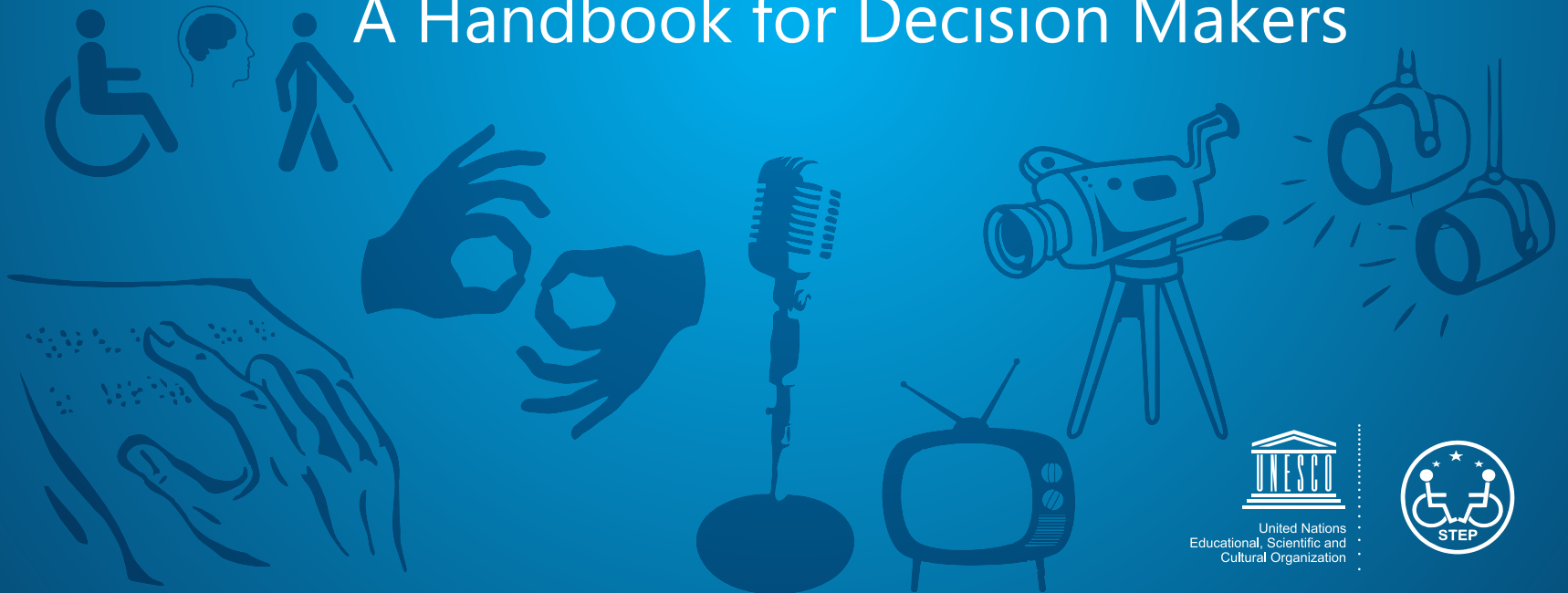


Access to Information and Knowledge Platforms for Persons with Disabilities

A Handbook for Decision Makers



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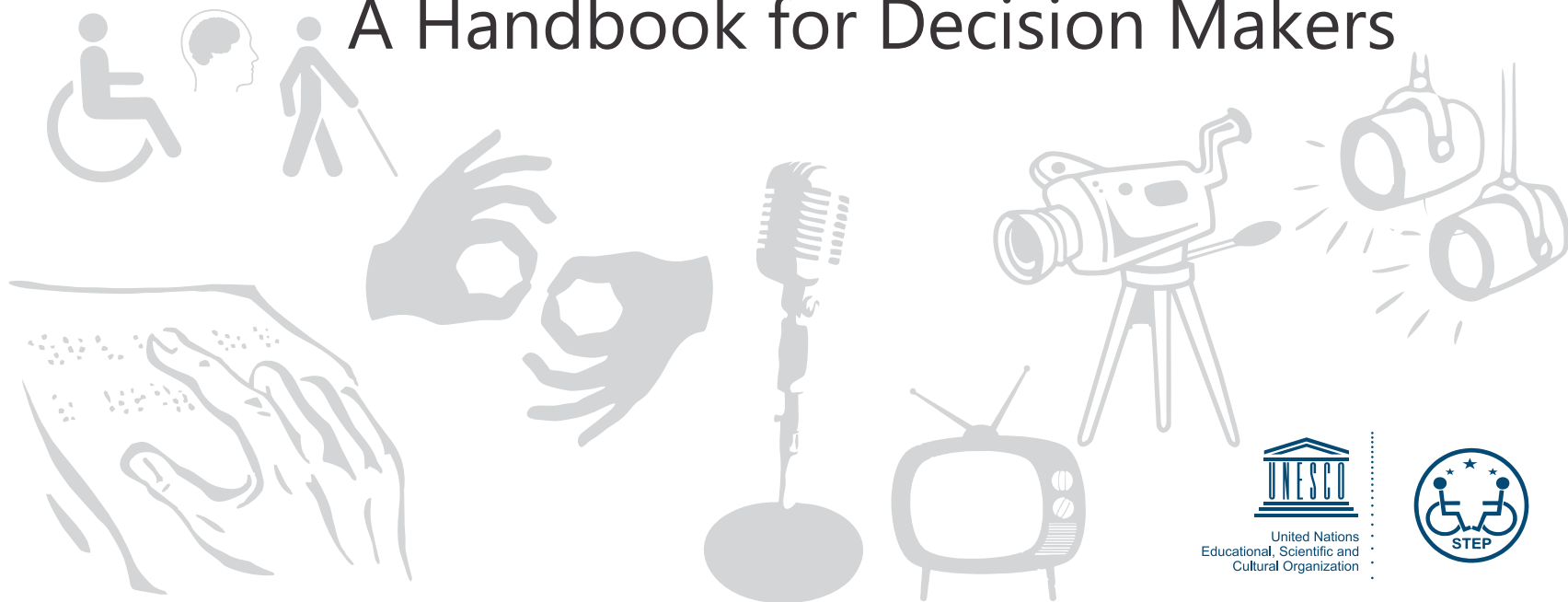
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1. Introduction

Persons with disabilities are a very heterogeneous group of people and how “disability” is defined differs from country to country. They face a multitude of social, economic, physical and political barriers, hampering their mainstreaming and full participation in society. These barriers include stigmatization and a misunderstanding of the abilities and aspirations of persons with disabilities.

Socio-economic data on disability in Pakistan is scarce, and where it –or estimates –exist, they are conservative. According to the 1998 (most recent) census, approximately 2.49 percent of the population has some form of disability. This is significantly lower than the World Health Organization (WHO) estimate of approximately 7 percent and estimates by non-governmental organizations (NGOs)



1. The Convention does not include a definition of “disability” or “persons with disabilities” as such. However, elements of the preamble and article 1 provide guidance to clarify the application of the Convention. The preamble of the Convention recognizes that “disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. Article 1 states that “(p)ersons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. See: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=151#sqc3>



of 10 percent of the total population. It is estimated that 66 percent of disabled persons live in rural areas and that 70 percent are completely reliant on family members for any kind of information.

The majority of persons with visual and hearing disabilities have no access to information, through print, on-line and broadcast sources. A number of relatively low cost and simple measures can be taken to allow barrier-free access to media and information and communications technologies (ICTs) and reduce barriers to information, which limit their chances to be educated, employed, make decisions that affect them, and can enable them to receive warnings and information in connection with disasters or health emergencies and reach their full potential.

