In a country where 2.21% of the population (Census 2011) is differently abled, one would imagine that providing benefits and opportunities that would give them a better quality of life would be a priority. Yet, even though the Government took the initiative to frame the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Bill in 2010, following the enactment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, it was only in December last year that the Bill was finally passed. This new Bill will replace the existing Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill 2016 is said to define disability based on an evolving and dynamic concept. Besides increasing the types of disabilities from the existing seven to 21, the Central Government will have the power to add to the list. The Bill also provides additional benefits such as reservation in higher education, increase of reservation in Government jobs from 3% to 4%, reservation in allocation of land and poverty alleviation schemes.

Government-funded educational institutions as well as Government-recognised institutions will have to provide inclusive education to children with disabilities. Such inclusiveness plays a fundamental role in sustainable development for persons with disabilities. It is a step in the right direction which necessitates the involvement of not just the Government but all concerned – families, teachers, agencies, NGOs and the community as a whole. Moving towards the transformation of a society willing to change their perception and attitudes and create an inclusive world.

To quote Stephen Hawking, “People with disabilities are vulnerable because of the many barriers we face: attitudinal, physical and financial... Addressing these barriers... will unlock the potential of so many people with so much to contribute to the world.”

From the Consulting Editor ...

From the Editor ...

The first Deepshikha of 2017 with a cover dedicated to Harmony, wishes our readers a New Year full of colour, light, life and laughter. Harmony leads to peace and with peace comes life and laughter. Readers will be happy to know that the little hand prints that form the flower on the cover are of our little children in the pre-primary class that includes both children with disabilities and those without disabilities. May the year foster harmonious societies that value All its members. May there be more equal opportunities and access for persons with disability.

We bring you reflections on the Rights of Persons with Disability Bill 2016 and current thinking about Inclusive Education. We also share events and programmes in IICP and excellent news. Our Founder Vice Chairperson Sudha Kaul was inducted into The Telegraph Education Foundation Hall of Fame 2016. Described by Barry O’Brien as a woman of gentleness and wisdom, Sudha Kaul dedicated the award to her team and students. We are so proud of you, Dr Kaul.

I end by wishing all our readers a very colourful Holi!
NOT QUITE AN ENABLING LEGISLATION

By S.D. Mukherjee, Jeeja Ghosh and Reena Sen

It has been a long wait for the disability sector to realise the aspiration of framing a legislation that captures the essence of a ‘rights based’ approach. The paradigm shift that was initiated with the enactment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007 needed to be reflected in all Indian legislation. Thus the government’s initiative to frame the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RDP) Bill in 2010 was a most welcome move. The Sudha Kaul Committee, which was given the responsibility of drafting the bill, included a rigorous process of consulting key stakeholders, it submitted its recommendations in 2011. It has been a long journey since then. The draft bill was passed through several committees, sent to different states and thus the original recommendations of the drafting committee were much diluted. The legislation had been pending in the Rajya Sabha since February 2014. A total of 199 amendments were proposed in the draft bill.

At a time when most people in the disability sector had virtually given up hope, the bill came up for discussion in the winter session of the Parliament this year. Finally, the bill was passed by both the Houses of Parliament. This is no doubt breaking news for the disability sector. But is it actually a time to rejoice? Are we aware of the implications of the new legislation on the disability sector as a whole?

Writing this article from a limited understanding of the law in progress, we can say that the future act has taken a step forward in that it has brought 21 disabilities under its purview. According to the census of 2011, there are 2.680 million persons with disabilities in India. Most disabled-rights activists are of the opinion that this enumeration is flawed. The Persons with Disabilities Bill (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 recognised only seven categories of disabilities, omitting many forms of disabilities from its ambit. Thus the increased number of categories is a step forward.

The recently passed bill has to be commended, in that for the first time in Indian disability legislation, women and children with disabilities have been acknowledged as vulnerable groups amongst persons with disabilities. However is it sensitive or inclusive of persons with disabilities in persons who are Trans-gender?

