TCI Fellowship Report

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Pakistan
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Considering the estimation of 2010, the global population, ‘more than a billion people are living with some form of disability, or about 15% of the world’s population’ (WHO, WB 2011). The qualitative evident suggests that persons with disabilities are most vulnerable in developing countries, but people with psycho-social disabilities are one of the least talked about topics in Pakistan. Approximately 50 million people are facing common psycho-social disabilities yet a handful of organizations exist which are catering to the persons with psycho-social disabilities in Pakistan. People with psychosocial disabilities make up a significant proportion of the population and, as equal citizens, deserve equal access to health, education, social, economic, political and cultural opportunities, they have often been subjected to chains and other humiliation such as being left at institutions, by their own families who often, do not even return to inquire about them, and they end up spending their lives in unhygienic conditions where they are secluded, restrained, and housed against their will. The mentally ill are seen as lesser beings in our society, facing discriminatory attitudes and being left behind at every stage in life, therefore depriving them of their basic human rights, which they should be guaranteed, as equal citizens of Pakistan.

Keeping in mind the great potential of abuse of persons with psycho-social disabilities, it is important to promote a framework that ensures full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and protects the fundamental freedoms of persons with psycho-social disabilities in Pakistan.

The stigma and misconceptions associated with psychosocial disability often results in people being ostracized from their own community in Pakistan. Pervasive stigma and discrimination affects their ability to earn a living, lift themselves out of poverty, and gain access to alternative treatment and support to integrate into their community.

There are organizations in Pakistan working for mental health but are unfortunately working in the medical model perspective and know nothing about disability rights and UNCRPD, people with psychosocial disabilities are not aware of their rights and are completely mislead by these organizations. To overcome all these issues, there was dire need for a right based platform in Pakistan to raise awareness and voices for the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities at national level as well as regional and global level.

For this purpose and being a member of TCI AP, I applied for the TCI fellowship program under “TCI Leader Consolidation Stream”. It built my capacity to carry out advocacy activities like awareness raising activities during the pandemic, CRPD trainings and dialogues with the government at a national level for the implementation of the rights based legislation for persons with psychosocial disabilities.
OBJECTIVES OF THE FELLOWSHIP

→ To create public-awareness and run anti-stigma campaigns in the community to end stigma and discrimination against people with psychosocial disabilities

→ Advocate for the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities for their inclusion in overall development process

→ Capacity building of persons with psychosocial disabilities through providing counseling and trainings

→ Awareness on the social model/human rights based approach to mental health
MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Distribution of Relief Packages to Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities

Under the fellowship stream, PDRN implemented a small grant project supported by Transforming Communities for Inclusion (TCI) in partnership with its technical partner Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP).

**Key Analysis/Findings during the Project:** During the pandemic, people with psychosocial disabilities were unable to upkeep their health and hygiene measures. It was quite challenging to stay in isolations for months where no access to rehabilitation services and on the other hand living a hard life due to stigma attached with people living with mental health problems. We are living in a society where family provides no support and myths like: he/she can’t do anything are always carried by them everywhere untill the identity is hidden. People with psychosocial disabilities living inside intitutions are at a greater risk of getting the virus and cause health problems. In Pakistan we have witnessed that families see people with psychosocial disabilities as a burden on the family and therefore they are sent to the institutions where their families never come back to inquire about them. Another serious issue which was observed during the COVID19 response was no access to appropriate information, there was a massive increase in the level of distress of people with psychosocial disabilities during the pandemic due to inappropriate and multiplied information.