UNESCO promotes the use of technologies that can widen access to education and information to all to achieve its envisaged goals in its Open Solutions for Knowledge Societies programme (focused on Open Educational Resources, Open Access, Free and Open Source Software, Open Training Platforms, Open Data, Open Cloud) and accessibility of information and ICTs, including for persons with disabilities.

As Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO has emphasized, to empower persons with disabilities is to empower societies as

a whole – but this calls for the right policies and legislation to make information and knowledge more accessible through information and communication technologies. It calls also for applying accessibility standards to the development of content, products and services. The successful application of such technologies can make classrooms more inclusive, physical environments more accessible, teaching and learning content and techniques more in tune with learners' needs. It can also enable all people to have access to warnings in case of a health crisis such as transmission of communicable diseases; for example, Ebola, and increased risk of natural or man-made disasters occurring and crucial information in the post disaster period.

This publication developed by UNESCO in consultation with persons with disabilities and around 30 eminent journalists from electronic, print and social media entities provides an overview of disability in Pakistan and highlights good practices that have already changed the lives of people with disabilities followed by concrete recommendations for action targeting policy and decision makers, educators, media and telecommunications companies, civil society and persons with disabilities.



2. Disability in Pakistan

Of Pakistan's estimated population of 185 million, if at least 10 percent are persons with disabilities, this amounts to at least 18.5 million people. This is far more than the official percentage, 2.49, reported in 1998. Classification of persons with disabilities by different categories of disability shows that the proportions of people with seeing disabilities are highest among the disabled followed by people with movement and hearing disabilities. The available (and rather conservative) estimates, tells us that one in eight households in Pakistan is inhabited by a person with a disability. These statistics aside, the stigma of disability remains the greatest impediment to the empowerment of persons with disabilities. Stigma remains in society at large, within communities, and even, within families, who see a disabled person as a loss of productive potential and a drain on their financial resources.

The available data, which makes rather conservative estimates, tells us that one in eight households in Pakistan is inhabited by a persons with a disability

Qualitative evidence suggests that in developing countries, a significant number of persons with disabilities are poor and more likely to be poor than their non-disabled counterparts. Being employed and educated are crucial to alleviating poverty; however, many persons with disabilities are denied education





It is the society as a whole that is responsible for creating barriers to full participation of persons with disabilities, and it is the society as a whole that has the responsibility to remove them.

and jobs. One of major barriers they face is access to information, through print, on-line and broadcasted sources. A number of relatively low cost and simple measures can be taken to allow barrier-free access to media and information and communications technologies (ICTs) and reduce these barriers, which limit the chances of persons with disabilities to be educated, employed, make decisions that affect them and reach their full potential.

In Pakistani society disability is still perceived as a sickness, in turn, the cause of the problem is seen in the individual person, and the corresponding solution in “fixing” this person. When this medical approach is adopted, the medical profession is assumed to bear the responsibility for persons with disabilities. This results, for example, in the creation of a “separate track” and provision of services in segregated settings, which are often stigmatized by the community. Equally disempowering is the charity, or welfare approach to disability, which is quite common in developing countries. It refers to society's belief that persons with disabilities are unable to take care of themselves, live



independently, or earn a living. Society responds to persons with disabilities with pity, considers them weak and helpless. In turn, persons with disabilities are viewed as “recipients” of the good will of the society, and not as rights-holders. These approaches do nothing for creation of barrier-free societies that are inclusive of all their members.

As a result of a strong disability movement, active for last two decades in the country, the social approach to disability is emerging which diverges from the first two in that it views disability as a social construct. This view does not look to “fix” the individual, but to “fix” the society. It is the society as a whole that is responsible for creating barriers to full participation of persons with disabilities, and it is the society as a whole that has the responsibility to remove them. Persons with disabilities are viewed as equal members of society with valuable contributions.