One prominent feature in this legislation is that it has curtailed reservation in employment to 4 per cent from the proposed 5 per cent in the draft bill of 2014. Many disabled rights activists are sceptical regarding this move as the number of categories of disabilities has been increased to 21—here lies the discrepancy.

How does one measure the effectiveness of any legislation? A law with ‘teeth’, crisp, clear and effective in addressing non-compliance of any of its provisions by concerned establishments or individuals. Disabled rights activists are disappointed as the provision for imprisonment (two to six months) has been dropped, leaving only a clause for fines ranging between Rs 10,000 and Rs 5,00,000. As we know, there are many in this country who can afford to pay fines. Fines do not address the real issues, nor do they compel people to abide by the laws of the land. As we all know, in our country people are particularly clever at finding loopholes in laws and ways of getting around these. The omission of punitive action has definitely diluted the effectiveness of the legislation. The 1995 Act virtually became ineffective because of the absence of punitive measures. Disabled rights activists are apprehensive that the present law-in-the-making is following a similar pattern. Thus we are likely to have another law without teeth.

The RPDP Bill has been the reflection of the aspiration of many stakeholders in the disability sector. It is too early to comment on the actual success or failure of the law, as that can be done only when we see it in action, so to speak. One can only remain optimistic and work towards effective implementation. The challenge now lies in effective dissemination, creating knowledge and awareness amongst all stakeholders with leadership roles given to activists in the disability sector. Finally, effective implementation needs to go hand in hand in creating the will for inclusion in civil society so that change is seen as necessary and not just a legal requirement.

Jeeya Ghosh is head, Advocacy; Sayon Deb Mukherjee is an Advocacy trainer; Reena Sen is executive director at the Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy, Kolkata.
Sumita Roy reports...

Held over a period of three days from 17 December 2016, the aim of the exhibition was to acknowledge and thank corporate sponsors who generously support IICP. It aimed to showcase the symbiotic relation between the donors and the students and vocational centre trainees. Large numbers of visitors from different schools and corporate organisations, guardians, parents and well-wishers went around the exhibition.

Students under the guidance of their teachers put in a lot of effort to display their creativity through charts, models, power point presentations and interactive skits. That they were hugely successful is reflected in the compliments they received especially the glowing tributes from the children of Vidyanjali and Modern High School for Girls (MHS). Most of them were fascinated to see how cheerful, focused and determined the children and adults in IICP’s services were despite the limitations of disability. Looking at the different displays in each class, the visiting students were amazed. They made appreciative comments, some of which are recorded in writing. Arya Pugalia was fascinated to see a student using his feet to make perfect folds in the paper to make a gift bag. The students from Vidyanjali were quite surprised to see some students competently operate the computer with their feet or elbows. They liked the catering section best of all! Sneha Pandey of Tata Steel Processing and Distribution Limited felt the presentation of their Company’s CSR activities by the Computer Lab was unique as it had highlighted all the important features of their organisation. It was heartwarming to see the positive interaction and feel the sense of inclusion from all the visitors.
Anupama Chowdhury of Class VI, MHS ended her poem dedicated to IICP with

“Some people say you are not normal,  
I am sure that is not the case;  
You are brave and beautiful in your own way,  
You have a unique glow on your face.  
Not all of you might be able to speak,  
But there’s a message you convey;  
Keep your head held high because  
Where there is a will there is a way.”

