

**Indraprastha College for Women
Equal Opportunities Cell & Enabling Unit
Annual Report 2014-2015**

Enabling Unit (EU) and Equal Opportunities Cell (EOC) of Indraprastha College for women strive to cater to the needs of Students with Disabilities enrolled in various courses both — Undergraduate and Postgraduate — programmes of the College. The primary aim of EU and EOC is to provide accessible means and create barrier-free environment for Students with Disabilities enrolled in the College. The work carried out by EU and EOC receives constant encouragement from the college administration. The college theme of the year 2014-2015, “Visibility of Disability: Issues of Access”, consciously crafted by the Principal, is in itself a testimony to the value attached to the creation of disabled friendly environment. It is worth mentioning that designating the college theme around disability and accessibility is the first-of-its kind initiative in the history of the institution.

Dr. BR. Alamelu (the Coordinator Enabling Unit) and Dr. Shrruti Sahrawat (the Coordinator Equal Opportunities Cell), and other members in the EOC: Mr. Vijay Gautam (the Librarian, Dr. Reetu Raj Ekka (Former Coordinator EOC {Member Ex-Officio}), Ms. Jaya Mishra (Member) and Dr. Rimpi Killan Singh (Member) have all been working tirelessly towards realizing the vision of the college.

For the academic year 2014-2015, total 23 Students with Disabilities (VH-19 and OH-4) have enrolled in various courses in the college – 13 in B.A I Year and 10 in M.A I Year.

Services and Facilities

EU and EOC of the college conducted an orientation programme for the freshers on 06/08/2014. Dr. Anil Aneja, Officer on Special Duty in the Equal Opportunities Cell of University of Delhi, participated as the Chief Guest and detailed the facilities available for students with disabilities both at the University level and in all Colleges affiliated to the University of Delhi. He gave a brief account of the Inclusive Print Project initiated by the Equal Opportunities Cell, University of Delhi for the easy access of print materials. The Librarian and the Coordinator of the Enabling Unit presented an overview of various facilities and resources made available in the College exclusively for students with disabilities. The freshers were then taken for an access tour of the College by the Coordinator Enabling Unit with a view to orienting them with the accessibility features of the institution.

Like every year, a fifteen-day Mobility Training Programme was arranged for students with visual impairment in the beginning of the academic year. Mr. Anil Kumar, a Mobility Instructor trained the students in free and comfortable mobility around the college.

Mr. Lalan Kumar was appointed as Computer Instructor on contractual basis — during both the Monsoon Semester (2014) and Winter Semester (2015) — to train, enable and enhance Students with Visual Impairment in computer skills.

44 students with disabilities (VH-43 and OH-1) have been issued Notebooks/Laptops on returnable basis as a measure of capacity building in academic excellence.

Notebooks/Laptops given to students with visual impairment are well equipped with Lex scanning/reading software, Hindi Optical Character Recognition (OCR Professional), a licensed version of Non-Visual Desktop Access (NVDA) and Braille Face. These Softwares are also installed in the notebooks/Laptops that came along with the Lex Air Camera, which are made available in the Library for use during the working hours.

45 Angel Pro Talking Digital Pocket Daisy Players of advanced version were purchased and distributed on a returnable basis to students with visual impairment to assist them in recording their classroom lectures and to help them have easy access to the study material available in audio and DAISY formats.

Braille Printer in the library was made fully functional, and students with visual impairment can now freely opt for the conversion of their printed study material into Braille Script.

Braille books for students with visual impairment in B.A Programme Courses and Non-Credit English were purchased and made available in the library.

Braille maps have been ordered and will be available for the use from the academic session beginning in July 2015.

Devnagiri — an Hindi OCR — has been procured and installed in the computers of the enabling Unit especially for the benefit of those students with visual impairment who are pursuing various courses in Hindi medium.

EU and EOC of our College on 29/09/2014 organised a hands-on workshop to train students with visual impairment in the effective use of NVDA. Mr. Gopal Saini and Ms. Suchaaro from Saksham Trust, deputed by the Equal Opportunities Cell, University of Delhi, served as resource persons. Participants were taught how to manage popular Microsoft Applications such as Internet Explorer and other Microsoft Office applications with the help of NVDA.

