

ACCESS AUDIT – ORISSA

(2004-05)

Status of Attitudinal Access for People with Disability in Orissa

Conducted by:



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LIST OF ACRONYMNS

USA.....	United States of America
NTA.....	National Trust Act
DSWO.....	District Social Welfare Officer
PD-DRDA.....	Project Director- District Rural Development Agency
DEO.....	District Education Officer
LBM.....	Lead Bank Manager
DPEP.....	Department of Primary Education Programme
GM-DIC.....	General Manager- District Industrial Corporatiron
LIC.....	Life Insurance Company
NGOs.....	Non-Governmental Organizations
KAP.....	Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices
Organs.....	Organizations
Educ.....	Education
WWD.....	Women with disability
Hosp.....	Hospital

Abstract

An Access Audit Exercise, supported by Action Aid- India Regional office in Bhubaneswar, was conducted in the year 2004-05 by Swabhiman..

In India, people with disabilities, especially those who are poor, suffer from profound social exclusion. This limits their participation in all spheres of life – social, cultural and political and results in a denial of their rights. Women with disabilities suffer double discrimination on account of both disability and gender.

Yet, data base available in India provide a limited picture of the exclusion that people with disabilities experience. For example, the very definition of disability, as accepted by law*, recognizes only seven kinds of people with disabilities – those with blindness, low vision, leprosy- cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disabilities, mental retardation and mental illness. It leaves out many types of disability such as hemophilia and AIDS. This varied understanding of disability is only the beginning of the problems associated with obtaining a through understanding of disability in India.

The Participatory Research and Action Study

In 2004, Swabhiman, the state level disability information and resource centre, designed a participatory research and action study to gather a collective understanding of the physical access for persons with disabilities, as well as the prevailing attitudes, beliefs and behavior of the community towards them. The study complements on overall effort to promote both government and civil society participation in mainstreaming people with disabilities.

Using a participatory approach to capture the point of view of people with disabilities themselves, the study represents the voices of people with disabilities, NGO'S, Government functionaries and Corporate in all the 30 district headquarters of Orissa, the 630 offices and premises visited and over 6825 facilities audited. Interviews with heads of various institutions and interaction with persons with disability and general public were also conducted to examine the status of attitudinal access.

The purpose of the Study

This audit provides information on the status of attitudinal access situation for people with disabilities in main public and private institutions in state of Orissa. Being the first to be conducted in Orissa, it makes recommendations and benchmarks upon which future improvements on attitudinal access for PWDs can be made and measured.

Information derived from the audit will enhance our capacity to:

1. Challenge the government, private firms, organizations and society to develop an all-inclusive culture of work that integrates PWDs and to implement measures that recognizes and are sensitive to the experiences and needs of people with disabilities.
2. Raise the level of awareness on disability issues to all institutions and individuals in society in order to influence positively their attitudes to acceptable standards that are inclusive, supportive and empowering to PWDs in Orissa and beyond.
3. Lobby for strengthening and promotion of targeted actions, programmes and practices that respond directly to the immediate and long-term aspirations of PWDs in all public and private institutions and other domains of our society.
4. Follow-up on the implementation of the basic and essential provisions for PWDs as stipulated in PWD Act of 1995 and NTA of 1999.
5. Make specific recommendations at the state policy level on strategies for raising the level of awareness on disability issues, measures for improving attitudinal access for PWDs at institutional and societal levels.

Problem statement

The planning of this study was informed largely by the need to provide facts and figures on the nature, patterns and forms of attitudes towards disability in general and specifically on people with disability in main public and private institutions in Orissa. Prior to this audit, there was a strong feeling among development workers in the field of disability and members of disability movement in Orissa that the prevailing attitudes, knowledge on and actions towards PWDs are largely unsatisfactory and discriminating in nature. This study was therefore formulated to carryout an audit on the status of access for PWDs at state level. Indicators of attitudinal access were used as a basis for the audit exercise. The audit focused on public and private institutions since they form core service delivery systems to all persons in the state.

More specifically the audit sought to examine the following issues:

1. The nature and prevailing forms of attitudes towards PWDs and disability in public and private institutions in the state of Orissa.
2. Find out the level of Knowledge on disability issues by various institutions
3. Establish the status and range of actions exclusive for PWDs in Orissa.

Study Methodology

This study applied a triangulation approach, where quantitative and qualitative investigative techniques were utilized to obtain as much information on status of attitudinal access.

We also recognized the intricate nature of this subject especially in reporting on the qualitative aspects, which the society most often than not ignore and yet adversely affect PWDs. Documentary review of existing literature and news content analysis were also used in formulating and reporting on the audit.

Interview schedule

The audit on institutions utilized the interview schedule to obtain information from heads of various public and private institutions. Questions were developed around some key indicators of attitudinal access that are specific to particular type of institutions in both public and private sectors. For example, some issues indicating attitudinal access in judicial institutions may vary with those in health related institutions. This variation was addressed by raising questions on attitudinal issues that are appropriate and relevant to the institutional contexts. However cross cutting themes were developed that were applicable in all the contexts-including institutions, general public and PWDs. Such issues include for instance people's perception of PWDs as burden or assets in their respective settings. Others include employment, exclusive programmes for PWDs and knowledge on disability issues.

In-depth interviews and case studies with general public and PWDs

This was mainly through the use of qualitative techniques to supplement information on attitudinal access from members of public. The audit team gathered information from PWDs and general public identified in all the districts of Orissa. The information was collected by using a checklist of issues pertaining to the subject of the audit. This information is presented in summarized themes and used to supplement the institutional audit.

Data presentation and analysis

The information collected was coded and structured in an analysis format using Excel computer programme. The findings are summarized and presented using Tables, graphs and charts.

Methodological limitations and units of analysis.

Since the concept of "Attitude is a value loaded concept" we largely measured it by inferring from the perceptions, level of awareness and behavior of institutions on matters affecting PWDs. The audit focused only on some key aspects of these dimensions. There was reluctance by some senior officers and officials to spare time out of their schedules for the interview. This made us to interview the next person in the line of administration and we felt that these senior officers should have taken part since they are the decision makers in those institutions.

The study focused on those main public and private institutions, which are important parts of the larger society and are expected to be sensitive to the needs of PWDs. These institutions are also involved in delivery of important human services and therefore their attitudes and actions affect directly the well being of PWDs. This Audit targeted only those public and private institutions found in the district headquarters and audit was carried out using the KAP approach. This approach sought to establish the level of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices of these institutions on PWDs and disability issues in general. Knowledge was measured on the level of awareness on disability related issues, attitudes were determined by perceptions regarding PWDs, while practices include the range of actions by these institutions in responding to needs and experiences of PWDs.

Mapping the institutions and respondents

The study targeted to carryout a comprehensive access audit of public and private institutions and public concentration points in the 30 districts of Orissa, with a view to establish the extent of the problem of attitudinal access in these state institutions. These institutions were identified using the list obtained from the Vocational Rehabilitation Center, which is a department of the Central Government working for the development of PWDs.

The institutions were broadly classified into eight categories namely;

- Government institutions: Administrative institutions/offices,
- Educational institutions: Primary, General and special schools and colleges
- Financial institutions: Non banking and banking financial institutions,
- Corporate house and other organizations: Including businesses and industries,
- Judicial institutions: District police headquarters and Courts,
- Public places: Marriage and Community halls, hotels, and markets. Shopping complexes
- The main district health facility: District Medical hospital,
- Transport service institutions: Mainly the public buses and railway stations.

Sample Size and Composition:

Except for few instances, the access audit operated with known targets that required total coverage. For instance, under the Government institutions, we managed to cover all the important government departments such as the District Collectorate, the DSWO, PD-DRDA, DEO., LBM, DPEP, GM-DIC, Municipal Commissioners among others. In financial non banking institutions, we included state corporations such as Post office, Telecom, LIC etc, while in banking; we considered banks that are utilized by majority of the district residents and by most social classes.

The category of corporate and other organizations, we considered established companies/ business such as industries, media companies among others, while other social organizations covered include Red Cross offices and main NGOs. Local community places that were covered in the audit include temples, churches, mosques, public halls, cinema halls, and stadiums among others. The district police headquarters and law courts were also covered in most of the districts. The health facility audited include the busy district public general hospitals both old and new installations. Railway stations and public bus stations in most districts were also covered to represent the public transport sector. Educational institutions covered included primary schools, general schools, special schools and colleges.

The target was to cover 780 public and private institutions in all the 30 districts of Orissa. However due to a number of reasons we managed covering 630 institutions which is 81% of the target set. Some of the main reasons included the closure of some offices and institutions due to official or personal reasons. A number of local holidays affected the data collection. Non-cooperation by some officials also added challenge to data collection process.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ATTITUDINAL ACCESS

Attitudinal access refers to staff, the general public, educators etc. being comfortable interacting with disabled people without being patronizing or downright rude. Negative attitudes are a major reason for disabled people being sidelined from the mainstream and not included in everyday thinking. Negative attitudes occur when disability is portrayed as a problem and when disabled people are perceived as helpless, useless, dependent, sick or tragic individuals. Positive attitudes include¹:

- Asking disabled people about their specific needs
- Addressing disabled people directly
- Being aware of and sensitive to various needs
- Using appropriate terminology
- Understanding how to guide people correctly
- Interacting with disabled people as you would with anyone else
- Not pre-judging the person's physical or mental ability etc.

Studies conducted in the world concerning attitudinal access point out that once accessible attitudes and communication styles are in place, the services offered to disabled people as well as every visitor increase exponentially.

Some eminent scholars on this subject have argued that the world we inhabit has been built for a non-existent population. Buildings, roads and open spaces cater for a fictitious model of the human being – exclusively for a man (not a woman) in the prime of life and at the peak of physical fitness. Statistically speaking, only a small minority of the population can fall into this category, even among the fit. (Panayiotis Psomopoulos).² In our rush to accommodate the needs of disabled people, we must not perpetuate the process of social segregation. We should design all facilities for all people. With the extra attention paid to designing for use of all the senses, the facilities will be more satisfying to all visitors and will result in more effective interpretation. In addition, if we remove the barriers that are presently keeping disabled people from using our facilities, we will have gone a long way towards reducing the (disabilities) these people bear”(Jacque Beechel, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Region, USA)³.

The above are some of the issues that have been raised from studies conducted in other countries abroad. The status of attitudinal access in Orissa largely negates these fundamental principles of inclusion. We recommend that the planning and development process in Orissa take proactive cognizance of these fundamental principles. Sensitivity and implementation of these principles will reflect the ideals of a civil and a just society for all and provide a symbol of hope and equity to persons with disability who have suffered perennial exclusion from mainstream society.

¹ US Department of Labour policy
see also Dr Sruti's publication on "Disability Etiquette".

² Panayiotis Psomopoulos, Athens Centre of Ekistics, Greece.

³ Jacque Beechel, National Park Service, Pacific Northwest Region, USA

Attitudinal barriers

People with disabilities encounter many different forms of attitudinal barriers. The situation is made unbearable when negative attitudes reinforce the lack of sensitivity to make built environments accessible to people with varied disabilities. Built environments are expected to install facilities that can enhance communication access for example to the hearing and visually challenged employees at work place and in other public places. Architectural designs are equally expected to make built environments accessible to the physically challenged persons by adhering to the provisions of inclusive designs. It is imperative to argue that in situations where the prevailing attitudes are largely unfavorable to PWDs, the built environments are equally inaccessible. Therefore any attempts to improve access for PWDs should address both attitudinal and physical barriers. Attitudinal barriers are manifested in various ways as discussed hereunder⁴;

Inferiority

This perception arises from the believe that any kind of impairments on an individual's core function automatically renders them ineffective and are relegated to a second position in affairs of society. It fails to recognize the skills that PWDs have, that enable them to be compatible at workplace.

Pity

This is the tendency by People to approach PWDs with sympathy owing to disability, which tends to lead to patronizing attitudes. People with disabilities generally don't want pity and charity, just equal opportunity to earn their own way and live independently.

Hero worship

People consider someone with a disability who lives independently or pursues a profession to be brave or "special" for overcoming a disability. But most people with disabilities do not want patternalised praises for performing day-to-day tasks. In spite of disability, the individual has simply learned to adapt by using his or her skills and knowledge, just as everybody adapts to being tall, short, bald, and blonde, etc.

Ignorance

People with disabilities are often denied opportunity because of unrealistic thinking that they are incapable of accomplishing a task. In fact, people with quadriplegia can drive cars and have children. People who are blind can tell time on a watch and visit museums. People who are deaf can play baseball and enjoy music. People with developmental disabilities can be creative and maintain strong work ethics.

The Spread Effect

This refers to the irrational thinking that if a person has one type of disability, it affects the performance of other senses, organs, abilities and personality traits. The worse is when they assume that the person is totally impaired. For example, many people shout at people who are blind or don't expect people using wheelchairs to have the intelligence to speak for themselves. Focusing on the person's abilities rather than his or her disability counters this type of prejudice.

