasonable for a single father given the state of the queue, which even after using the middlemen led to a lead time of 6 hours for his turn of assessment”. The doctors in assessment panel called my father and said that I am not a person with benchmark disability and thankfully my father being educated in science, explained doctors in detail my medical condition and because of his command on the subject and his revered stature in the society as Professor gave me the privilege to sustain that ruthless process of providing proof of disability; and finally get a disability certificate.

Alas! History had to repeat itself, when after moving to Coimbatore “I had to undergo the same ordeal for my admission in school required a disability certificate from the state of Tamil Nadu and I was even assessed as a person with Cerebral palsy, when I am a person with hemiplegia; an acquired disability because of a accident in childhood”.

At the very beginning of the fellowship he decided to work for the community that never had a privilege like him, nonetheless, their identity mattered equally and so should their aspirations.

PROGRESS OVERVIEW

Introduction:

About the status of disability certification in rural areas.

NOVEMBER 2021 TO APRIL 2022

- He started his journey by attending a half yearly capacity building workshop held in New Delhi in October 2021 post which he started to update himself on disability related news. The region specific feed on phone and local coverage in newspapers were highlighting issues of Disability Pension which made it evident the pressing issue which was the top of mind recall for him to study the status of outreach of pension amongst persons with disabilities.
- He realized that Deoghar is unexplored for him and one needs to identify a particular block to start his work with and found that Sonarithari block had the least outreach of pension and had lowest literacy rate at 58% with respect to district average of 65%. He used his network and the guidance of his mentor Mr. Arun Kumar Singh, active secretary of Rashtriya Viklang Manch to establish connections with active members of the cohort in the region. Mr. Rohit Kumar Das responded back and with him he started to capitalize on the upcoming International Day of persons with Disabilities, 2021 to plan a meeting having representation of 2 members per block from the Viklang Manch to establish formal connection.
- This was a success with attendance of 60 representatives and all came to know about Mahavir's project and helped him gauge the predominant issues in the region. It was also used as an opportunity to invite and network with District social welfare officers who also provided technical insights on the challenges in implementation of schemes in the region.

- It also helped him in understanding the governance mechanism that is followed in Viklang manch where there is absence of hierarchical structure. Setting of clear goals and thereby distribution of responsibilities was not formal thereby reducing the efficacy of advocacy efforts. Moreover the outlook was more towards activism towards only having entitlements (not self independence) than evidence based advocacy and that is how he understood that this is an opportunity to learn from them their ability of community mobilization, take their help in establishing credibility in community given their proficiency in local Khortha language. And, also found that Sonarithari had no representative of theirs which would not lead to differences between two different approaches and thus, began his intervention there.
- He collaborated with Prawah NGO working there so that he could establish relationships with the community and also understand the underlying scenario which will also help in preparation of the study design. They also helped him in the process of refining the study design.
- He gained a [letter of support from BDO](#), Mr Kundan Kumar Bhagat, who worked with him by providing the details of Panchayat members and also helped him in introducing his work to the representatives of Gram Panchayat during their annual meeting.
- He then started his primary study in Sonarithari and Binjha and used next one month to do the pilot study to test the design and also introduce himself henceforth as independent researcher in the villages.
- He then started the actual study going door to door during which he realized that there is discrepancy in the official data for he could identify more than 200 persons with disabilities in both the region while the official count stood at only 45, attaining pension. This proved the hypothesis of low outreach of schemes for persons with disabilities.
- The period while he was conducting pilot study also led to several discussions with the community which made him realize that there might be issues of outreach with other social security measures like financial inclusion and disability certification; which he also incorporated in the study design.

- The outcomes of responses made him realize that there is a strong correlation between disability certification and pension; for. The former is required for the latter. In addition, even though the financial inclusion in terms of having a bank account outnumbered the outreach of the other two social security measures, it could not be banked upon by the beneficiaries to exploit benefits of scholarship, skill development and livelihoods which are crucial for self independence of the community. [Click here](#) to know more about the report.

MAY 2022 TO OCTOBER 2022

- So, he started to have regular community meetings and workshops to make people aware of disability certification which is required to become beneficiary of well laid government schemes to attain self independence. It was important not only for the community but also for office bearers of Panchayat to understand the process of certification to make it facilitative for persons with disabilities. But, active engagement with the community was very effective against the government executives given their duties and difference of preferential location where he could have done such meetings together for both the community and executives.
- He then started to follow up at all levels of certification to facilitate disability certification as well for the ones most in need like people with multiple disabilities or people with high support needs. In the process of pursuing officials to do certification for such people on priority basis, he realized that there is no systematic division of responsibility to identify such persons at the level of Panchayat and block. Anganwadis were directed to collect the data but they were also engaged with other responsibilities for them to not have exclusive attention on disability certification. It would have worked given a disaggregated data on families having member/s with disabilities was available for them.