Through this project, PDRN provided 50 COVID prevention kits to people with psychosocial disabilities living with poor economic conditions which included IEC materials and Bali declaration. The COVID prevention kits included following items:

- COVID Prevention Booklet
- Soaps
- Hand Sanitizers
- Tissue Papers
- Gloves
- Hand Wash
- Bali Declaration
- Masks
- Disinfect Sprays

Distribution of COVID prevention Kits by Mr. Atif, ED, STEP
A picture while preparing the COVID prevention kits
INFORMATION PLATFORM FOR PEOPLE WITH PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITIES

Under the fellowship stream it was one of the objectives to develop an information platform for people with psychosocial disabilities and present PDRN as an independent body. PDRN developed following information platforms:

1. An official website of the PDRN has been developed with the help of a consultant to share the news and information of the network and our work with the stakeholders and general community. The portal will help persons with psychosocial disabilities to get registered/connected with the network and learn more about social model of disability through resources. The website can be accessed by the link here: www.pdrn.org.pk

   ![Screenshot of Website of PDRN](image1.jpg)

   Figure 1 Screenshot of Website of PDRN

2. Instagram Page – This platform is used to share stories on a daily basis to aware the general community on the disability rights, share news with peers, do live sessions with people with psychosocial disabilities, and make promotional posts to aware the community on UN CRPD and rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities. It is planned to use this platform as a TV channel also in the coming future for conducting live sessions with people with psychosocial disabilities to share their stories.

   ![Screenshot of PDRN Instagram News Feeds](image2.jpg)

   Screenshot of PDRN Instagram News Feeds
3. Facebook Official – Facebook has become one of the largest social media platforms where people interact and engage. In this context, an official Facebook page of the Psychosocial Disability Rights Network (PDRN) has been developed to share news, accomplishments and achievements with the community which has keen interest in the mental health sector, disability stakeholders and general community.

Screenshot of PDRN Facebook Page
→ A virtual consultation meeting was carried out with persons with psychosocial disabilities and following this consultation a response paper was prepared to include the voice of people with psychosocial disabilities. The objective of this consultation meeting was compile challenges faced by people with psychosocial disabilities and also a set of recommendations to share with the government.

→ A response paper was prepared following the consultation meeting which was shared with the shared with the ministry of human rights, ministry of planning, development & special initiatives, ministry of social protection and as a result

→ PDRN through STEP was supported and was invited to be part of the Special Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on the Implementation of ICT Act. The committee was established by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan which comprises of DPO representatives from different DPOs in Pakistan.

→ PDRN is part of Disability and Gender Electoral Working Group established by the Election Commission of Pakistan, the purpose of the working group is to support ECP in making the voting policies inclusive of people with diverse disabilities. PDRN has played an active role and has been engaging regularly in WG meetings hosted by ECP.

→ PDRN represented in policy dialogues organized in the provinces by STEP and advocated with the parliamentarians on the inclusion of people with psychosocial disabilities. PDRN emphasized especially on the challenges faced by people living with mental health problems inside institutions and our communities.

→ PDRN in collaboration with STEP supported by TCI lead the process of national consultations with DPO members to prepare a charter of demands/national commitments to compliment the upcoming Global Disability Summit 2022. The consultations were initially planned for three days offline interactive workshops but to the government instructions and lockdown the methodology was transformed from in person to online. The consultations were carried out through group calls, Zoom meetings, in person meetings and online surveys. A detailed report was submitted to TCI separately.

→ PDRN initiated first ever survey in Pakistan to be conducted with people with psychosocial disabilities on COVID 19. The purpose of the survey was to learn from people with psychosocial disabilities from different provinces on the types of barriers being faced by them during the pandemic. Approximately 60 people with disabilities participated and completed the online survey.
A screenshot from one of the virtual meetings with people with psychosocial disabilities

Meeting of Special Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Policy Dialogue in Social Welfare Department, KP Province
Policy Dialogue in Lahore, Punjab Province
AWARENESS RAISING

→ A social media awareness campaign was run through PDRN Instagram page through regular sharing of stories and posts to sensitize people about the rights based approaches towards psychosocial disability and mental health in Pakistan. There was a great engagement seen through this initiative where people started approaching and learn how PDRN is contributing towards rights of people living mental health problems.

→ PDRN prepared a COVID related IEC Material through a consultant, the copies were shared with the COVID prevention kits to the beneficiaries of the small grant COVID prevention project and also 150 copies where shared with stakeholders during advocacy meetings and dialogues.