⁴ See also Eco-access: The eco-access philosophy on "inclusive design" Web: <http://www.eco-access.org/index.html>

Stereotypes

The other side of the spread effect is the positive and negative generalizations people form about disabilities. For example, many believe that all people who are blind are great musicians or have a keener sense of smell and hearing, that all people who use wheelchairs are docile or compete in paralympics, that all people with developmental disabilities are innocent and sweet-natured, that all people with disabilities are sad and bitter. Aside from diminishing the individual and his or her abilities, such prejudice can set too high expectations that an individual cannot meet. When they fail to meet them, they are more often than not left with a psychological injury.

Backlash

Many people believe individuals with disabilities are given unfair advantages, such as easier work requirements. Employers need to hold people with disabilities to the same job standards as co-workers, though the means of accomplishing the tasks may differ from person to person. People with disabilities do not need favors, but equal opportunities to make contribution to society.

Denial

Many disabilities are "hidden," such as learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, and epilepsy, cancer, arthritis and heart conditions. People tend to believe these are not bona fide disabilities needing accommodation. The ADA defines "disability" as an impairment that "substantially limits one or more of the major life activities." Accommodating "hidden" disabilities which meet the above definition can keep valued employees on the job and open doors for new employees.

Fear

Many people are afraid that they will "do or say the wrong thing" around someone with a disability. They therefore avert their own discomfort by avoiding the individual with a disability. As with meeting a person from a different culture, frequent encounters can raise the comfort level. It is also good to learn about disability etiquette, which will boost your comfort and confidence as you interact with them.

Breaking down barriers

Unlike physical and systematic barriers, attitudinal barriers that often lead to illegal discrimination cannot be overcome simply through laws. The best remedy is familiarity, getting people with and without disabilities to mingle as coworkers, associates and social acquaintances. In time, most of the attitudes will give way to comfort, respect and friendship.

Tips for interacting with people with disabilities:

- Listen to the person with the disability. Do not make assumptions about what that person can or cannot do.
- When speaking with a person with a disability, talk directly to that person, not through his or her companion. This applies whether the person has mobility impairment, a mental impairment, is blind or is deaf and uses an interpreter.
- Extend common courtesies to people with disabilities as you would anyone else. Shake hands or hand over business cards. If the person cannot shake your hand or grasp your card, they will tell you. Do not be ashamed of your attempt, however.
- If the customer has speech impairment and you are having trouble understanding what he or she is saying, ask the person to repeat rather than pretend you understand. The former is respectful and leads to accurate communication; the latter is belittling and leads to embarrassment.
- Offer assistance to a person with a disability, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help.
- It is okay to feel nervous or uncomfortable around people with disabilities, and it's okay to admit that. It is human to feel that way at first. When you encounter these situations, think "person" first instead of disability; you will eventually relax.

ATTITUDINAL ACCES SITUATION IN INDIA

In India, efforts to put in place institutional and legal structures to address the problem of discrimination, abuse and neglect of people with disabilities were intensified in the 1990s, which culminated to the enactment of two important legislation documents namely; the Person with disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act of 1995 and the National Trust Act of 1999, which covers other forms of disabilities that are not included in the original Act.

These important developments arose from a background and experience of the last five decades since independence that yielded little improvements in the plight of persons with disability. The experience showed that the unmonitored approaches to disability issues that progressed through different thinking and attempts ranging from, charity, rehabilitation and services failed to address the challenges facing people with disability as they did not seek to empower PWDs by building their inner capacity, knowledge, self determination and independence. Instead most of the efforts made through these approaches kept away from aggressively advocating for equal opportunity, rights and participation of PWDs in mainstream society and the consequence was continued marginalization of persons with disability. The enactment of the new act and the subsequent proposals to strengthen them and address the inbuilt gaps is aimed at empowering people with disability to participate fully, have equal opportunities in life and assert their rights as others in society.

The Provisions of PWD Act of 1995 on Education.

These provisions for education for people with disabilities are stipulated in Chapter five of the PWD Act.

Section 26 provides for Access to education and special schools, where appropriate governments and local authorities are bestowed to ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education till he/she attains the age of eighteen years. It is also expected to endeavor to promote inclusive education and setup special schools in government and private sector for those severe cases and equip such institutions adequately.

Section 27 provides for educational schemes where governments and local authorities are expected to make schemes for conducting part-time classes in respect of children with disabilities who could not continue their studies on a whole-time basis. It is also expected to offer functional literacy for children in the age group of sixteen and above. Further they are expected to conduct non-formal education by utilizing the available manpower in rural areas. They are also expected to conduct classes and discussions through interactive electronic or other media and offer education through open schools or open universities.

Section 28 on research stipulates for appropriate governments to initiate or cause to be initiated research by official and non-governmental agencies for the purpose of designing and developing new assistive devices, teaching aids, special teaching materials or such other items as are necessary to give a child with disability equal opportunities in education.

Section 29 is on Teachers' training, where appropriate Governments are expected to set up adequate number of teachers' training institutions and assist the national institutes and other voluntary organizations to develop teachers' training programmes specializing in disabilities.

Section 30 stipulates a list of Incentives and facilities such as Transport facilities to the children with disabilities, financial incentives to parents or guardians to enable their children with disabilities to attend schools, the removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institution and imparting vocational and professional training, the supply of books, uniforms and other materials to children with disabilities attending school and conferring grant of scholarship to students with disabilities as well as setting up of grievances cells for parent, regarding the placement of their children with disabilities. It also stipulates for modification in the examination system, restructuring of curriculum for the benefit of all children with disability in all contexts.

Section 31 sets up Amanuensis for All educational institutions to provide or cause to be provided amanuensis to blind students and students with low vision.

Employment Reservation for People with in the PWD Act- 1995.

The employment-related provisions of the Act are contained in Chapter Six of the Act which are detailed below:

Section 32 on identification of posts, governments are expected to identify posts, in the establishments, which can be reserved for the persons with disability and conduct periodic reviews on the list of posts identified and update the list taking into consideration the existing changes and developments.

Section 33 is on percentage of vacancies, in which case governments are commanded to appoint in every establishment such percentage of vacancies not less than 3 per cent for persons or class of persons with disability of which 1 per cent each shall be reserved for persons suffering from: blindness or low vision, hearing impairment and locomotor disability or cerebral palsy, in the posts identified for each disability.

Section 34 on reporting stipulates that government may, by notification require that employers in every establishment to furnish it with returns as may be prescribed in relation to vacancies appointed for persons with disability that have occurred or are about to occur in that establishment.

Section 35 is on checking of records, where any person authorized by the Special Employment Exchange in writing shall have access to any relevant record or document in the possession of any establishment.

Section 36 pertains to Carrying forward of vacancies, where in any recruitment year any vacancy under Section 33 cannot be filled up due to non-availability of a suitable person with disability or, for any other sufficient reason, such vacancy shall be carried forward in the succeeding recruitment year. If in the succeeding recruitment year also suitable person with disability is not available, If unsuccessful the offer may be first be interchanged among the three categories and only when there is no parson with disability available for the post in that year, the employer shall fill up the vacancy by appointment of a person, other than a person with disability.

Section 37 is about *keeping* records where every employer is expected to maintain such record in relation to the person with disability employed in his establishment and these records shall be open to inspection at all reasonable hours by such persons as may be authorized in this behalf by general or special order by the appropriate government.

Section 38 is about Schemes where governments and local authorities are expected to formulate schemes for ensuring employment of persons with disabilities, training and welfare of persons with disabilities, the relaxation of upper age limit, health and safety measures and creation of a non-handicapping environment in places where persons with disabilities are employed, the manner in which and the person by whom the cost of operating the schemes is to be defrayed; and constituting the authority responsible for the administration of the scheme.

Section 40 on reservation in poverty alleviation schemes governments and local authorities are expected to reserve not less than 3 per cent in all poverty alleviation schemes for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

Section 41 talks about Incentives to employers to motivate both in public and private sectors to ensure that at least 5 per cent of their work force is composed of persons with disabilities.

Laws on Disability in India

The law has laid down various provisions to ensure the empowerment of persons with disabilities, and to ensure their participation in the mainstream.

1. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995

It is commonly known as the Disability Act, or the PWD Act, the Act aims to empower persons with disabilities. The endeavor of the Act has been to introduce an instrument for promoting equality and participation of persons with disability on the one hand, and eliminating discriminations of all kinds, on the other.

2. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992

The Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992, was created to provide for the constitution of the Rehabilitation Council of India. It aims to regulate training of rehabilitation-related professionals. This is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

3. The National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999

The National Trust Act, 1999, supports programmes, which promote independence, facilitate guardianship where necessary and address the concerns of those special persons who do not have family support. The Trust also seeks to strengthen families and protect the interest of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities after the death of their parents. The Trust is empowered to receive grants, donations, benefactions, bequests and transfers.

4. The Mental Health Act, 1987

An Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to the treatment and care of persons with mental illness, to make better provision with respect to their property and affairs.

5. Non Discrimination

It makes provisions for adaptations of Rail compartments, Lorries and Aircrafts etc. for easy access for persons with disabilities. It also provides access for wheel chair users in all the public places. Provides also for installation of signals at red lights for the visually handicapped. It is expected to devise appropriate symbols of disability and also to develop barrier-free areas by providing ramp etc. in all the places of public welfare.⁵

⁵ www.ncpdep.org

ATTITUDINAL ACCESS AUDIT RESULTS.

Introduction

This report reflects on the outcome of the access audit exercise that was carried out in main public and private institutions in the state of Orissa. The purpose of the audit was to establish the status of attitudinal access for people with disability in these core human institutions. The audit exercise adopted a KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices) framework to measure and analyze the extent to which these institutions are aware, responsive and sensitive to the needs and experiences of persons with disability and disability issues.

Specific aspects and indicators that were considered within this framework of analysis include cross cutting issues of concern in disability such as employment, special schemes for PWDs, perceptions of disability and knowledge on disability issues. These indicators were formulated and measured in view of the varying contexts of different institutions taking into consideration of the schemes of service they are expected to offer to the general public and to persons with disability in particular. In-depth interviews were also conducted with persons with disability and members of the general public. A total of 630 institutions were covered and the summary of the main findings is discussed here under four main sections discussed subsequently.

The audit established that only 3% (460 employees) out of a labor force of 17,156 in public and private institutions in Orissa are employees with disability. This indicates gross under representation of the provisions of employment reservation and affirmative actions stipulated in the PWD Act of 1995. There were no concrete measures among these institutions to increase the employment opportunities for PWDs. 63% of these institutions do not know about the disability Act. 31% of heads of institutions perceive persons with disability as a burden. This proportion presents a tip of the iceberg that is the root cause of the suffering of persons with disability in society today. 26% of these institutions reported that they have not put in place exclusive schemes to cater for the needs of persons with disability and the situation is further decried by the feedback derived from case studies of PWDs who reported high level of dissatisfaction with the existing schemes. Majority complained that they lack coordination and replenishing and coupled with red tape bureaucracy and delay.

The findings from comparative analysis of the cross cutting issues on disability among public and private institutions in Orissa are discouraging. For instance employment statistics show that government, financial, community places and public transport service institutions have the least number of employees with disability. Knowledge on disability issues is poorest among Community places, transport and financial institutions. Regarding perceptions on disability, Transport sector, public places, courts, corporate houses and other service organizations indicated a high level of favorable attitudes towards PWDs. However these favorable perceptions are weakened by lack of equal opportunities for gainful employment to PWDs and inept schemes.

Institutional based analysis revealed that government institutions are fairly weak in terms of level of knowledge on disability laws and have employed a low proportion of persons with disability in their departments. This is below the expectation as they are the custodians of the law. 60% of educational institutions in Orissa are unaware of the provisions and concessions available for PWDs in the disability Act. These provisions are important in realizing the goal of inclusive education and provide them with cushion to do so.

Main hospitals in Orissa support the view that women with disability are potential mothers, yet they have not put in place special arrangements to cater for their antenatal, delivery and postnatal care. Medical certification schedules for persons with disability are conspicuously missing in most of these hospitals.

Corporate houses and other organizations such as NGOs reported a very low level of knowledge on disability act. They also reported that PWDs have limited access to grievance cell in their respective districts. They have equally employed a low proportion (4%-only 27 persons) of person with disability in their main institutions.

94% and 65% of community places such as marriage and public halls etc do not know about the disability act and do not have special arrangements for persons with disability attending function in these places.

It is surprising to note that 86% of public transport service institutions, especially the railways administration is aware of the available concessions and facilities for PWDs yet only 8% know about the disability Act. This divergent understanding explains why they perceive these services as charity yet they are lawful and fundamental rights for persons with disability.

Very few schemes for PWDs are available among financial institutions in Orissa. 66% of these institutions do not have exclusive schemes for PWDs. Very few persons with disability access credit facility in these institutions mainly owing to high interest rates charged and unfounded perception by lenders that they are risk borrowers. This excludes PWDs from accessing credit facility, which is important for their economic empowerment.