3. Barriers to Information and Knowledge

Without disability accessibility in the design, development, and dissemination of information through telecommunications services and products — from broadcast television and radio programmes to electronic and printed information such as in newspapers — people with disabilities will be left out and left behind. This exclusion becomes ever more compelling as technologies converge and the pace of change increases with more and more products and services made available through new means of "digitization." There is not only one barrier concerning accessibility, digital technologies, and people with disabilities. Generally, "digital divides" for people with disabilities manifest along several fracture lines. These include: varying ability within intellectual, visual, and hearing abilities; change due to aging; complications from accidents and multiple disabilities; differences in fine motor skills and ability to reach or approach equipment; and one's income and access to emergency information. These fracture lines occur generally in the four main areas of communications technology — telephony, television, the Internet, and information technology — or any technological device or equipment found in public and private settings.

Digital divides occur across the various functional limitation areas and across communication technologies and exist even as telephony and television shift from analog to digital technology. That will bring its own set of accessibility and usability concerns such as in the not-so-smooth pass through of captioning. Furthermore, people without disabilities may not discern the need for accessible and usable billing, customer service and product materials to ensure independence for the person with a disability. For example: a blind person may need to "read" his bills in an alternate format such as Braille or to have access to bill payment by voice over a secure telephone system; a person with an intellectual disability may need an easy-to-remember phone number; a training video on how to use a product must have captioning of the audio track for hard of hearing or deaf persons; the elderly or sight-impaired person may need a larger font on a website, in operating instructions, and/or on packaging.

Article 21 of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, cover " Freedom of Expression and opinion and access to information".



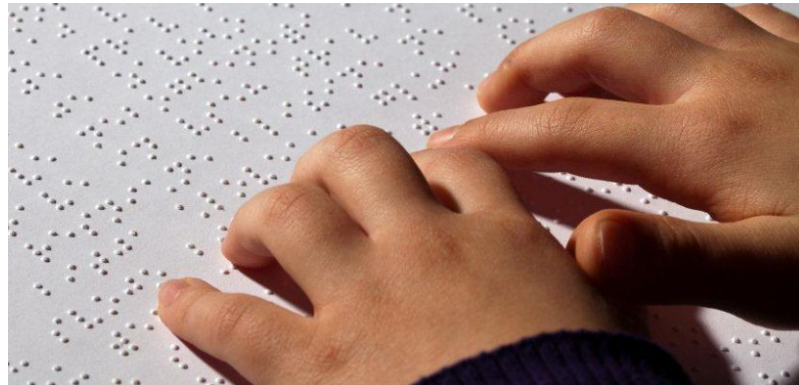
3.1 Barriers for Persons with Visual Impairment

Barriers in television broadcasting include:

- Lack of visual orientation to the broadcast picture.
- Lack of information provided through verbal communications in broadcasting techniques
- Television broadcasting is more focused on images rather than speaking

Barriers in information and communication technologies include the following:

- Most of the websites are developing through flash technology which is non friendly for screen readers
- To make websites attractive, developers use more pictorial



screens, which is a big barrier for screen readers to navigate

- Lack of understanding on 3GW web accessibility standards of web developers

Barriers in print media include:

- No newspaper and magazines issue Braille versions
- Websites and print media is generally not accessible to persons with visual impairments

3.2 Barriers for Persons with Hearing Impairment

Barriers in television broadcasting:

- No sign language is available in any television programmes
- There is no captioning or subtitling for persons with hearing impairment





4. Policy Framework

Persons with disabilities are perhaps the most socially excluded and marginalized group in Pakistan; unseen, unheard and unaccounted for. Persons with disabilities face a multitude of social, economic, physical and political barriers that hamper their mainstreaming in society. These barriers include

stigmatization and a misunderstanding of the abilities and aspirations of these persons. Furthermore, disability work in Pakistan is fragmented and the prevalent development discourse does not include a robust knowledge of a rights based approach to working for persons with disabilities. This





reduces the voices, participation and recognition of this group in sustainable development issues and concerns. Presently, in Pakistan, very few organizations understand the issues of disability from a development perspective and instead rely on a charity or social welfare model.

