

**THE STUDY ON PROMOTING
THE LIVING STANDARDS OF
DIFFERENTLY ABLE PERSONS
IN ADDALAICHENAI DIVISIONAL
SECRETARIAT DIVISION –
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
OLUVIL AND PALAMUNAI AREA.**

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Abstract

Many activities have been taking place in promoting the living standard of differently able persons all over the world. It has been widely accepted that the differently able persons should be treated with fair and dignity as with others in the society. When describing the activities related to persons with disabilities, the WHO in 1980, has adopted an international classification of the terms "Impairment", "Disability", and "Handicap". Impairment is any loss or abnormality physiological or anatomical structure or function. It can be temporary or permanent. A disability is any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity within the range considered normal for a human being. This may also be temporary or permanent. Further, handicap results from impairment or a disability and limits or prevents the fulfillment of a function that is considered normal for human beings. The standard of living in different countries is frequently compared based on annual per capita income and on an individual level; the standard of living is a measure of the quality of life in such areas as housing, food, education, clothing, transportation and employment opportunities. It is the easy by which people living in a time or place are able to satisfy their wants. Palamunai and Oluvil in the Addalaichenai Divisional Secretariat division were selected as the sample location for this research. The area is mostly populated with Tamil speaking Muslims. The survey and interview were used as the technique to collect the data. The total population in the above division is 43,499 and 9,236 in Palamunai and 8,590 in Oluvil respectively. The total differently able persons are 1.1% of total population in Palamunai and 1.6% of total population in Oluvil as in 2008. Out of these differently able persons, 24% of legs impairment, 20% of hands impairment, 13% of vision impairment, and other 43% of other impairments in Oluvil and 27% of legs impairment, 9% of

hands impairment, 8% of vision impairment, and other 56% of other impairment in Palamunai. These people undergo severe hardships in meeting their living means and their main livelihood are sewing (4%), poultry farming (8%), fishing (5%), weaving mats (5%) small business (20%) and begging (5%). Moreover, most of them depend on others (53%). Further, this research identified various problems faced by the differently able persons in the above division and appropriate recommendations for promoting the living standard of the same have been proposed. This would in turn help the Government, INGOs, Politicians, and well wishers to find appropriated strategies to promote their living standards.

Introduction

Many researches have been done on the issues of differently able persons to address their issues in different perspectives. Many organizations and people have realized that the differently able persons are part and partial of the society where they live and they should be cared and treated as others. Promoting the living standards of these people has become the important task that everyone should focus on and it has become more burdens during this period of economic crisis. In poor countries, the effect of disability on people's lives is likely to be worse than in rich countries: The World Bank has estimated that persons with disabilities account for up to one in five of the world's poorest people, that is, those who live on less than one dollar a day and who lack access to basic necessities such as food, clean water, clothing and shelter. Another figure shows around 10 per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with disabilities (Ashokhans and Shanta, 2006).

However, all over the world, persons with disabilities continue to face barriers to their participation in society and are often forced to live on the margins of society. They are routinely denied basic rights such as to equal recognition before the law and legal capacity, freedom of expression and opinion, and the right to participate in political and public life, such as voting.

Eighty per cent of persons with disabilities – more than 400 million people – live in poor countries and there is a strong link between disability and poverty. For example, the statistics on employment for persons with disabilities are staggering. In developing countries, 80 per cent to 90 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age unemployed and in industrialized countries it is estimated to be between 50 per cent and 70 per cent. The rights to education and health are also routinely denied. Ninety per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries do not attend school, says UNESCO.

In Sri Lanka, it is estimated about 7% to 10% of the total population is disabled. This means around 1.6 million Sri Lankans are living with disability. For many reasons, there is a wide range of people who too will fall under the category of disabled by their physical imbalances. This group includes elderly people, pregnant mothers, sick people and mothers with small children. Altogether about 25% of the population is in need of access facilities to public buildings, public places common services in this country.