A one-day seminar titled, "Reading without Seeing" was organised on 30/09/2014, wherein Mr. Gopal Saini and Ms. Suchaaro, acting as the key resource persons, introduced to the visually-impaired participants the basics of DAISY reading and other accessible formats. The participants were also informed about the Assistive Devices Implements for Persons with disabilities (ADIP) Scheme run by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, and the procedures to avail various assistive devices under the scheme.

'Samarthya' – an Annual Cultural Fest of Equal Opportunities Cell and Enabling Unit of our College — was held on 27/02/2015. It began with the Principal's Introductory Remarks. Dr. Hemachandran, Assistant Professor at the Centre for the Developing Societies (CSDS) graced the occasion with the inaugural lecture. He spoke on the topic, "Accessibility: A Universal Norm" which very well coincided with our College theme for the academic year 2014-2015, "Visibility of Disability: Issues of Access".

The session was chaired by Dr. Mita Bose, Associate Professor at the department of English, and formerly Vice Principal of the college.

Dr. Hemachandran's talk primarily touched upon the Moral imagination and the ready acceptance of one's own disability and made a strong case for the effective use of innovative, pedagogic methods to make the 21st century classroom a truly inclusive one.

More than 100 students with disabilities of various colleges affiliated to University of Delhi actively participated in 'Samarthya-2015'.

The Coordinator Enabling Unit, besides being available on all week days in person and all 24 hours on phone, also conducted weekly meetings for students with disabilities on every Thursday at 10:30 AM in the Enabling Unit. These weekly meetings proved to be a great platform for information dissemination, to hear grievances and to find out quick solutions. Students with disabilities were made aware of various scholarships, Government schemes run to support their studies and important college events.

The college arranged free transportation for all the students with disabilities to travel back to their destinations during the examinations.

In strict compliance with the directions of UGC, the College made a provision for the allotment of an extra 20 minute time per hour to all students who employed scribes to assist them in writing the exams.

Students have been encouraged to participate in various cultural and sporting events conducted by other colleges of University of Delhi, and several of them stood as winners in various categories.

EU and EOC Representation/Participation in Formal Deliberations Outside

Dr. BR. Alamelu, Coordinator, Enabling Unit attended the Interactive Session organized by the Equal Opportunities Cell, University of Delhi for all the Coordinators of Enabling Units of Colleges affiliated to the University of Delhi on 12/08/2014. The Interactive Session discussed, among other things: the proper distribution and deployment of Lex camera scanners and other assistive devices to all the Equal Opportunities Cells and the Enabling Units as part of Inclusive Print Project, short duration training in various special Softwares made available by the Equal Opportunities Cell of the University of Delhi, UGC XII Five-year Plan Guidelines on the establishment of Equal Opportunities Cells and Enabling Units, strategies for the effective implementation of various provisions of the Marrakesh treaty India has signed in June 2014, etc.

It is worth mentioning that ours is the first college to have fully implemented the Inclusive Print Project discussed in the meeting mentioned above. In this regard, the Enabling Unit of our College facilitated the installation of Lex scanning/reading software, Hindi Optical Character Recognition (OCR Professional) and Braille Face on 06/09/2014, the installation of NVDA (licensed version) on 22/09/2014, Hands-on

Workshop on the effective usage of NVDA on 29/09/2014 and one-day seminar titled, "Reading without Seeing" on 30/09/2014.

Students with disabilities of our College took part in a workshop on "Synchronising Education and Employment for Persons With Disabilities" held on 26/09/2014 at Miranda House, organized by Coordinators of Innovation Project, Sri Aurobindo College (SAC), University of Delhi, Sarthak Education Trust, New Delhi and Lakshita, the Enabling Society of Miranda House, University of Delhi. Dr. Shrruti Sahrawat, Coordinator Equal Opportunities Cell of our College accompanied the students to the workshop.

Department of Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India in a unique initiative observed Raahgiri Day for persons with disabilities on 01/02/2015 at Connaught place, New Delhi. This exclusive initiative, meant to create an inclusive environment for Persons With Disabilities, coincided with the spirit of Hon'ble Prime Minister's universal mission, "Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas". Dr. Shrruti Sahrawat, Coordinator Equal Opportunities Cell and Dr. BR. Alamelu, coordinator Enabling Unit along with two NSS volunteers took 12 Students with disabilities of our College and participated in this unique initiative by the Government of India.