Fundamental to human rights is the principle that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights and that they are entitled to rights without distinction of any kind. Therefore, persons with disabilities are rights-holders who can, and should, determine the course of their lives as much as any other member of society. In a human rights-based approach to disability, limitations imposed on persons with disabilities by the social and physical environment are regarded as violations of their rights. A human rights-based approach acknowledges that if something is necessary for a person to live in dignity, then it is a right that can be claimed and the government has a duty to respond and can be held accountable.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is both a human rights treaty and a development tool, provides an opportunity to strengthen developmental policies related to the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and

soon to be adopted Sustainable Development Goals, thereby contributing to the realization of a “society for all” in the twenty-first century. Pakistan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2011 and implementation is the responsibility of the State, assisted by development partners including disabled peoples organizations.

Under article 21 of the Convention, which covers “Freedom of expression and opinion and access to information”, the Government of Pakistan has committed to:

“take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice, as defined in article 2 of the present Convention, including by:

- (a) Providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost;



- (b) Accepting and facilitating the use of sign languages, Braille, augmentative and alternative communication, and all other accessible means, modes and formats of communication of their choice by persons with disabilities in official interactions;
- (c) Urging private entities that provide services to the general public, including through the Internet, to provide information and services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities;
- (d) Encouraging the mass media, including providers of information through the Internet, to make their services accessible;
- (e) Recognizing and promoting the use of sign languages."

Moreover, as a way of ensuring the "Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;" under Goal 3 of the Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, adopted by Asian and Pacific countries in 2012, countries of the region have committed to "enhance access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication" and under Target 3.C, in particular, "enhance the accessibility and usability of information and communications services".



5. Concerns of Women with Disabilities

More than 90 countries around the world have put in place a statutory right to information, yet in many of these countries, one-half of the population is limited in its full enjoyment of that right and the myriad benefits that it may provide. In the rare instances when requests for information are disaggregated by gender, statistics demonstrate that women do not access information at the same rate as men.

Often in our societies, it is the most marginalized populations who become vulnerable due to limited access to information. This is particularly true for women with disabilities. As various tools are applied to address the web of adversities facing women with disabilities — poverty, illiteracy, violence, and inadequate opportunities for quality participation — insufficient attention has been paid to the power that information can play in confronting these challenges. Though recent years have witnessed a plethora of research and programming related to voice, participation, and





empowerment of women with disabilities, access to information has been implied rather than explicitly identified as a core ingredient for success. Importantly, when focus is placed on women with disabilities ability to fully and effectively exercise their fundamental right to information, the considerable gender asymmetries become even more apparent. Continuing failure to engage in gender-sensitive policy making; entrenched traditional cultural mores; lack of engagement from women with disabilities 's civil society organizations; information-access and flows that actively exclude women with disabilities; and long-standing obstacles such as illiteracy, overwhelming household responsibilities, and immobility all have played a role in creating gender asymmetries in the exercise of the right to information. Paradoxically, it is arguable that while women with disabilities are the least likely to demand and receive access to information, they are perhaps the most in need of this potent tool. The level access to information of women with disabilities is rather low and therefore the women are not as empowered as their male with disabilities counterparts, or are totally disempowered.

Women often face the double burden of sustaining income generation while caring for their families. Increasingly, they are the key decision makers as the number of female-headed households has risen due to civil conflicts, and as men find work farther from home. Women represent an estimated 70 percent

Often in our societies, it is the most vulnerable and marginalized population who suffer the greatest due to limited access to information, and this is particularly true for women with disabilities

of the world's impoverished people and two-thirds of the world's illiterates due to limited economic and educational opportunities of which 10-12 percent are women with disabilities. Access to basic information remains a very crucial commodity for any person or groups of persons especially with regard to making informed decisions. Although everyone needs information, women with disabilities in particular need information on issues affecting their health, lives, families and for their work in the disability sector as emerging leaders.