Audit results reveal a disturbing situation among judicial institutions in Orissa especially concerning their low level of knowledge on the provisions of the disability Act. For instance 70% of them confirmed that they are not aware of these provisions. Only 1% of employees in all the main district judicial institutions (courts and police) are persons with disability. This is a very low proportion considering that the courts reported a staff load of over 1,425.

Persons with disability who were interviewed in these institutions expressed a high level of dissatisfaction with the way they are treated at work places. To begin with they complained of an inaccessible physical environment within these institutions. The management as well as the higher authorities on these institutions do not take timely actions regarding most of the request made by them. For example, one case complained and told of his frustration with the district administration as he sought to obtain transfer of his wife living in a neighboring district, who is equally a public servant to live with him in his resident district to avoid the afflictions he encounters while traveling in inaccessible public buses. He travels most of the time in private buses to meet his family in a neighboring district and most often his plea to be granted a comfortable seat in these buses is often treated with contempt and sometime abuse. His insistence and persistence with responsible authorities to grant his family transfer is equally met with abuse by the concerned officials.

AUDIT RESULTS

The key results of the audit have been analyzed and discussed at four levels. The first one presents findings on four main themes of the audit that reveals the overall status of attitudinal access in Orissa. These themes were categorized under knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability issues in all the main institutions audited. The second level presents a comparison between the cross cutting themes among the institutions. The third one discusses the status of attitudinal access in each of the institutions. The fourth level is a case study presentation on the feedback that was obtained from discussions with Person with disability and members of general public.

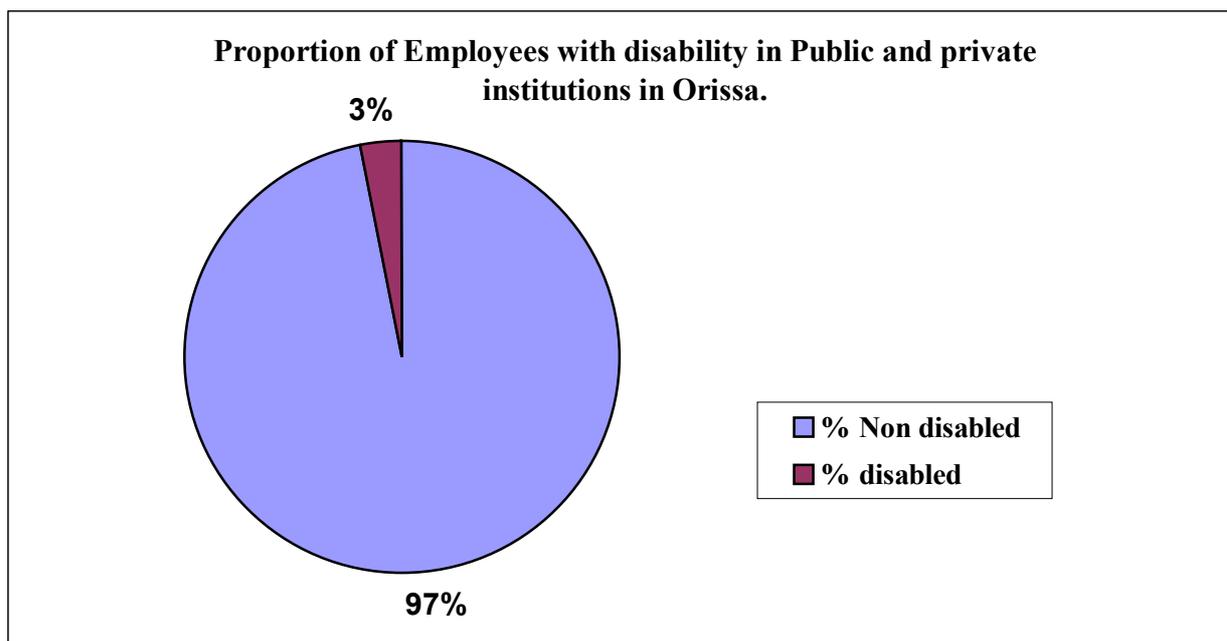
Cross cutting issues on disability.

(1) Employment

This is one of the most important indicators for ascertaining aspects of attitudinal change in the institutions regarding persons with disability and their level of commitment towards fulfilling the provisions contained in PWD Act of 1995.

Table 1 & Chart 1. Proportion of disabled employees in Public and Private Institutions in Orissa

% of non disabled employees	% of disabled employees	No. of Non disabled employees	No. of disabled employees	Total
97	3	16,696	460	17,156



Source: Access audit results-2005

Very small proportions of PWDs are employed in public and private offices in Orissa. The audit results in chart 1 indicate that only 3% (460) are employed. 97 % (17,156) are largely the non-disabled employees. Majority of PWD employees interviewed work in lower cadres. This status is against the provisions of disability act, which stipulates at least 3% of job reservation to PWDs in any job offers to the public from every institution. If these provisions were followed in this case, then we would expect over 5,718 employees with disability out of a total work force of 17,156 employees in main public and private institutions audited in Orissa.

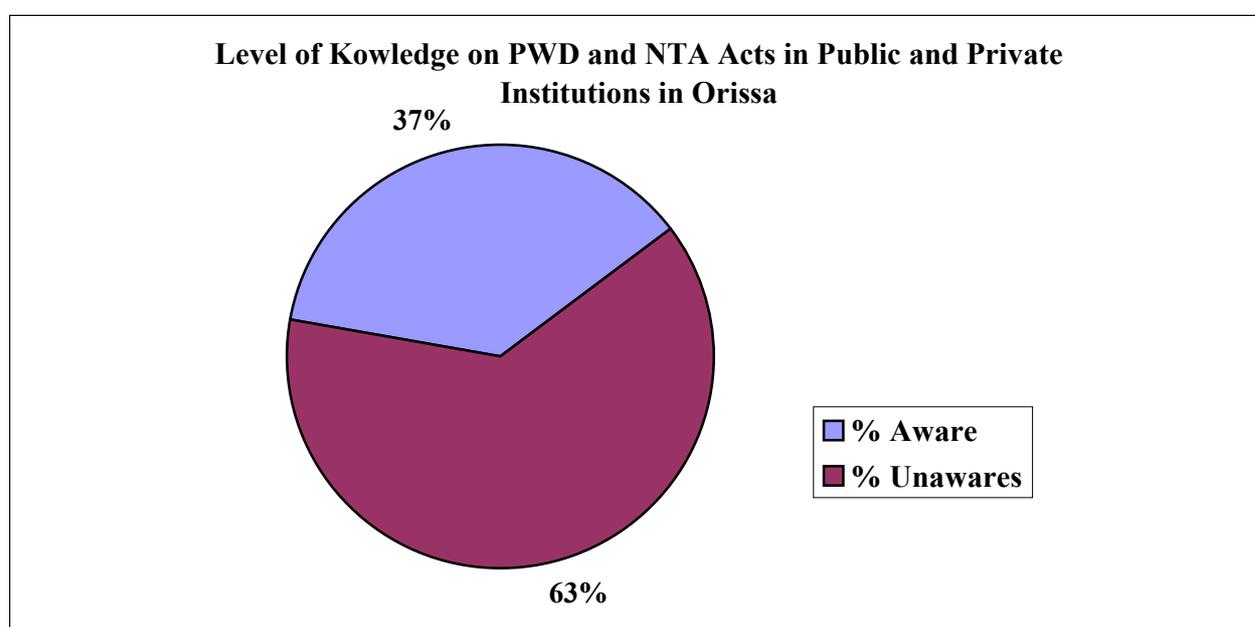
(2) Knowledge on disability issues

The level of knowledge on disability issues, especially on the disability law is below average among the public and private institutions in Orissa. Out of a total of 378 heads of institutions interviewed, 63% of them confirmed that they are not aware of both the PWD Act of 1995 and NTA of 1999 (see chart 2). The status is warring especially with the realization that heads of institutions who carry important decisions that influence the lives of many are not privy to the law or its provisions.

Table 2. Level of Knowledge on PWD Act and NTA-1999

% Aware	% Unawares	Aware	Unaware	Total
37	63	140	238	378

Chart 2



Source: Access audit results-2005.

This situation is so largely because the necessary independent and inclusive institutional frameworks have not been put in place as stipulated in the disability law. The more the delay in setting up this structures, we expect decision makers and heads of institutions in both public and private sectors to remain lax and deliberately ignorant about disability issues. These structures are expected to play major role in monitoring the implementation of the schemes and enforcement of laws. The audit team observed that many public notices displayed in most institutions did not have any specific messages about schemes or offers for persons with disability. Issue based public engagements between the administration and persons with disability were also rare in most settings audited. Such engagements should be an integral part of addressing the special needs of persons with disability in institutional set ups.

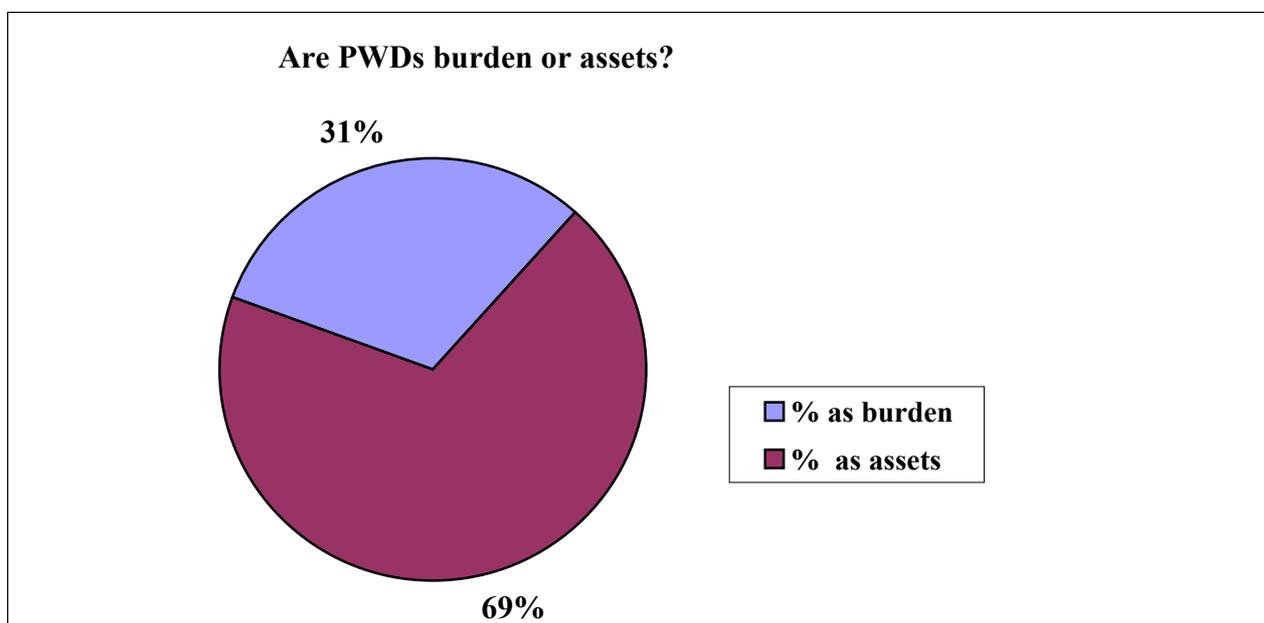
(3) Attitudes towards PWDs:

31% of heads of institutions consider persons with disability as a burden (see chart 3). Although majority of them perceive them as assets, the litmus test for this confession is how much of it is reflected in positive behavior change in terms of responding and being sensitive to the needs of persons with disability. For instance, when asked how many persons with disability they had employed, majority of them had very few and others had none. This indicates the stated attitudes lack a commitment and therefore could be described as being superficial. This is also vindicated by the poor state of physical access for all categories of persons with disability within their built environments.

Table 3. Are PWDs are burden or assets to the institutions

% Burden	% Assets	Burden	Assets	Total
31	69	120	267	387

Chart 3.



Source: Access audit results-2005.

There is need to monitor to ensure follow up sensitization to translate these otherwise superficial nature of perceptions into meaningful change for persons with disability. Commitment and performance of heads of institutions should be made part of their assessment criteria for any rewards or promotions they get under motivation strategies in public administration.