From L to R: Shoaib Ali Laskar smiles widely at his sponsor Ray O’Brien from Childrens are Angels from Heaven, USA; Subrata Roy, MD, Vesvius India and Mrs Roy at the ‘Vesvius classroom’; Manjari Kaul, donor and well-wisher at the exhibition; Partita Bhattacharyya, Former MD, Coal India Ltd and his wife Indrani, Guests of Honour

A fashion pageant presented by children and adults with family members and staff

From L To R: Rudraprasad, Swatilekha and Sobini Sengupta were the Chief Guests at Black Holes are Not Black – a Kasha O Kalam presentation organised by IICP at Gyan Manch; Lead actors include Jeeja Ghosh and Sayom Deb (Den) Mukherjee of IICP. At the same venue – a dance drama by IICP trainees and staff, Aamader Ganga

Student of MHS in conversation with Sayari Sarkar of the Adult Day Centre

Sheba Naaz and Ablinshet Patra with Chitra Koyal and other members of Self Help Groups formed by IICP, at their stall
Connections’ and ‘collaboration’, key words symbolising ‘inclusion’ in spirit and action, is essentially a human experience. Inclusive education necessitates firm conviction in the entitlement of every child to education. Often in the process of including every child, the requisite attention to provision of essential infrastructure and resources are missed out. Though we refer to educational inclusion as a process of removing barriers and talk about access, opportunity, engagement and participation, formal education still remains out of reach for millions of children.

Representatives from 25 countries met at Dubai to share experiences and examples of effective policies and practice to facilitate the way ahead in educational inclusion.

Susan Douglas, Conference Chair and Advisor to the British Council, stated that education was the key to a more equitable and peaceful world and inclusion enables the voiceless to have a voice. Professor Philip Garner from University of Northampton, UK prioritised attitudinal change and will as key factors in inclusion and usage of interdependent systems approach to view schools and students. With masterly use of ‘L’ words, he spoke about Legislation, Leadership by and in schools, Learning communities for collaboration and support, Learning measurement and Lenses through which we view children, Learning challenges, Labels and Ladders. The latter implies task analysis of the steps that help students move towards targets. Location by itself is not a robust factor associated with effective inclusion belying that merely placing a child in a mainstream classroom results in effective inclusion.

The video presentation from Andreas Schleicher of OECD, Paris focused on gaps in performance and PISA, Programme for International Students Assessment. Data on learning outcomes showed that Poverty and Socio-Economic Status were not the only factors associated with low academic performance. If equality and/or equity are the goals, Schleicher recommended teachers be provided with opportunities to enhance knowledge base of subjects, methodologies, exercise autonomy and develop support networks. Lastly, he advocated coherent and comprehensive policies committed to promoting skills and learning for ALL.

In response, Rajkumar Badole, Minister for Social Justice, Govt of Maharashtra, cited how his mother, a woman with no formal education, urged him to go to school simply because schooling makes a difference and it matters. He spoke of the vicious cycle of denial, discrimination and disadvantage posed by poverty, a rural urban divide and barriers of caste despite prevalent social support schemes. School dropouts in his State with 100,000 schools was due to lack of teachers, gaps in teacher training and a migrant labour force. Marie Schoeman, from the Dept of Basic Education, Pretoria, South Africa felt Prevention, Intervention and Compensation was the way ahead and one school culture does not meet all needs. She spoke of parents devaluing education leading to disillusionment in children and social issues like teenage pregnancies that often lead to dropouts. Dr Khine Mye, the DG of Alternative Education in Myanmar shared the three key measures adopted by his country to meet the challenge of an effective education for all – a National Education Law, a National Educational Strategy Plan and a UNICEF-supported class evaluation plan.
Dr Humaro Bano from Lahore Pakistan was forthright about the barriers of policy, practice and culture that prevent access to effective education in her country; the adverse situation made more so by regional instability, distance from schools and shortage of trained teachers, particularly for students with disability. She highlighted a path-breaking project in the Punjab province working for school reform.

The content of the 16 workshops are categorised in three themes.

In order for Inclusive Education as a concept, process and vision of a cohesive world order to succeed, speakers mentioned collaboration, networks, whole school approaches, capacity building and universal designs to meet the changing needs of all students, including those with special educational needs. Harnessing the resources of youth and community to address social inequality and exclusion, as well as a cluster approach across schools was emphasised. It was a humbling and valuable learning experience to hear about the complexities of needs assessment and educational interventions in African and Middle Eastern countries affected by ongoing conflict, insurgency, instability and displacement.