Our College is one of the special invitees to a one day National Conference to launch the national action Plan for skill training of Persons With Disabilities on 21/03/2015 at Plenary Hall, Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. This national level event was organised by The Department of Empowerment of Persons With Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, along with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India. Dr. Babli Moitra Saraf (the Principal), Dr. Shrruti Sahrawat, (Coordinator Equal Opportunities Cell) and Dr. BR. Alamelu (Coordinator Enabling Unit) represented the College in the conference.

Dr. BR. Alamelu (Coordinator Enabling Unit) and Ms. Radhika Gupta, Semi Professional Assistant (SPA), Library attended a workshop on the use of Lex Air Camera and other assistive Softwares like Braille Face and Hindi OCR Professional, conducted by the Equal Opportunities Cell, University of Delhi on 28/04/2015. The Coordinator Enabling Unit agrees to share some of the key inputs from the workshop with the users of these Softwares in the College, preferably through a hands-on demonstration proposed to be conducted in the new academic session.

Ms. Shipra Shukla (M.A Hindi Hons II Year) and Ms. Ranjana Pandey (M.A Hindi Hons II Year) were nominated to attend the National Convention for Youth with Disabilities conducted by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) from 04-05/04/2015 at United Service Institution of India (USI), New Delhi.

Ms. Ishita Marwa (B.A Programme III Year), is awarded the most meritorious physically challenged student for the academic year 2014-2015.

We, the coordinators of Equal Opportunities cell and Enabling Unit wish to place on record our deepest appreciation for the committee members for their cooperation throughout the year in translating our aspirational goals into concrete actions.

None of the events briefly highlighted above would have been possible without the kind assistance, wise guidance and the timely support of the Principal and her administrative staff. The Equal Opportunities cell and the Enabling Unit owe special thanks to the office of the Principal and other administrative staff for their constant help.

Recommendations

- Given the increasing intake of students with disabilities year after year, attempt should be made to shift the Enabling Unit to a spacious room that can accommodate more Computers and other assistive devices. The total number of students with disabilities by the end of academic year 2014-2015, for example, is 51, and this number would certainly may keep increasing in the years to come. So the Enabling Unit should be planned keeping the future requirements in mind.
- Enabling Unit should have an attached toilet and a dust bin.
- College should make Educational tour for students with disabilities an annual event. This would help students with disabilities coming from varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to gain exposure.
- An attempt should be made to create an inclusive academic forum to meet and discuss disability issues, create awareness about disability through the screening of films, documentaries, etc.
- It seems more logical and congenial to make the Enabling Unit as part of Library, so that the assistive devices such as Braille Printer and Lex Air Camera can be easily accessed by the users.
- An attempt should be made to label the classrooms and other important places with Braille Signboards.
- It is suggested that a Sound Indicator be installed in the College main gate, so that the students with visual impairment can easily recognise the location of the College and make an easy entry.
- A person should be trained and appointed in the library to handle the braille printer and Lex Air Cameras to convert the print material in to braille and other accessible formats.
- The Braille Printer should be placed in a sound-proof room, so that its noise does not cause disturbance to others.
- It is suggested that the undertaking forms of the Notebooks/Laptops be modified, as the Notebooks/Laptops initially given by the University as part of FYUP have now become the property of the College. The College may introduce certain changes to suit the administrative feasibility without necessarily affecting the interests of the students. One of the changes that can actively be considered, for example, is that the students of 1st and 2nd year (UG) and 1st year PG may be allowed to retain the notebooks/laptops issued to them till the final Semester of their programme of study, with a proviso that they shall show their notebooks/laptops at the time of renewal of I-Cards every year. Accordingly, students with disabilities in the final year of their study programme would submit the Notebooks/Laptops on the last day of their final exams. To ensure that the students would return the Notebooks/Laptops on the last day of their final exams, the administration can, at the time of issuing hall-tickets, collect Class X or Class XII certificates (in original) which shall be returned on the safe submission of Notebooks/Laptops.

- An attempt should be made to organize a two-day National Conference to academically deliberate the issues of disability, with a particular focus on women with disabilities.
- The Equal Opportunities Cell and Enabling Unit of our College can plan to bring out a journal, at least once in a year, wherein the issues around disability and accessibility in higher education can be systematically discussed.
- The publication of Magazine carrying exclusively the creative writings/views of students with disabilities should be considered. This can be planned as an inter-college publication and circulated widely in accessible formats.

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