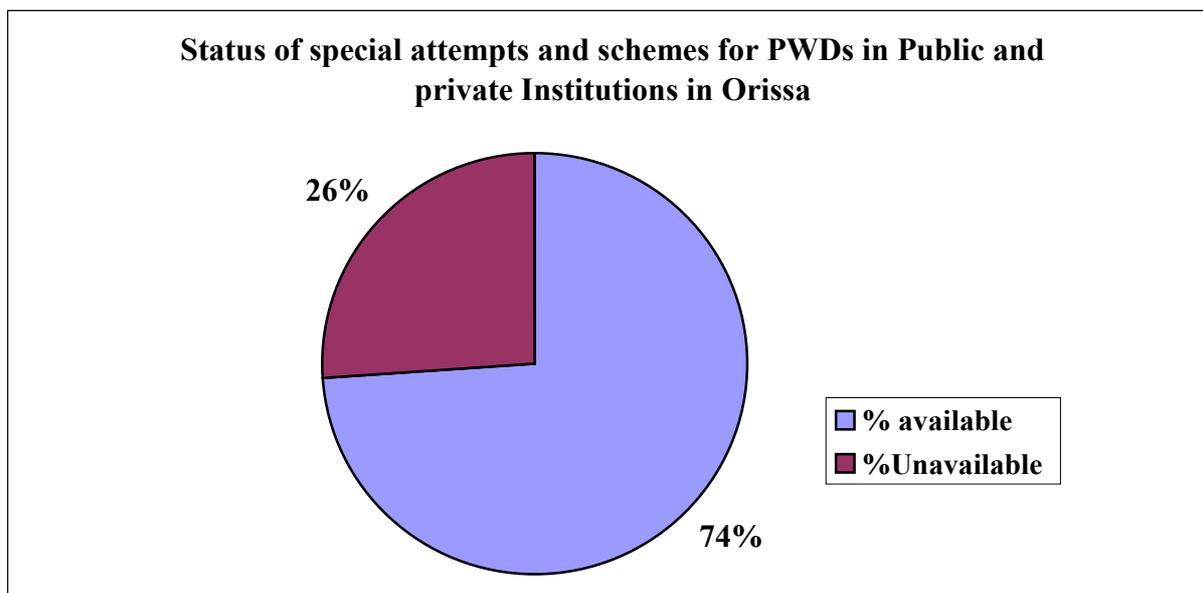
(4) Status of Exclusive attempts and schemes for PWDs

Majority of persons with disability interviewed regarding the available exclusive schemes for PWDs in various institutions complained that they are ineffective and insufficient owing to delays and lack of adequate supply.

Table 4. Proportion of existing exclusive schemes /special arrangements for PWDs in Institutions in Orissa

% Available	%Unavailable	No. Available	No. Unavailable	Total
74	26	386	139	525

Chart 4.



Source: Access audit results-2005.

Further, 26% of these institutions (see chart 4), do not have any schemes in place. 74% reported that they have made such provisions but poor financing hampers their operations. The physical access within and outside their built environment is also inaccessible owing to structural barriers. Responsible authorities and institutions could not report on any initiatives they have made to improve access for all even in situations that does not require money to improve.

Comparative analysis on cross cutting themes in disability

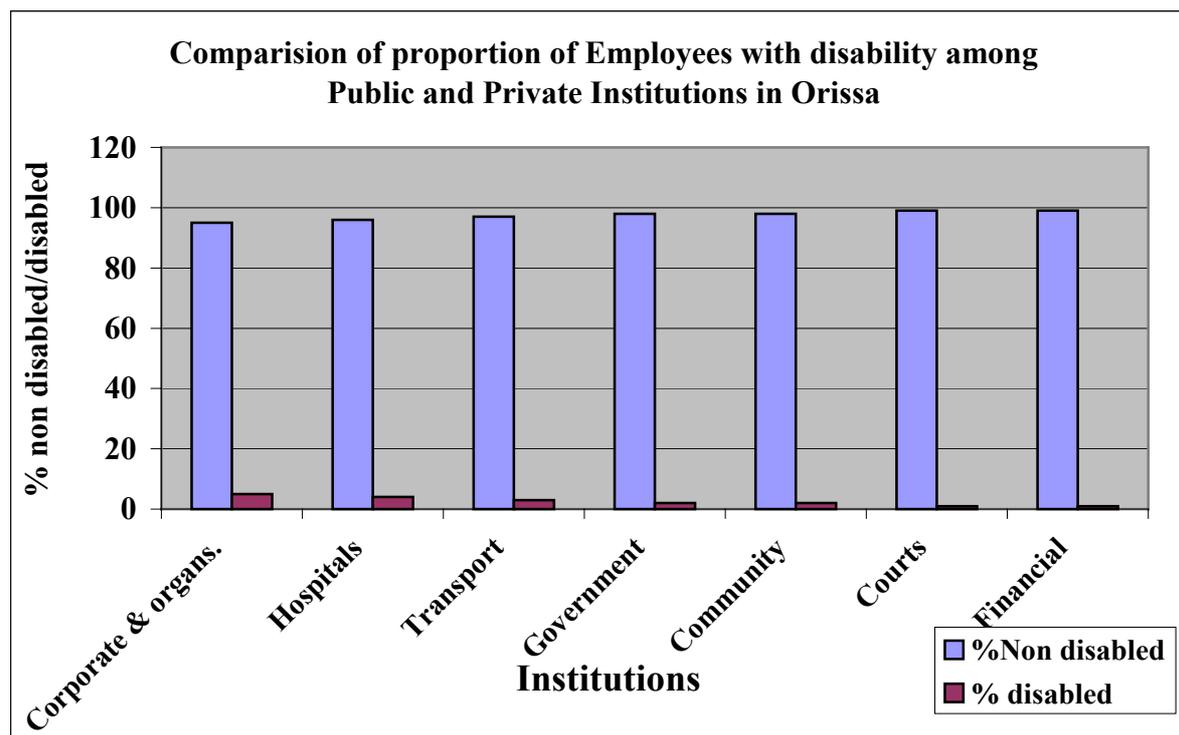
Proportion of employees with disability

Comparative analysis on the proportion of employees with disability among various institutions reveal a grim scenario where only an average 3% are employed in these institutions. Graph 1. Shows that government, financial, public places and transport service institutions have the least number of employees with disability.

Table 5: Comparison of proportion of employees with disability in Public and Private Institutions in Orissa

Institutions	%non disabled	% disabled	non disabled	disabled	Total
Government	98	2	7737	191	7928
Hospitals	96	4	735	27	762
Courts	99	1	1407	18	1425
Financial	99	1	2650	25	2675
Corporate & Organs.	95	5	2754	160	2914
Community Places	98	2	235	4	239
Transport	97	3	1178	35	1213

Graph 1.



Source: Access audit results-2005.

A lot needs to be done to ensure that all the institutions comply with the provisions of 3% reservation on employment for the persons with disability. It is also not encouraging to learn that the government institutions still lag behind in the implementation of this provision yet they are the custodians of the disability act. If the government sets an example by enforcing strict adherence to this provisions, we would expect the private sector to do so

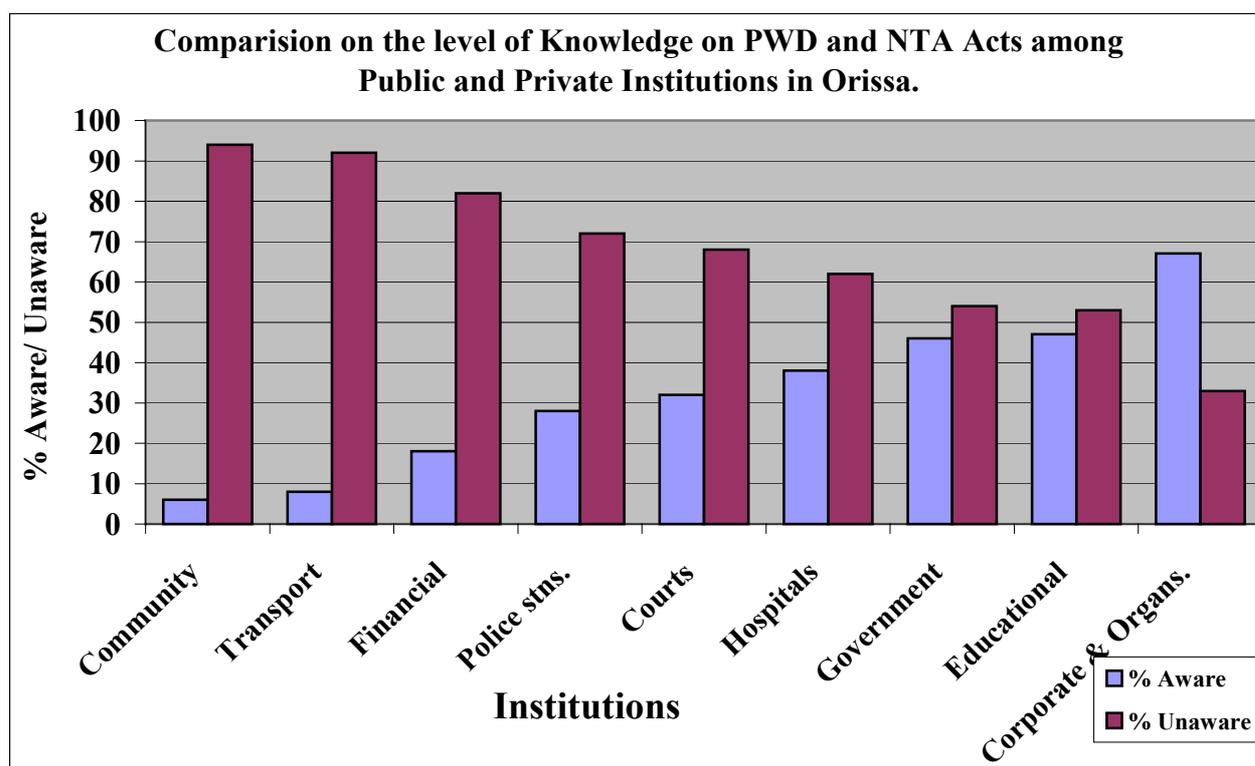
Knowledge on disability issues

The level of knowledge on disability issues-specifically the disability act, is below average in most public and private institutions in Orissa. Graph 2. Indicate that 94%, 92% and 82% of community places, transport and financial institutions respectively reported that they were neither aware of the existence nor the provisions of the PWD Act 1995 and NTA1999. Further, 72%, 68% and 62% of, police, district courts and main hospitals were equally unawares of the laws respectively. 54% and 53% of educational and government institutions were also unaware respectively.

Table 6: Comparison on level of Knowledge on disability Acts among institutions in Orissa.

Institutions	% Aware	% Unaware	Aware	Unaware	Total
Government	46	54	69	81	150
Educational	47	53	20	23	43
Hospitals	38	62	8	13	21
Courts	32	68	7	15	22
Police stns.	28	72	5	13	18
Financial	18	82	10	46	56
Corporate & Organs.	67	33	18	9	27
Community	6	94	1	16	17
Transport	8	92	2	22	24

Graph 2.



Source: Access audit results-2005

It is disheartening to learn that even judicial institutions such as police and law courts are oblivious of the disability act, yet they are expected to be the institutions of Law. In order to realize change in protecting the rights of all the judicial institutions mainly police and courts need to their attitudes and set examples for others in society.

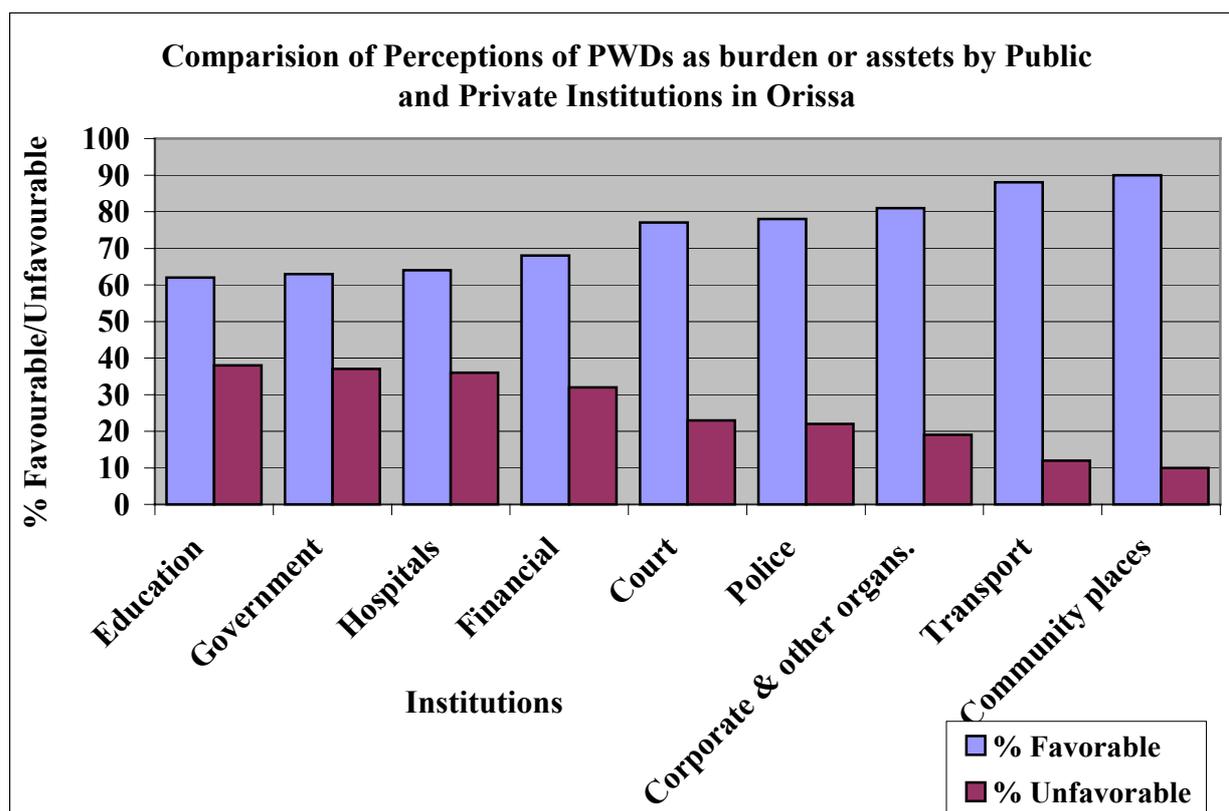
Perception of disability.