Information networks that are supposed to make access to information easier for women with disabilities remain out of their reach especially in rural areas where physical access is difficult due to bad roads and poor infrastructure. For organizations of persons with disabilities and people that strive for inclusion of the less privileged, the need is to provide a safe space and network to empower women and girls with disabilities and enable them to challenge their situations, improve their health, economic and social status and and create new possibilities for themselves without fear or



intimidation. With genuine access to information women with disabilities can take advantage of opportunities to transform their lives, families, and communities.

In particular, access to information:

- empowers women with disabilities to make more effective decisions, such as in relation to education, crop production, land ownership and health care;
- enables women with disabilities to understand and exercise their full range of rights;
- is critical for holding government and service providers accountable
- helps women with disabilities to participate more fully in economic and public life;
- can link women with disabilities with the necessary resources for achieving economic empowerment; and
- bridges gender gaps and helps to balance power in decision-making processes

Ultimately, through exercising their right to information, women with disabilities will be able to more fully enjoy their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights in meaningful and transformative ways.

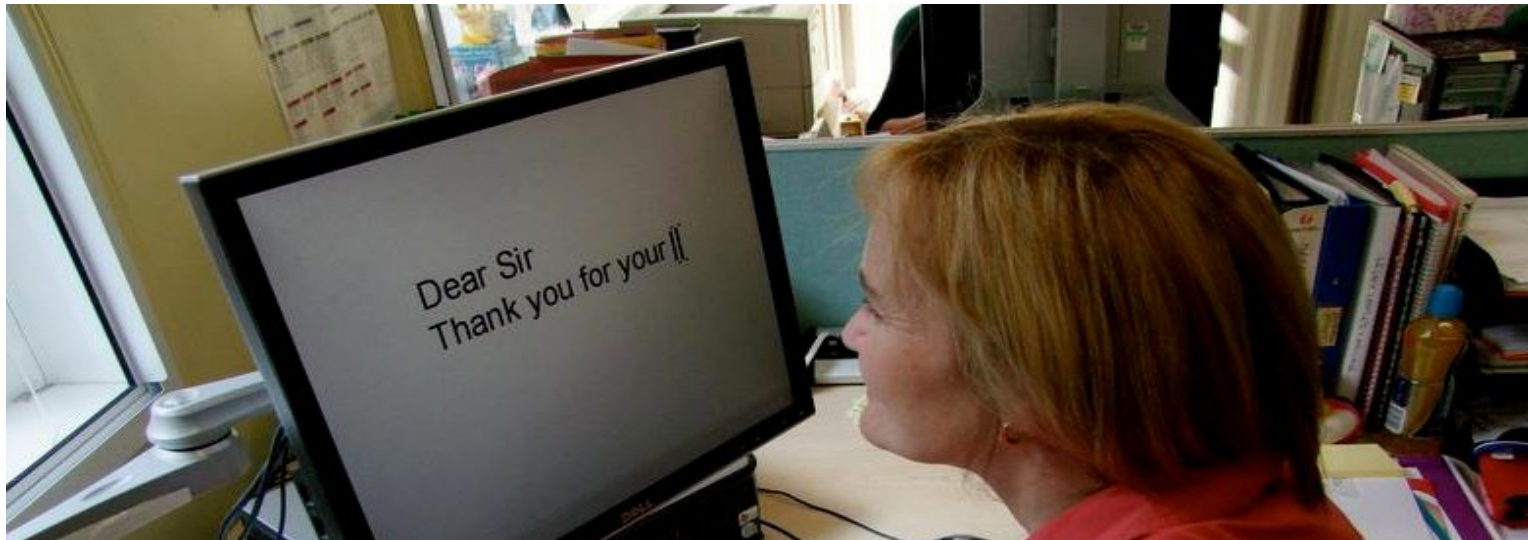




6. Emerging Solutions

According to 'Disability Studies Quarterly', information and communications technology (ICT) has the potential both to enhance access for people with disabilities and to contribute to creating barriers. What we now call the digital divide actually began long before the introduction of computers — barriers have existed and still exist today with

telephones, television, the Internet and other information technology. It is important to remember that people with disabilities have many different accessibility needs and that there are different ways to make technology accessible and that new accessibility needs emerge as technology changes.