→ PDRN prepared first ever rights based animated video message in Pakistan for people with psychosocial disabilities to compliment #WhatWENeed 2020 campaign. The video comprises of around 3 minutes and explains Article 11 of the CRPD for persons with psychosocial disabilities.

Article 11 Animations Video Running over Instagram Platform
TRAININGS

→ PDRN in partnership and support of STEP conducted an online training for 40 women with diverse disabilities on “Inclusion of Women with Disabilities in Decision Making Process”. The training methodology was developed for five days comprising of 3-4 hours per day, the objective of these trainings was to aware women with disabilities of different international conventions protecting rights of women with disabilities and also building their capacity on advocacy skills. PDRN was presented as an example/case study of leading advocacy initiatives for people with psychosocial disabilities in Pakistan.

→ PDRN organized CRPD based virtual training workshop for people with psychosocial disabilities to aware them on the CRPD and how it protects rights of people with disabilities. During the workshop PDRN emphasized on the medical model and social model of disability to aware participants on the inclusive communities, programming and policies.

Screenshot of a virtual training of women with disabilities
MEMBERSHIPS OF PDRN

Through PDRNs online visibility, a person with a psychosocial disability can get registered with one click on “Become a Member”. For this it is important for the person to fill a small form with contact details and why they want to be affiliated. PDRN provides memberships to organizations and individuals working on mental health in Pakistan.

Virtual Meeting a Member Organization from Lahore for Seeking Collaboration
INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION

→ PDRN worked in collaboration with STEP and TCI to organize a South Asia Sub-Regional meeting under the topics: Social Protection, COVID 19 and Advocacy on CRPD inline SDGs. The workshop was attended by Disabled People Organizations, UN representatives and Civil Society organizations from the region.

→ PDRN participated and submitted a statement to UN CRPD Working committee on De-institutionalization during the Asia Pacific consultation. The statement was shared with TCI separately.

→ PDRN as member of TCI participated in the focus group discussion and story sharing organized by IDA on Disaster Risk Management and COVID19.

A Group Photo after the Sub-Regional Meeting
SUSTAINABILITY AND KEY UPCOMING ACTIONS OF PDRN IN 2021 & 2022

→ As the world hits with COVID 19, there is a drastic change in the working environments of the organizations including civil society organizations and government institutions. It has been quite challenging to engage/interact with organizations and individuals during the pandemic. Most of the activities are now being conducted online and organizations are transforming from in-person to online. PDRN has been quite active during the pandemic and is contributing online towards inclusion of people with psychosocial disabilities.

→ PDRN requires a continuous support of a coordinator/support person to support in the coordination, planning and implementation of all PDRN activities. (Subject to availability of resources)

→ In Pakistan it is quite challenging to get registered as an independent body, PDRN has been super active in this processes and has completed the compilation of registration documents. The process of registration will be completed by August 2021.

→ PDRN has acquired a separate office space from the Center for Research on Inclusive Development and plans to establish its independent office by September 2021. (Subject to availability of resources)

→ PDRN is part of leading organizational networks in the capital and is playing an active role in contributing towards disability inclusive development. PDRN aims to influence maximum into the cross disability and be part of the disability movement in Pakistan.

→ PDRN aims to establish a peer support system for people with psychosocial disabilities and an online hotline for seeking information related mental health and psychosocial disabilities in Pakistan. Through this hotline people with psychosocial disabilities will also be able to register complaints and the caller will be facilitated by the PDRN coordinator to register complaints with Human Rights Protection Center.

→ PDRN aims to lead the process of a SITAN study in Pakistan on the situation of people with psychosocial disabilities in social care institutions and Article 19 of the CRPD. The study will be shared with government stakeholders, parliamentarians, civil society organizations and cross disability organizations.

→ PDRN aim to do interactive in person trainings of people with psychosocial disabilities from ICT and other provinces to be aware of disability inclusive development and social model of disability. The objective of the training will be to build the capacities of people living with mental health problems on advocacy skills and CRPD perspective towards mental health.
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