- The other challenges related to disability certification also came into surface as follows: -
- There was an astounding lack of information amongst the locals about the proceedings and workings of obtaining a disability certification, leading to a sense of confusion and disorientation amongst the PwD's of the locality
- The official offices and headquarters for issuing the certificates were also miles away from the village centre, and this was also aggravated by an unavailability of transportation mediums.
- The actual process of documentation was also dreadfully ancient, lacking basic modern technologies and progressions.

Click here to [read the detailed report](#)

- He started establishing a relationship with the Civil Surgeon C.K Shahi , who was key to disability certification as he was working as Chief Medical Officer. He had a meeting with him to apprise him of his findings and also submit to him a standard operating procedure which would facilitate certification in an effective manner. He was quite supportive; like he aided in the certification of Shivraj Mishra who because of his condition of cerebral palsy required certification on a priority basis. Follow their cases as follows:

[Click here](#) to know about Shivraj Mishra

- The certification aided them in times ahead to receive assistive devices for them through help and cooperation of District administration. [Click here](#) to read the Tweet
- The experience led him to believe that mobilization of the community is important to resolve the issue of certification as well as to take it ahead towards self employment through community owned business enterprises. He discussed this with Block Program Manager, JSLPS to form SHGs for persons with disabilities. He liked the idea but also told him that they focus primarily on women led SHGs. He also directed him to meet a functional SHG of persons with disabilities.

- He made a visit to an SHG in the Devipur block and gauged their development on their own which motivated him to use it as a way to mobilize people, build their capacity and hand hold them so that eventually they realize their needs and advocate for it on their own.
- He intervened to identify and mobilize 12 persons with disabilities in (location) but it could not be formalized given that 4 persons identified were already a part of other SHGs. A minimum of 10 people are required to form SHG as per norm of Livelihood mission unless being formed in regions with less population density like hilly regions.

NOVEMBER 2022 TO APRIL 2023

- He realized that to build credibility it was important to begin inclusion of PwDs in the livelihood schemes than wait for SHGs to formalize and he started to reach RSETI (Rural Self Employment Training Institute) and reached their Director Mr. A. N Sinha in early November to propose for training PwDs in agri business activities. It would also help in identifying active PwDs who can then take the leadership of initiating community owned business initiatives. It was also reasonable to look at agriculture as a viable self employment option keeping in mind the region keeping in mind market linkages for the product in mind.
- He planned the training in a way that the date of passing out of the batch coincides with International Day of Disability which would also enable him to invite officials from the administration to celebrate this pioneer initiative; first in the region for persons with disabilities. And accordingly executives like Deputy commissioner Manjunath Bhajantri of Deoghar District, Regional Manager of SBI attended the completion of training in Mushroom Production to 25 people.
- Rahul, one of the attendees utilized it as an opportunity and he was mentored by Mahavir to ensure multiple cycles of production and also use the experience of the community to sell the product.

- This was also a time when he refined his baseline report around the insights achieved from these interventions looking at it critically from the lens of outreach of schemes, status of budget utilization and audited reports to generate evidence of poor state of outreach.

MAY 2023 TO OCTOBER 2023

- As he intervened on the issue, he realized that financial support is equally important to seed fund the initiatives of trained people and he started to reach lead bank SBI (State Bank of India) in the region and their officials to make people aware of funds that can be availed in the form of loans.
- He did two sessions in the gram panchayat Bhodajamua to make people aware of the schemes available to support business enterprises.
- He also followed the training by ensuring exposure visits of PwDs to witness successful agri produce enterprises for them to understand the nuances of the process which benefits the business and in return facilitates support from financial institutions.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- During the fellowship in the Deoghar district he got the opportunity to be part of District Task force in eradication of Child labour in the Shravani Mela under Project Panchi which was an initiative by the district administration of Deoghar where he got the opportunity to work with various NGOs of the district working for eradication of child labour and abuse. He also nominated two Persons with Disabilities in the task force.
- He actively worked with the district level DPO named Jila Divyang Manch, Deoghar which helped him in galvanizing support for his fellowship activities.
- Organised 10 days mushroom production for 25 Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with SBI RSETI Centre for the first time in the district.

Please click on [Impact and Policy Change](#) for details



EXPERIENCE IN THE FELLOWSHIP

This Fellowship gave him the opportunity to explore the status of Persons with disabilities in the rural areas.

RESOURCES

**Follow Kumar Mahavir's
work on their social media**