Significant section of these institutions reported that PWDs are a burden to society. For example 38%, 37%, 36% and 32% of educational, government, main hospital and financial institutions consider persons with disability as burden.

Table 7. Comparison of perception of PWDs as assets or burden by Public and Private Institutions in Orissa.

Institutions	% Favorable	% Unfavorable	Assets	Burden	Total
Government	63	37	99	59	158
Education	62	38	31	19	50
Police	78	22	14	4	18
Court	77	23	17	5	22
Financial	68	32	34	16	50
Corporate & Organs.	81	19	17	4	21
Community places	90	10	19	2	21
Transport	88	12	22	3	25
Hospitals	64	36	14	8	22

Graph 3.



This finding largely point to a tip of the iceberg that afflicts persons with disability in the wider society. However other institutions such as the community places, transport sector corporate and other service organizations reported favorable attitudes towards persons with disability. Unfortunately the favorable attitudes have not yielded positive change in the status of persons with disability because of a large gap between change of perceptions towards disability and expected societal behavior change.

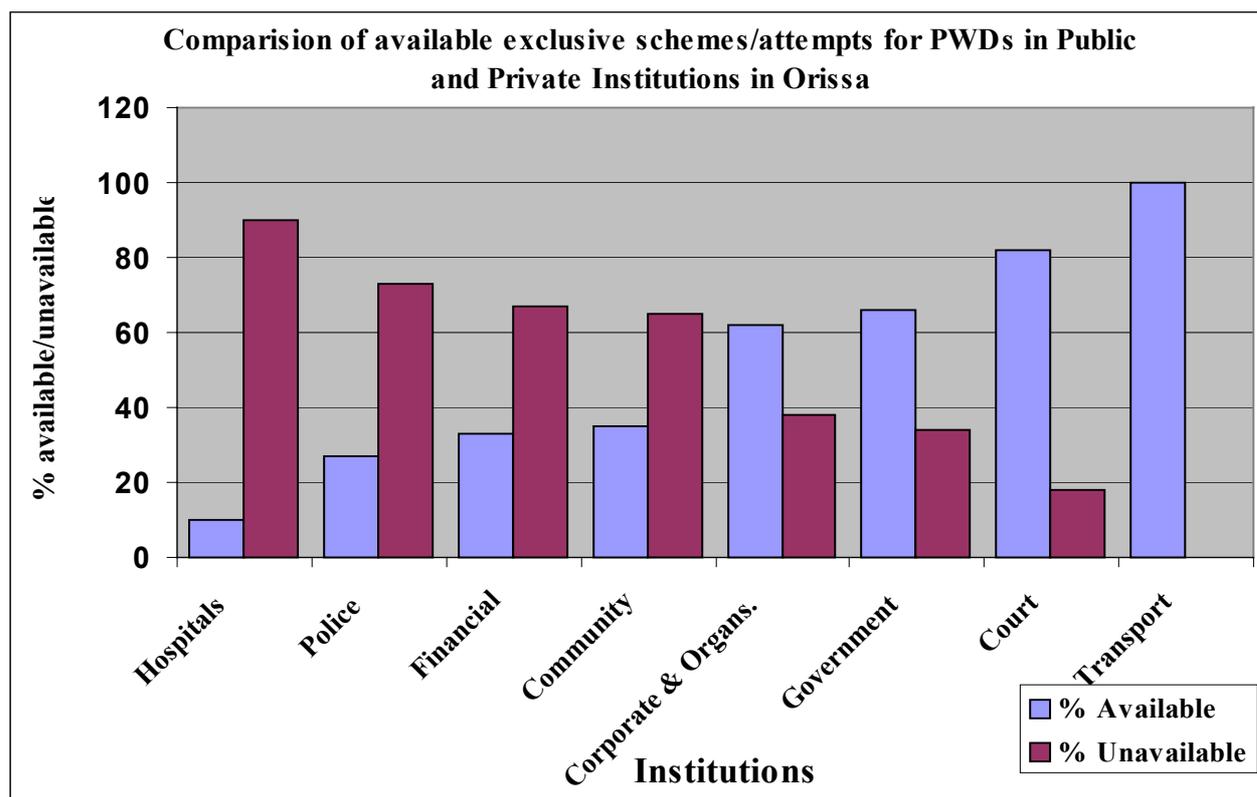
Status of exclusive schemes

Exclusive services for PWDs are not in place in some and uneven in various institutions in Orissa. For example in graph 4, whereas 82%, 66% and 62% of the courts, government offices and corporate houses had some schemes in place respectively, 90%, 73%, 67%, and 65% of public hospitals, police stations, financial and community institutions respectively have not implemented any of the schemes authorized by law.

Table 8: Comparison of exclusive schemes for PWDs in Public and Private Institutions in Orissa.

Institutions	% Available	% Unavailable	Available	Unavailable	Total
Government	66	34	97	51	148
Hospitals	10	90	2	19	21
Court	82	18	18	4	22
Police	27	73	4	11	15
Financial	33	67	17	34	51
Corporate & Organs.	62	38	13	8	21
Community	35	65	6	11	17
Transport	100	0	229	1	230

Graph 4.



Source: Access audit results-2005.

Further, when individuals with disability in these institutions were asked about the effectiveness of these schemes, many reported a high degree of dissatisfaction and complained that they are inadequate, coupled with delay and bureaucracy which is marred by incidences of corruption. Railway stations reported commendable travel concessions for PWDs, however the poor state of physical access and lack of disability certificate denies PWDs this opportunity.

Institutional based analysis.

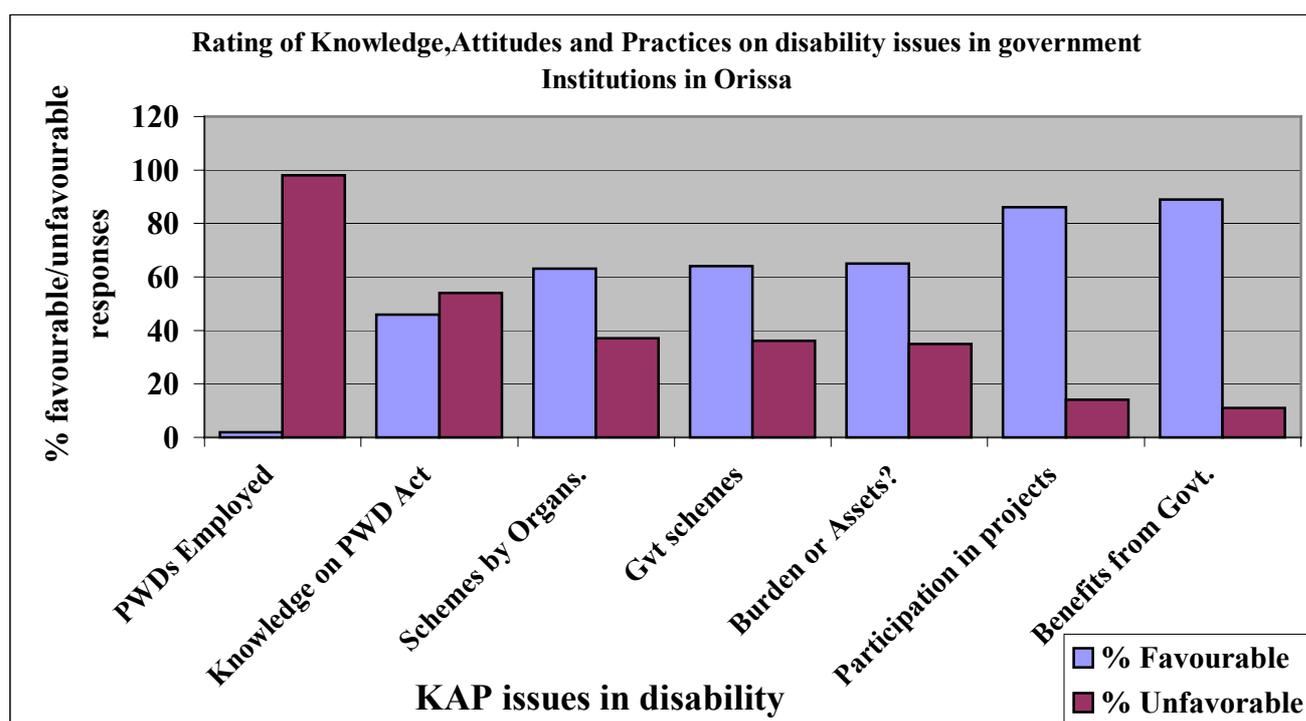
1. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in government institutions in Orissa.

Government institutions in Orissa reported comparatively low level of knowledge on the existing laws on disability and have lowest proportion of employees with disability as compared with non-disabled ones.

Table 9. Knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in Government Institutions in Orissa.

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
Benefits from Govt.	89	11	116	15	131
Gvt schemes	64	36	95	54	149
Knowledge on disability	46	54	69	81	150
Schemes by Organs.	63	37	87	51	138
Perceptions (as Burden/Assets)	65	35	109	59	168
Participation in projects	86	14	30	5	35
PWDs Employed	2	98	191	7737	7928

Graph 5.



Graph 5, illustrates that only 2%(191) of the staff in main government institutions audited are persons with disability out of a labor force of 7928 employees, while 54% of them did not know about the existing disability laws. 36% and 37% of government institutions reported that they do not have exclusive schemes for PWDs and have not made any attempts to cater for their special needs. Further 37% of government officials perceive persons with disability as a burden. On a positive note 89% and 86% of them reported that they deliver some benefits to PWDs and involve them in projects respectively. We recommend that the government set mechanisms to ensure continuous budgetary allocation and monitoring to make these schemes effective.

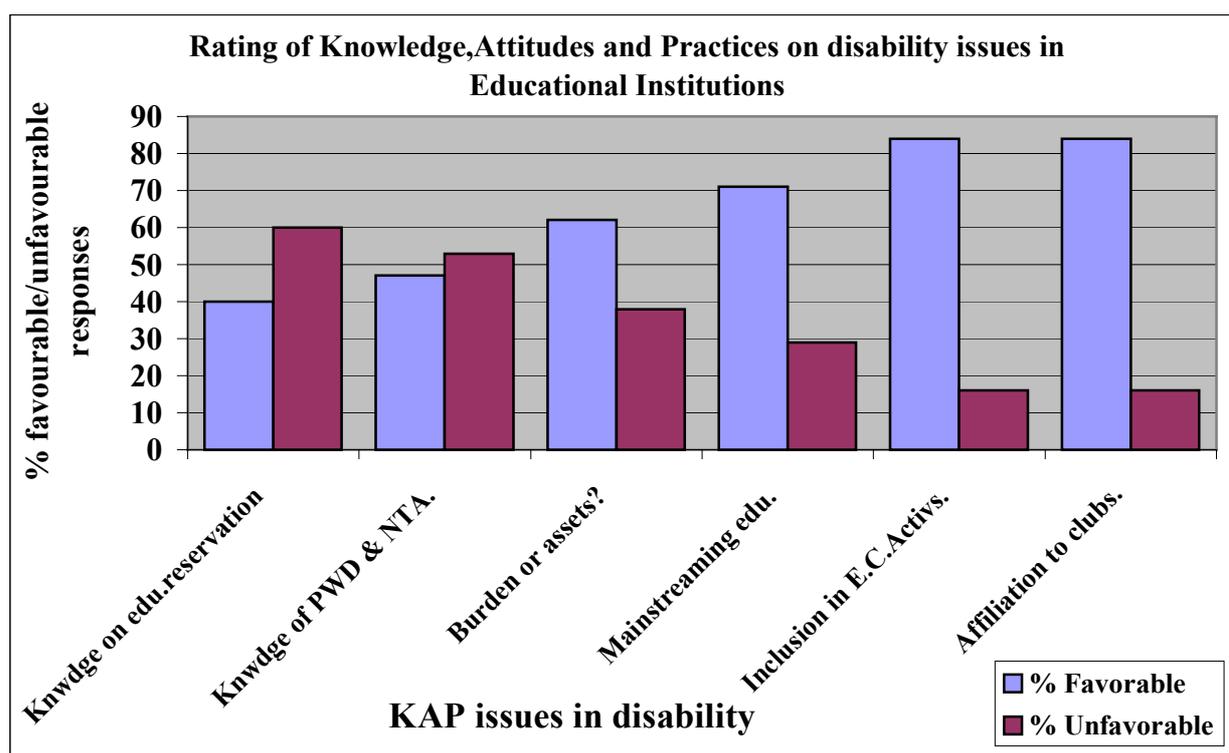
2. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in educational institutions in Orissa.