Further, Minister of Social Services and Social Welfare presented an important progressive Regulation that was gazetted last October 2006 for the benefit of the increasing disabled population in this country and was passed by the Parliament. These regulations will pave the way for the disabled people to have access to all public buildings, public places and common services (The Island, P.03).

This research focuses on promoting the living standard of differently able persons in Addalaichenai Divisional Secretariat Division – Special Reference to Oluvil and Palamunai Area.

Research Objectives

The following objectives were set to carry out the above research.

1. To identify the problems faced by the differently able persons in Addalaichenai Divisional Secretariat Division – Special Reference to Oluvil and Palamunai Area.

2. To suggest some strategies to promote the living standard of these people.

Literature Review

Many previous researches have been done on the issues faced by the differently able persons and contributed to the knowledge paradigm of differently able persons. Researches focused on the human rights of the disabled people in terms of adults, women, and children, disability and poverty, disability and disaster etc. (Nora Ellen Groce, 1999; Noel Smith et al, 2004; Unicef, 2007; Hon Hazel Blears, 2008; Ashok Hans, 2005).

Disability defined

The Disability Discrimination Act – 1995 (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities (Disability Discrimination Act 1995)

Many interpretations have been given to this term from different point of view. During the 1970s there was a strong reaction among

representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities and professionals in the field of disability against the then current terminology. The new concept of disability was more focused on the close connection between the limitations experienced by individuals with disabilities, the design and structure of their environments and the attitude of the general population. Recent development has seen a shift in terminology and an increasing tendency towards viewing the disability complex as a process (the disablement process), involving a number of different elements on individual and societal levels.

Further, disability means 1) a condition which prevents one from performing all usual physical or mental functions. This usually means a permanent state, like blindness, but in some cases is temporary. 2) a legal impediment, including being a minor who cannot make a contract, or being insane or incompetent, as determined by others.

Impairment, disability and handicap

The term 'Impairment' is used to refer to the loss or limitation of physical, mental, or sensory function on a long-term or permanent basis. Disability on the other hand, is used to describe the

condition, whereby the physical and /or social barriers prevent a person with impairment from taking part in the normal life of the community on an equal footing with others.

The following distinction is made by the World Health Organization, in the context of health experience, between impairment, disability and handicap: "*Impairment*" Any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function. Disability: Any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. Handicap: A disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfillment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual.

"A handicap is therefore a function of the relationship between disabled persons and their environment. It occurs when they encounter cultural, physical or social barriers which prevent their access to the various systems of society that are available to other citizens. Thus, handicap is the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others. Disabled people do not form a homogeneous group. For example, the mentally ill and the mentally retarded, the visually,

hearing and speech impaired, those with restricted mobility or with so-called "medical disabilities" all encounter different barriers, of different kinds, which have to be overcome in different ways (International Classifications of Impairment, Disabilities and Handicaps, 1980)

For this research, the term differently able person is used to refer to a condition which prevents one from performing all usual physical or mental functions. This usually means a permanent state, like blindness, but in some cases is temporary.

Disaster Management and Disability

Disabled persons suffer disproportionately during disasters. Disasters not only create impairment, they also further discrimination against already disabled people, compromising the determinants of their health and creating conditions for the worsening of their overall health and well-being. Understanding these issues is problematic as there is inadequate documentation of the structural, social, financial and cultural barriers to improving the health and well-being of people with disabilities, in general, and during disasters in particular. The disabled do have specific issues that make them more vulnerable, and this fact

is not clearly understood or accepted. Until recently, researchers felt that natural disasters did not discriminate among their victims but study of post disaster stress shows that disabled are usually marginalized, abused and invariably abandoned (Ashok Hans,2006).

Disability and Poverty

While real progress has been made in recent years, there is still much to do. Disabled people are more likely to live in poverty, have fewer educational qualifications, be out of work and experience prejudice and abuse. They still routinely find themselves experiencing poorer services. Disabled people can feel that they are fighting a system which is fragmented, complex and bureaucratic, and which does not put their needs at the centre of service provision.