There was focus on measures for the removal of barriers that prevent girls from accessing education. These included the facilitation of confidence to break away from the shackles of oppressive tradition and cultural norms, the creation of secure learning spaces and means of safe travel to and from school, the availability of mentors, role models, life-oriented, relevant curricula and supportive infrastructure. The latter includes appropriate facilities for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).

Strategies and approaches to curriculum delivery, differentiation and evaluation comprised the third category of workshop deliberations. Speakers highlighted a whole school approach, leadership and mentoring, giving children a voice, preparation for and support during transition periods. Since Challenging Behaviour generally leads to exclusion, it was illuminating to hear about community orientation to change perceptions through teacher induction, motivation, training and teaching strategies. Speakers dealt with alternate, innovative ways of measuring impact and charting progress and change in children who will eventually become stakeholders and leaders in the process of inclusion.

‘Nothing about Us without Us’ – Natasha Baker, a British Paralympic dressage rider and three-time gold medalist proved to the gathering that disability is not a deterrent to excellence.

A panel discussion chaired by Mark Herbert, Head of Schools, British Council UK with the participation of Jake Epelle, Founder Albino Foundation, Nigeria, David Bartram, SEN Director, London Leadership Strategy, Souheir Elmasry, Chair Board of Trustees, Child and Family Foundation, Cairo and myself followed. It addressed the importance of awareness of disability with focus on the individual, partnerships, collaboration and advocacy for all marginalised groups, including those with albinism, to be brought within the ambit of inclusive education. There were useful suggestions about the need to focus on sharing of strategies and human resources within financial constraints.

Parent to a daughter with spina bifida, Dan White advocates the need to change perceptions about disability by publishing ‘Department of Ability’ series that feature people with disability as super heroes and heroines who are ‘Born to be Different – Born to Save the World’.

The end of the conference left us with myriad questions, food for reflection and lastly doubt and confusion. The latter is probably the best way forward as it leads to engagement, discourse, debate and dissent and finally some clarity.

As a stakeholder I am confident that my learning and experiences will lead to more steps in this complex but highly rewarding process of making more children feel they belong, know they matter and add value to my life.
Golf for a Cause!

IICP Hope Cup 2017

Thank You Tollygunge Club ...

David Panter and Ranabir Sen just before tee-off; 300 golfers participated in the tournament.

David Panter and Ranabir Sen just before tee-off; 300 golfers participated in the tournament.

Thank you

Indrajit Bhalotia and the Protouch team for tournament management.

Mrs Bakshi, wife of Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi, Chief Guest presents special prizes to the youngest and oldest female golfers, Fizza Ali and Bharti Ghosh Dastidar and the youngest and oldest male golfers Anshul Mishra and Joginder Singh; also in the picture is Anil Mukerji, CEO and Managing Member, Tollygunge Club

On the dais from L to R: Viren Sinha, Vice President Tollygunge Club and Chairman Hope Cup Organising Committee, Indrajit Mookerje, President Tollygunge Club, Lt Gen Praveen Bakshi, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, ADC, GOC in C Eastern Command, Sudha Kaul, Vice Chairperson IICP, Uma Ahmad, Chairperson IICP, David Panter, Guest of Honour

Thank You

Donors and Sponsors!
Clockwise: Deepak Atal, Vice Chairman APPL Foundation with the
3rd Runners-up – Brig P Barik, Col HS Brar, Col A Sharma, Col T Chakravarty;
Indrajit Mookerjee, President Tollygunge Club with the
2nd Runners-up – Anant Bajoria, Ambarish Khaitan, Akash Tantia,
Raghu Khaitan; David Panter with the 1st Runners-up – Shyamal Bhattacharya,
Gautam Bhattacharya, Arjya Bhattacharya, Sanjay Gupta; Lt Gen Bakshi
with the winners of the Hope Cup, Amit Bhowmik, Dinesh Agarwal,
Ranabir Chatterjee, Tutul Ali