Knowledge of laws on disability and about the concessions reservation on education for persons with disability is largely below average among the selected educational institutions that were audited. For instance, results in graph 6 indicate that 60% and 53% of the institutions had no prior knowledge on PWD Act 1995, NTA 1999 and on concession reservation for PWDs in academic institutions respectively.

Table 10. Rating of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on disability issues in educational institutions in Orissa.

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
Inclusion in Ex Cu. Activities.	84	16	43	8	51
Affiliation to clubs.	84	16	43	8	51
Mainstreaming edu.	71	29	44	18	62
Knowledge of PWD & NTA.	47	53	20	23	43
Burden or assets?	62	38	31	19	50
Knowledge on educ. reservation	40	60	16	24	40

Graph 6.



If the responsible government departments and institutions were committed in comprehensive implementation of the provisions of the Act, then all schools could be aware and implementing access provisions. The attitudinal response on issues of disability in educational institutions are fairly favorable. For example, when school heads were asked about their views on inclusive education, 71% acknowledged that Children with disability could also enroll in mainstream schools. However, 38% of them still perceive PWDs as burden. 84% reported an encouraging practice by involving children with disability in extra curriculum activities and facilitating their affiliation to existing clubs in and outside school.

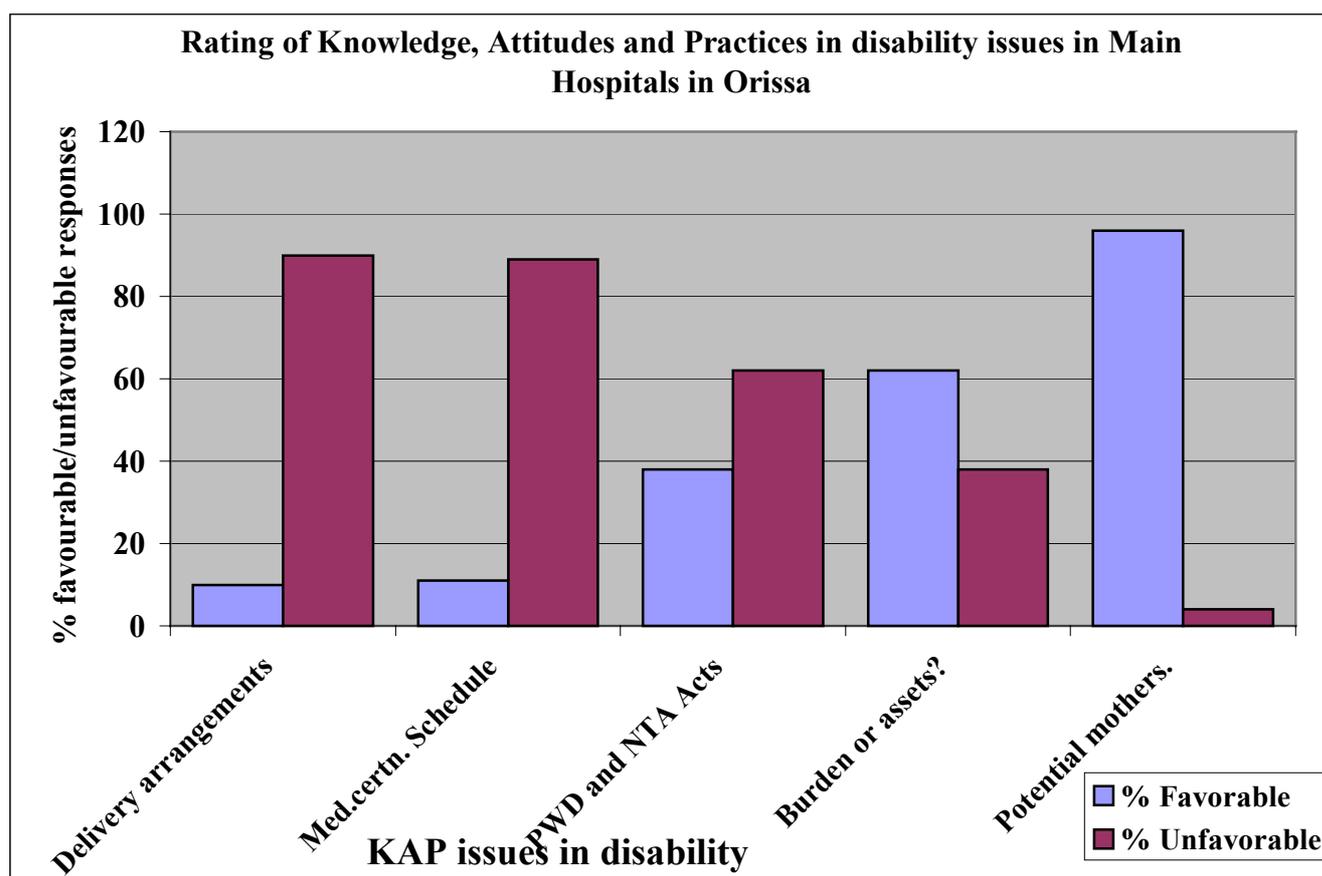
3. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in main hospitals in Orissa

Main district hospitals in Orissa do not have a medical certification schedule for PWDs; they lack special delivery arrangements for expectant mothers with disability and have the lowest level of knowledge on disability laws. Graph 7 show that 90%, 89% and 62% of hospitals do not make special delivery arrangements, do not have medical certification schedules in place and are unaware of the PWD Act respectively.

Table 11. Rating of knowledge, Attitudes and practices on disability in main hospitals in Orissa

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
PDW and NTA Acts	38	62	8	13	21
Delivery arrangements	10	90	2	19	21
WWD as potential mothers.	96	4	23	1	24
Burden or assets?	62	38	13	8	21
Med. certn. Schedule	11	89	2	16	18

Graph7.



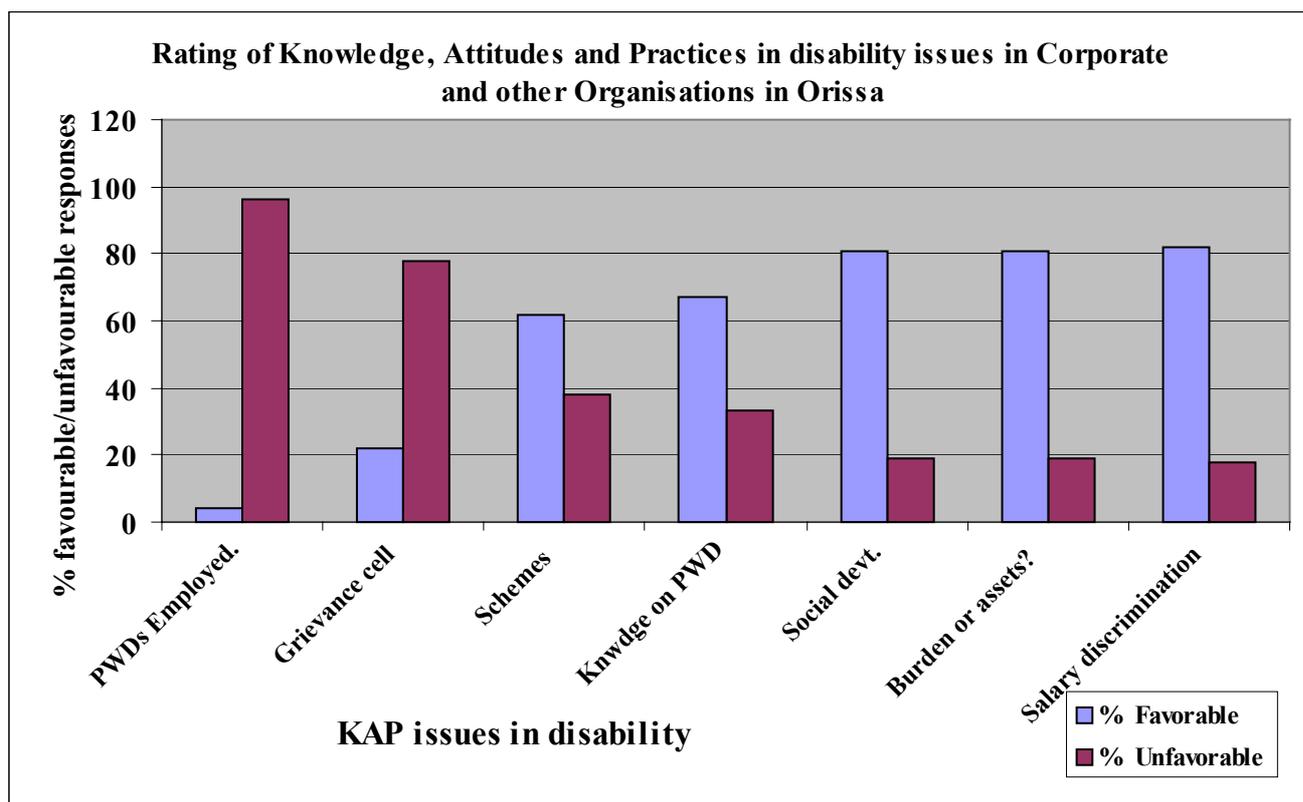
It is also disheartening to learn that 96% of hospital administration regards women with disability as potential mothers yet they do not provide special delivery facilities for them. Further the status of physical access in most public hospitals is largely inaccessible to the sick and to persons with varied disabilities due to existing structural barriers.

4. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in corporate houses and other organizations in Orissa.

Corporate houses and other social organizations reported that PWDs do not access grievance cells in their respective areas, while their knowledge on disability issues and available attempts for PWDs are not adequate. Graph 8 indicates that 78% of them reported that PWDs do not get access to public grievance cell, while 33% and 38% of them do not know about the various acts on disability and have not made any exclusive attempts for PWDs respectively. 81% of these institutions regard the contribution of persons with disability as valuable to their organization.

Table 12: Rating of knowledge, Attitudes and practices on disability in corporate houses and other organizations

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
Exclusive schemes	62	38	13	8	21
Knowledge on PWD	67	33	18	9	27
Social dev. Wing	81	19	17	4	21
Salary discrimination	82	18	14	3	17
Access to grievance cell	22	78	4	14	18
Burden or assets?	81	19	17	4	21
PWDs Employed.	4	96	27	735	762



Incidences of salary discrimination against employees with disability were reported by 18% of these organizations. The disheartening situation is revealed by the fact that out of a labor force of 762 employees in main district public hospitals, only 4% (27) of them are employees with disability. Most of the institutions covered in this audit have decimal number of employees with disability, which is an indication that very few empowerment and self-reliance programmes like gainful employment, income generation activities e.t.c are available to PWDs.