Disability and Living Cost

It is well known that disabled people face additional costs to enable them to meet their needs.

Disabled people experience additional costs in most areas of everyday life, from major expenditure on equipment essential for independence, to ongoing higher expenses for, for example, food, clothing, utilities and recreation. According to a recent research finding, the weekly budget standards required for disabled people are for example £1,513 for a

person with high–medium mobility and personal support needs; £448 for a person with intermittent or fluctuating needs (i.e. from relatively negligible needs to higher needs); £389 for a person with low–medium needs; £1,336 for a person with needs arising from hearing impairment; £632 for a person with needs arising from visual impairment. Deaf people face particularly high costs due to their need for interpreter/communicator services (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2004).

Living Standards

The term Standard of Living is interpreted in many ways and has been given different definitions from different discipline. Living standard refers to a level of material comfort as measured by the goods, services, and luxuries available to an individual, group, or nation.

According to Guillermo Cantor (2004), “as many other categories in social sciences, this one can have so many interpretations and definitions. Several questions arise around this concept and the meanings that can be assigned to it. Is a household’s standard of living determined by how much monetary income its members earn? Is it a product of the needs that it can satisfy? By what criterion do we consider a household as poor? Is that poverty status only the consequence of the lack of resources or is it related to the capacity that a household has?”.

Another, interpretation says that the degree of prosperity in a nation, as measured by income levels, quality of housing and food, medical care, educational opportunities, transportation, communications, and other measures. The standard of

living in different countries is frequently compared based on annual per capita income. On an individual level, the standard of living is a measure of the quality of life in such areas as housing, food, education, clothing, transportation, and employment opportunities. (Financial and Investment Dictionary, 2006).

Methodology

The differently able persons in Addalaichenai Divisional Secretariat Division – Special Reference to Oluvil and Palamunai Area were selected as the sample population for this research. There are 240 differently able people in these areas with different impairments. Of these 50% of differently able people were selected from each area (Palamunai - 51 and Oluvil – 69). The survey method was used to collect the secondary data and the interview was used to collect first hand data from the differently able people in the areas. The data were analysed to get the findings.

Findings and Conclusions

The area is mostly populated with Tamil speaking Muslims. The survey and interview were used as the technique to collect the data. The total population in the above division is 43,499 and 9,236 in Palamunai and 8,590 in Oluvil respectively. The total differently

able people are 1.1% of total population in Palamunai and 1.6%

of total population in Oluvil as in 2008.

Table 1: Total Populations in Addalaichenai Divisional Secretariat

S.NO	Areas	2005	2006
1	Addalaichenai	23077	23428
2	Palamunai	9171	9236
3	Oluvil	8547	8590
4	Deegaapiya	953	2245
	Total	41856	43391

(Source: Resource Profile, Divisional Secretariat, Addalaichenai, 2008)

Out of these differently able people, 24% of legs impairment, 20% of hands impairment, 13% of vision impairment, and other 43% of other impairments in Oluvil and 27% of legs impairment, 9% of hands impairment, 8% of vision impairment, and other 56% of other impairment in Palamunai. These people undergo severe hardships in

meeting their living means and their main livelihood are sewing (4%), poultry farming (8%), fishing (5%), weaving mats (5%) small business (20%) and begging (5%). Moreover, most of them depend on others (53%). The following table shows this in detail.