Printed Files can be readable by persons with visual impairment in digital format with the help of screen reading softwares




In television, a visual description for people with visual disabilities also reduces the digital divide. It is an audio commentary for blind or partially sighted people. When there is a gap in the dialogue on television or at the theatre, for instance, an explanation of anything visual going on is provided so that the audience can follow the plot. BBC Digital TV Channel providing video description

VOICE GUIDANCE





Reducing barriers to access in television includes captioning for people with hearing and other disabilities. The first programs seen with captioning were Disney's Wonderful World

A scene from the movie Toy Story. Woody is in the foreground, looking towards the other toys. Buzz Lightyear, Jessie, Mr. Potato Head, Hamm the piggy bank, Rex the dinosaur, Slinky Dog, and the three little green aliens are gathered in a playroom. The room is filled with various toys and furniture, including a bookshelf and a toy chest.

-Why don't you stay?
-Yeah, woody. Stay with us.



Sign Language interpretation is being provided on video documentaries





WEB ACCESSIBILITY = EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

AN ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE PROVIDES
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR **EVERYONE** TO:



GET INFORMATION

LEARN

WORK

COMMUNICATE

The key principle of World Wide Web (Web) accessibility is designing web sites and software that are flexible enough to meet different user needs, preferences, and situations. This flexibility also benefits people without disabilities in certain situations, such as people using a slow Internet connection, people with "temporary disabilities" such as a broken arm, and people with changing abilities due to aging.

The largest search engine 'Google' is fully accessible for persons with visual impairment



7. Recommendations

Special attention should be paid and necessary products and services should be created for persons with disabilities. The more totalitarian and repressive societies are, the more restricted access to information and knowledge as well as rights to self-expression and opinion is. In addition, special services and attention to the consideration of the common good of society are limited. However, when a society is free and respectful of human rights, individuals have more solidarity, are open to work together and share information. As a consequence of this free exchange of information and knowledge, it should be possible to build a more inclusive and intellectually and culturally rich society, where all people can fully participate in the social, cultural and economic life and where people with different abilities, can take full advantage of information and communication technologies.

Access to information and knowledge allows humans to contribute to social development where they can make better choice. The conditions, special capacities and

abilities of each individual to learn should never be an obstacle or an impediment to their individual development. On the contrary, it is the duty of all authorities to establish an enabling environment and provide special services to those who require them, keeping people with disabilities in mind. Such an inclusive society ensures that each person is valued as an equal human being.

A few initiatives can enable access of persons with disabilities including:

Policy Level:

-The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should take lead to incorporate Article 21 of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the existing legislation to ensure accessibility at all information platforms as right of every citizen with disability

-The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) can take a lead role in developing operational



guidelines for electronic and print media on accessibility for persons with disabilities

-The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) needs to incorporate a component of accessibility as compulsory in early warning mechanisms and post disaster communication in affected areas. A quick evacuation guide or a list of emergency contact organizations could be provided in large print text or as an audio version. It could also be made available in Braille where appropriate.

Media organizations:

-Television channels can replicate the emerging practices from around the world to make information more accessible, such as sign language for news bulletins at prime time and subtitles for key public service messages in addition to news bulletins.

-Newspapers and television channels can have their website compatible with screen reading applications such JAWS and NVDA

Corporate concerns:

Mobile and Internet service provider companies could provide information in accessible formats with slight technological changes.

Development Organizations:

Development organizations including non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies could disseminate information in the most accessible options through their websites, introducing sign language interpretation and captioning during seminars, trainings and meetings.

Persons with disabilities and their organizations:

Persons with disabilities are the best advocates as they are the ultimate users of accessible information. They could initiate organized campaign to sensitize stakeholders on the significance of information in accessible formats.



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