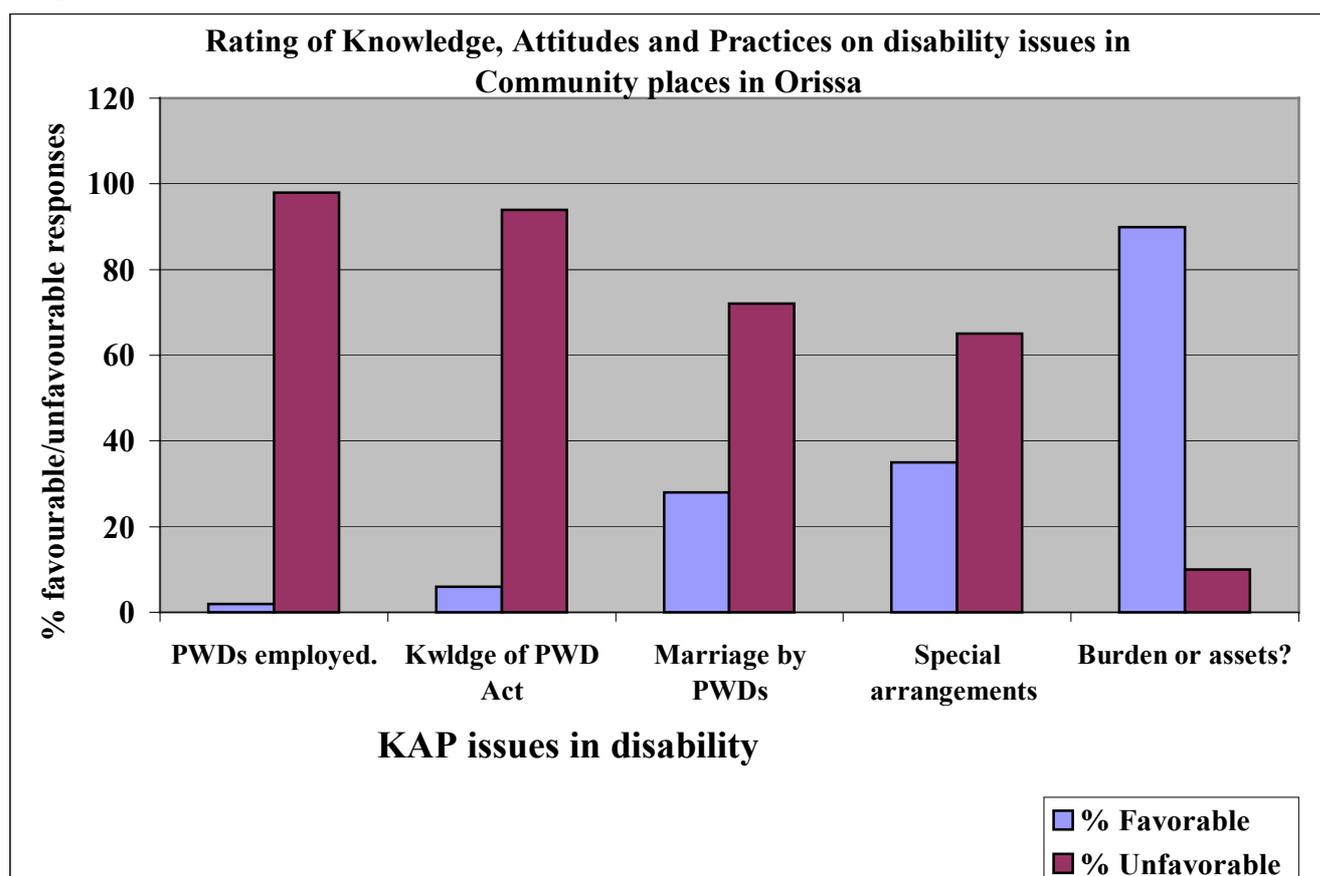
5. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in Community places in Orissa.

Community places such as public halls and marriage mandap in Orissa exhibited very low level of knowledge on disability issues and do not make special arrangements for people with disability attending social functions in these places. For instance, graph 9 illustrates that 94% and 65% of community places do not know about the act on disability and have no special arrangements to cater for the needs of persons with disability respectively. The work force in community places covered indicates that only a mere 2%(4) out of 239 employees are persons with disability.

Table 13: Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in public places in Orissa.

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
Marriage by PWDs/ yr	28	72	5	13	18
Burden or assets?	90	10	19	2	21
Special arrangements	35	65	6	11	17
Kwldge of PWD Act	6	94	1	16	17
PWDs employed.	2	98	4	235	239

Graph 9



The situation in community places proof that indeed people with disability largely suffer from social exclusion that starts at home and reinforced in public spheres. The response on whether people with disability are assets or burden was supportive as 90% of them regard them as assets. However this gesture is weakened by the poor state of physical access and exclusion of PWDs in formal employment opportunities.

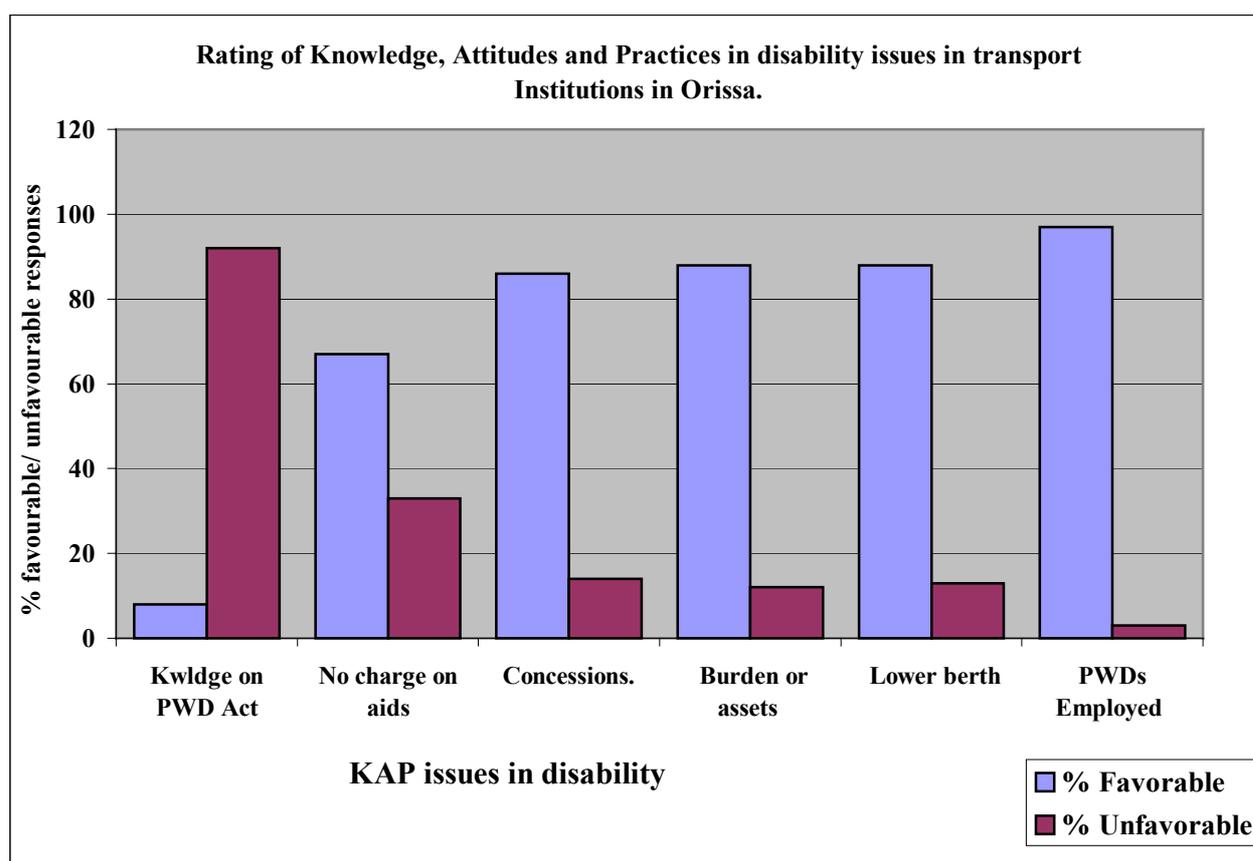
6. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in public transport service institutions in Orissa

Public transport service institutions in Orissa are largely aware of the various concessions and facilities for PWDs, but have a very low level of knowledge on disability act.

Table 14: Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in Public Transport service institutions in Orissa.

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
Kwldge on concessions.	86	14	18	3	21
Allotment of lower berth	88	13	14	2	16
No charge on aids	67	33	14	7	21
Burden or assets	88	12	22	3	25
Kwldge on PWD Act	8	92	2	22	24
PWDs Employed	97	3	1178	35	1213

Graph 10



Graph 10 shows that 92% of these institutions do not know about the existing disability acts. However, 88%, 86% and 67% of them are aware of the existing travel concessions for PWDs, the allotment of lower berth for passengers with disability and the no charge on aids and appliances on transit for people with disability in public transport respectively. The public transport institutions should also improve on the hygienic conditions especially on the public utility facilities such as toilets. Poor hygienic conditions are part of physical barriers for persons with disability in most institutions.

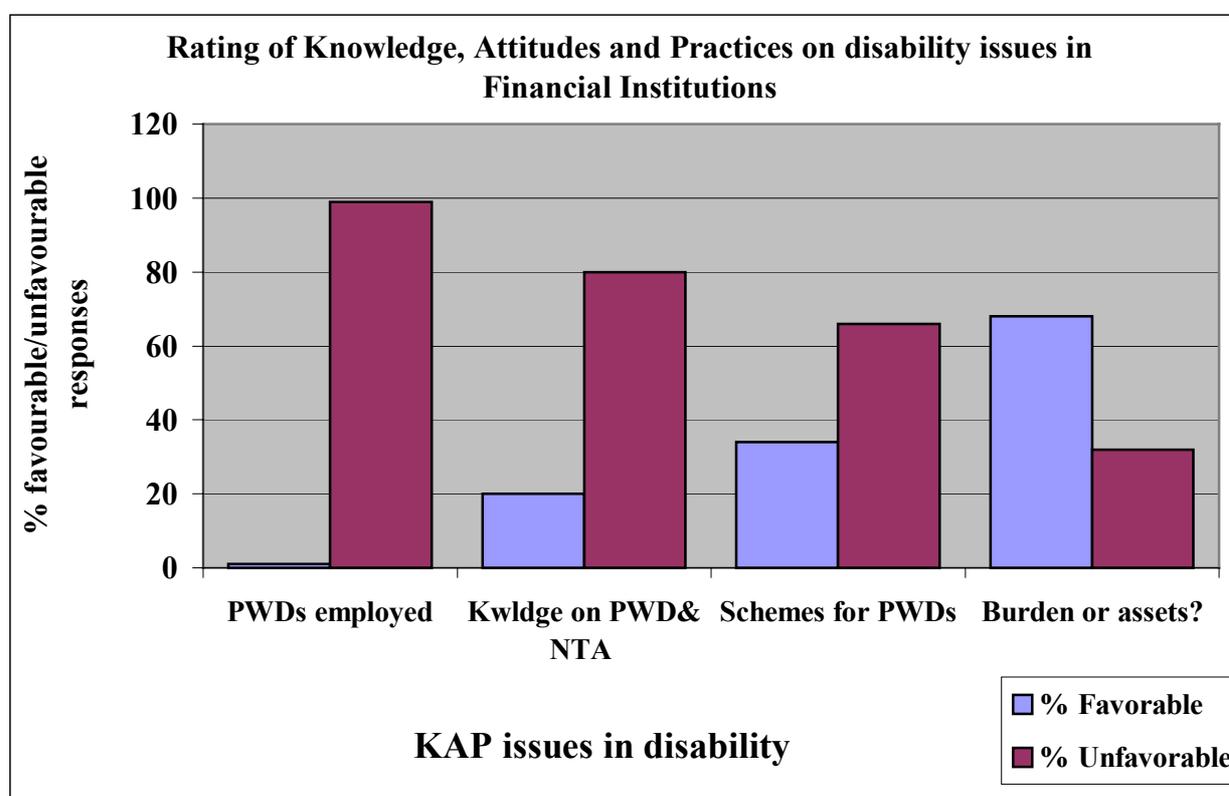
7. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in financial institutions in Orissa

Main financial institutions in Orissa have a low level of knowledge about laws on disability and have comparatively made few exclusive attempts for PWDs. Findings in Graph 11 show that 80% of the financial institutions covered did not have knowledge of the existing disability acts.

Table 15: Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in financial institutions in Orissa.

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
Kwldge on PWD& NTA	20	80	10	40	50
Schemes for PWDs	34	66	17	33	50
Burden or assets?	68	32	34	16	50
PWDs employed	1	99	25	2650	2675

Graph 11



Further 66% of them have not put in place exclusive measures to cater for the needs of PWDs. 32% of these institutions perceive persons with disability as burdens to their organizations. When they were asked about the number of persons with disability they have employed, they reported a mere 1% (25) out of a total work force of 2,675 employees. This proportion indicates that their attitudes are not committed to providing equal opportunities for gainful employment for PWDs. There is need to sensitize the financial sector in Orissa in order to enforce inclusion of more PWDs in the work force and in availing concessionary credit facility for self employment.