From L to R: Special mementos of gratitude presented by Una Ahmad, Chairperson, IICP to the ‘Tolly’ Team M T Unni, Saibal Bose and Gaurav Pundir

“[I want to become an amateur golfer.
My role model is Tiger Woods!”
Meet Dhruv Vir Khullar, an avid golfer who has
participated twice in the Hope Cup

Music by Michelle Manuel
I went to Nature Camp this year with my friends and teachers from CSE. Initially, I was a little scared of leaving my parents and going alone. But once I reached the camp, I loved the mountains and flowers. I never imagined being in a place this beautiful!

We were group Cheetah. The roads were very rocky and our teachers pushed our wheelchairs with great care. I met a lot of people and made many friends. We chatted and sang songs together. One day we went to the Jaldhaka river. Touching the cold river water was a new experience. I shall never forget this camp!

**Chandni Singh, Student, IICP**

This was my first visit to the Nature Camp as well as the mountains. I participated in various activities like mountaineering, trekking, rock climbing, river crossing and nature study. I started to love, appreciate and care for Mother Nature. I learned to be positive, apply myself and use will power to accept and overcome different challenges. The experience gave me confidence that I CAN DO whatever I am entrusted with.

**Atiqu Rahaman, Placement and Liaison Officer, IICP**

Awed by the beauty of the camp site, we were thrilled to see the tents, our home for the next five days. The day started with early morning exercise and activities with the children and ended with late night meeting for guides and escorts. No one felt any tiredness. We had great fun during the evening hall gatherings and the camp fire was amazing. We returned on 24 December from the beautiful valley of Dalgaon, but a part of me was left behind.

**Sutapa Dutta, Special Educator, IICP**

My younger brother Tausif Akhtar went to Nature Camp with his school friends and teachers and enjoyed himself very much. He said that the camp site was beautiful and surrounded by mountains. I felt very happy when he excitedly told us about going and sitting near the river. He added that he was glad there were no mosquitoes in the camp! From time to time, the teachers informed us of his well-being. We will happily send Tausif to camp again. Thank you IICP.

**Shabnam Shahnaz, Sibling**

Our daughter Afsara went to Nature Camp this year. Since this was the first time our daughter went alone, we were a bit scared. But after seeing everybody taking so much care of our little Afsara at the station, we relaxed. We got to know about her from time to time from her teachers. Thank you all for understanding our worries. When we went to the station to bring her home, Afsara was sitting chatting with her friends. Her smile conveyed how happy she was. Returning home, she talked about her friends and the camp all the time. She has learned a lot from this experience. The exposure will benefit her and teach her new things.

**Tabassum and Afsar Khan, Parents**

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**Himalayan Nature & Adventure Foundation Camp**

The five-day Camp was held in Dalgaon near Jhalong, Darjeeling district in December 2016

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From L to R: Manish Jain, IAS, CEO of National Trust and SS Vinayak, Asst Commissioner for Disabilities, West Bengal, visit the Early Intervention Clinic at IICP; We congratulate our colleagues Jeeja Ghosh and Dipak Ghosh who were felicitated at a vocational award ceremony organized by Rotary Club of Calcutta; Jui Sardar (2nd row to the left), a student of the Open Schooling Unit and a trainee of IICP’s Vocational Training Centre was felicitated by Fresh Look, Kolkata on the occasion of International Women’s Day 2017

The Goddess of learning Saraswati riding on a chariot made at the Adult Day Centre: Saraswati puja at IICP

National Affiliates’ Meet 2017 at IICP

Dr Amita Dhanda, Professor of Law, NALSAR, Hyderabad leads an informative workshop on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

Thanking those who give of their time and talents: Volunteers Day 2017, IICP Thank You, Koolie Jar for the cake
Congratulations to our Founder & Vice Chairperson Dr Sudha Kaul

Inducted into the
Telegraph Education Foundation Hall of Fame 2016