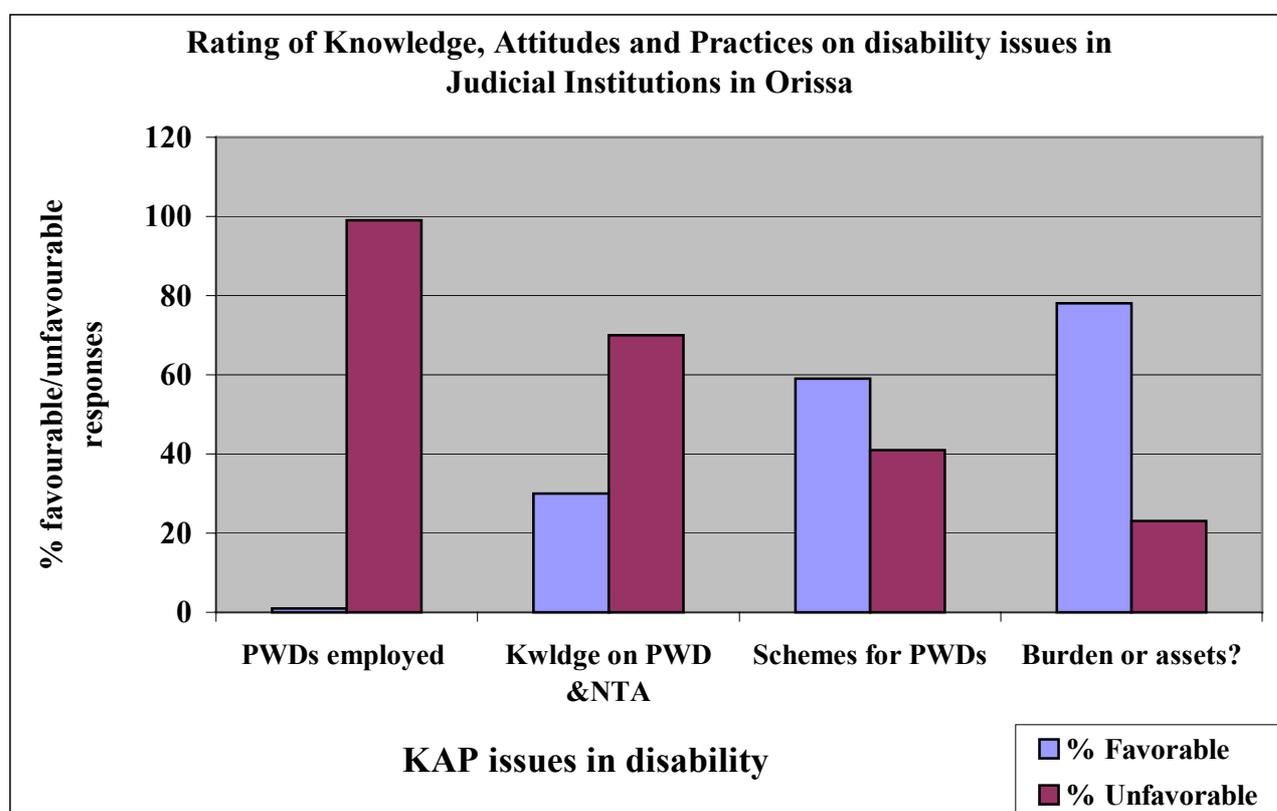
8. Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in Judicial institutions in Orissa

Judicial institutions in Orissa (police and law courts) are largely and ironically unaware of the existence and provisions of the disability acts, yet they are expected to provide legal guidance and enforce the provisions of the disability laws.

Table 16: Rating of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability in judicial institutions in Orissa

Disability issues	% Favorable responses	% Unfavorable responses	Favorable responses	Unfavorable responses	Total
Burden or assets	78	23	31	9	40
Schemes for PWDs	59	41	22	15	37
Kwldge on PWD &NTA	30	70	12	28	40
PWDs employed	1	99	18	1407	1425

Graph 12.



Their commitment to practice the concession reservation for PWDs in employment is equally low among judicial institutions. For instance, finding in graph 12 illustrates that 70% of them do not know about the various disability acts. Out of a work force of 1425 staffs, 1% (18) are employee with disability. There is an urgent need for judicial institutions to take a frontline in not only ensuring the implementation of the provisions of the acts, but also to protect PWDs from the violations of their rights.

CASE STUDIES OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

Information was obtained from people with disability through in-depth interviews during the course of the audit concerning their knowledge, attitudes and experiences in disability issues. This information is used to supplement the findings of the main audit. Discussions with individuals in this category were on attitudinal barriers they encounter in various institutions in Orissa as well as their knowledge and perceptions on disability. The findings are discussed under themes in this section.

1. Treatment of People with disability among Institutions in Orissa

It is important to mention on the onset of this discussion that most of the issues on disability that were rated in all the cases interviewed revealed a high degree of dissatisfaction on the part of PWDs especially regarding changes in their status, level of knowledge on disability issues, on the treatment they receive at work places and their own perception of disability. For instance there was a strong feeling and consensus among the cases interviewed that their working environments are largely hostile owing to poor reception they receive at work place. This ranges from insensitive attitudes and behavior towards them. They are not consulted and fully involved in the affairs at work and their request are often delayed and sometime denied without convincing reason.

The physical access in these offices presents an agonizing hindrance to them every other day. One case in Deogarh expressed his dissatisfaction by saying... *"people are only concerned about entry slopes for their two wheelers than in making the entrance accessible to all."* He further reiterated on his suffering as he sort intervention from the district administration to transfer his family that works for the government in a neighboring district 200km away from his residence. He had a bitter encounter with the district revenue secretary who rudely asked him. *"Who gave you this job and why did you continue with it."* This statement always weakens his resolve to follow up the issue and other matters that he would like addressed. This is an example that can illustrate the heart-breaking and psychologically traumatizing attitudes that PWDs encounter.

Another case was also interviewed in Sambalpur district regarding a pending rape issue. She is a speech and hearing challenged girl who was allegedly sexually assaulted by a police constable. After reporting the matter sometimes later, a DNA test was carried out from samples of a child she conceived after the rape. The results did not collaborate with those of the accused. This resulted in an immediate release of the suspect, without further investigation.

2. Perceptions on disability by PWDs

It is disheartening to learn from the cases that were interviewed about their apathetic view of disability. This deep feeling of apathy is largely psychological reaction to the highly negative attitudes and hostile experience persons with disability encounter in their daily life. It breaks their ego and self esteem which is likely to invoke such feelings of apathy. Most of the cases who shared their inner most experiences perceived disability as a burden and a life of struggle. This negative perception was reported by many as resulting from social exclusion and unfriendly environments perpetuated by institutions and society at large. There is need to come up with targeted programmes for addressing such individual psychological needs that are associated with the traumatizing experiences they face each day.

3. Knowledge on disability Acts and changes in status of PWDs

The cases interviewed exhibited a low level of awareness on the laws on disability and their provisions. They also reported that they have witnessed very few changes in the status of people with disability in their respective areas. For instance, most of the cases interviewed reported that they have seen very little improvement in lives of PWDs in the past five years. A large number of them did not know about the various acts on disability and how they could benefit from them. For those who new about it, they complained of the bureaucracy and cost of pursuing justice which is often marred with delay and sometime by incidences of corruption. We encountered a case in Roulkela, who was asking... ” *what is this disability certificate and what are the benefits of having one*”. Our attempt to explain could not touch her heart as she narrated the poor performance of government schemes, which sometime do not provide adequately to them and are often coupled with poor delivery systems and delays. Disability information should be packaged in a simple and most accessible manner

4. Knowledge on disability issues and perceptions on PWDs

A large proportion of the people with disability interviewed expressed a very low level of knowledge on disability issues. They equally perceive persons with disability as a burden to society they live in. Most of the cases interviewed confirmed that they did not know much about current issues on disability. This could be as a result of internalization of unsupportive societal attitudes. It may lower their interest to seek information. The poor communication infrastructures for example lack of access to radio and TV as well as increase in pockets of poverty is likely to hamper the growth of knowledge on disability issues. The harsh societal attitudes are likely also to segregate against the access of PWDs to means of communication such as inability to listen to radio in the living room in situations where PWDs are confined in bedrooms and backyards in home settings. Lack of facilitated access to educational opportunities to most PWDs adversely impact on their level of knowledge on disability issues.

CASES FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC

1. Treatment of members of general public in Institutions and society in Orissa

It is important to mention at this point that general members of public encounter less incidences of attitudinal discrimination as compared to persons with disability at institutional level. For instance most of members of public interviewed reported that they are largely satisfied by the way they are treated at work place and in society. This experience presents a sharp contrast to the experiences reported by PWDs who complained about the high degree of dissatisfaction owing to hostility and unfriendly working environments they face in their day-to-day life. This finding reveals the imbedded segregation of PWDs from the mainstream society largely due to ignorance on the part of society. This finding confirms earlier one on poor status of knowledge, attitudes and practices on disability issues in public and private institutions in Orissa. This problem can largely be attributed to the long-term discrimination and unfavorable social constructions by society about disability. The pace of implementation of the provisions of PWD Act of 1995 and NTA of 1999 have been slow. There is need to confront these unfavorable attitudes by sensitizing the institutions and deploying legal means where applicable.

2. Perceptions on disability by members of the general public.

Like the case with PWDs, the general public interviewed about their view of disability equally reported a negative perception regarding disability. Most of those interviewed expressed remarks that largely indicated apathy concerning disability. This feeling of apathy can largely be attributed to ignorance and negative social constructions on disability by society. The potential of PWDs in our society remains untapped mainly because the society does not guarantee fairness and equal opportunity for all. We recommend for aggressive measures to provide opportunities to persons with disability so that they can demonstrate their full potentials. This will make them prosper in all aspects of life and thereby influence positively the perception of society and contribute to economic development of society rather than being treated as recipients of charity.

3. Knowledge on disability Acts and changes in status of PWDs

The general public exhibited a very low level of knowledge on the disability acts as compared to the PWDs. This could largely be attributed to the large interaction gap between non-disabled and persons with disability in our society. They also reported that they have witnessed very few changes in the status of people with disability in the past five years.

4. Knowledge on disability issues and perceptions on PWDs

A large proportion of the general public equally confirmed a very low level of knowledge on disability issues as compared to PWDs. Majority of them also perceive them as burden than assets to the society they live in. The low level of knowledge on disability issues could largely be attributed to unfavorable attitudes towards disability and lack of exposure to the plight of people living with disability. Aggressive and all inclusive public campaigns to create awareness on the plight of persons with disability as well as creating a lasting platform for inclusive civic engagements will be important in addressing this challenge.

Conclusion

Looking at the results of the attitudinal access audit of the main public and private institutions in Orissa, it is evident that the level of knowledge on disability issues, perceptions on disability and the institutional practices are largely unfriendly and unsupportive to persons with disability. On the overall the knowledge on disability issues particularly the disability acts is low among these institutions mainly because of lack of adequate sensitization by the government and lack of individual interest and attitude to do so on the part of the individuals.

The audit found out that most of the institutions in both public and private domains are still far from fulfilling the provisions of the PWD Act especially in regard to providing equal opportunity for gainful employment, protection of rights and full participation. For instance among all this institutions only 3% out of a work force of 17,156 persons are employees with disability.

Although most institutions indicated that they have put in place some measures to cater for the special needs of PWDs, these measures were found inadequate, uncoordinated and full of bureaucratic red tape and delays. This mainly owes to lack of necessary institutional framework that are stipulated in the disability law to monitor the implementation of such schemes. Majority of the respondents reported that they recognize that persons with disability can offer valuable contribution to their institutional development, yet this conviction has not yielded and tangible action in favor for PWDs. This contradiction between confessions made and the praxis is mainly because of lack of a sustained sensitization and awareness regarding disability issues and their contribution to the mainstream. However, there are still a considerable number of respondents (31%) who felt that people with disability are a burden to society. This represents a tip of the iceberg, as it is largely the attitude portrayed by the society at large. There is urgent need to set up initiatives to confront, challenge and influence these egocentric feelings before they devastate the prospects of persons with disability.

Institutional analysis on the existing status of attitudinal access revealed some disheartening situations within specific institutions. For example, the government being the custodian of social justice for all was found among the institutions that have least number of employees with disability. Further, persons with disability who were interviewed complained that the schemes meant to provide for specific special needs for PWDs are largely dissatisfying as they are uncoordinated, coupled with bureaucratic red tape, delays and lack of replenishment. They also exhibited a low level of knowledge on disability issues. It was amazing to find out that most judicial institutions (the police and courts) are not aware of the provision for PWDs especially those contained in the PWD Act of 1995. This is mainly because they have not made a stop to reflect on the impact of the judicial systems on the already marginalized groups for instance the persons with disabilities. Main public hospitals, police, financial institutions and community places are among the institutions with least attempts/special arrangements for people with disability. This is a grim picture especially because these are the most vital institutions that are expected to respond effectively and efficiently in service for all.

It is equally disheartening to learn from the cases that were interviewed about their apathetic view of disability. This deep feeling of apathy is a psychological reaction to the highly negative attitudes and hostile experience they encounter in their daily life.

A large proportion of the people with disability interviewed expressed a very low level of knowledge on disability issues. This could be due to their weak self-esteem resulting from unsupportive societal attitudes and ill treatment they receive at work place.

Recommendations

1. There is needed to come up with targeted programmes for addressing individual psychological needs that are associated with the traumatic experience they face each day.
2. Aggressive and all inclusive public campaigns to create awareness on the plight of persons with disability as well as creating a lasting platform for inclusive civic engagements will be important in addressing this challenge.
3. We recommend for aggressive measures to provide opportunities to persons with disability so that they can demonstrate their full potentials. This will make them prosper in all aspects of life and thereby influence positively the perception of society.
4. We recommend for the reform and strengthening of the judicial system to respond adequately to protect PWDs against gross violations of their constitutional rights.
5. We recommend that the government institutionalize the disability act by setting in place the stipulated management and coordination structures to fore see the implementation process. The structures should collaborate with the civil society organizations to maximize impact for the good of PWDs.
6. We recommend for installation of the office of an independent disability commissioner as envisaged in the PWD Act of 1995.

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