Table 2: Differently able people in Ouluvil and Palamunai

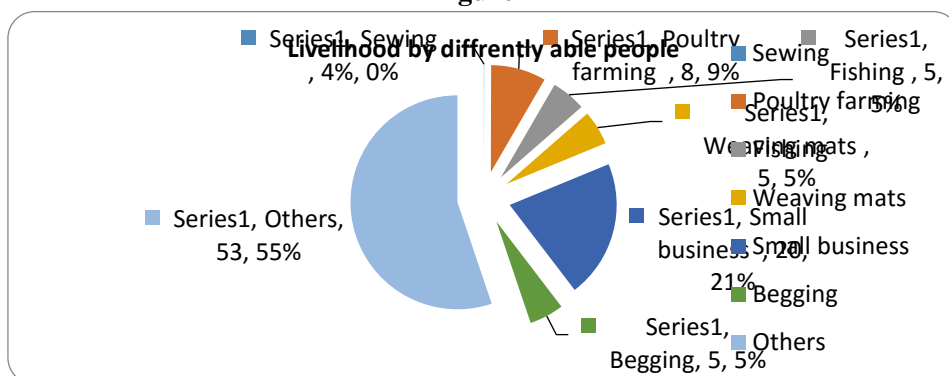
Area	Legs	Hands	Eye	Other Injuries	Total
Oluvil	33 (24%)	28 (20%)	18 (13%)	59 (43%)	138
Plamunai	28 (27%)	09 (9%)	08 (8%)	57 (56%)	102

Source: (Social Residence Council, Palamunai, 2007)

When analyzing differently able person's livelihood in this areas, it shows that they are involved in different occupations such as sewing, poultry farming, and fishing, weaving

mats small business and begging (5%). Moreover, most of them depend on others. The following Figure 1 shows this.

Figure 1



Further, this researchers were able to identify identified various problems faced by the differently able people during the interview in the above division. They are faced with many social and economic problems due to the impairment of different nature.

Economic issues

1. Poverty: Poverty affects the differently able people in many ways

in these areas. The first reason is that those differently able persons' family consist many children; thus they are unable to meet the expenses for medical and others with the income that they earn.

2. Getting equipments: Many differently able people depend on some special equipment so as to facilitate their day to day life. They

cost more than what they can afford. Hence, they are unable to go without their supportive equipments. This in turn affects the ability to earn money by engaging in any venture.

3. Poor availability of capital: These people face many difficulties in finding the initial investment as capital to start a venture with the help of some skills that they acquired and they feel that they would be able to do some ventures if they are provided with capital.

4. Poor employment opportunities: Differently able persons have less opportunity to get employment in the open labor market due to their impairment though they are capable of doing expected tasks. This also affects them in finding means to manage their day to day life.

Social issues

Differently able persons are not treated as equal as with others in the society. They are treated in isolation and the society looks them as incapable people and they are not even invited to any events in the family and society.

1. Looking sympathetically: People look at these differently able people with pity and they give money to them. This affects them psychologically.

2. Maintenance: Differently able person's need others help to do their

day to day activities. Some people look after them for sometimes. Later, they also feel tired and their mental set up also change as with earlier stage towards the differently able persons. Thus, differently able persons are subject to many tortures and violence.

3. Marriage: Marriage has become another major issue among differently able persons in the society. It is difficult to find partners to either side of the mankind with impairment. A differently able person has to look for another person equal to his or her level and also they continue to face problems even after the marriage such as health related problems.

4. Poor education: Differently able persons get less chance for education especially children with disability. They are reluctant to sit and study with other children due to their disability and it is observed that they are dropped the education and remain at home in the middle. Though there are many schools for special needs students, differently able persons rarely go there due to poor knowledge about the existence of them and poor income to afford to get education from these places.

5. Poor chance to display their abilities: Differently able persons have rare chance to bring out their talents though many of them have different unique skills. Their skills are not staged and brought to the light.

6. Different treatment under law:

Though there are some special acts in terms of differently able persons, some common law do not provide the benefit to differently able persons such as rules with driving license etc.

Conclusion

Promoting their living standards of the differently able persons has become the major work of the members in society. Thus, the issues that they are faced with should be resolved to promote their living standard as with others. Many interested people have started working on it including the government and nongovernmental organizations in many ways. The following strategies can also be adopted to promote the living standards of the differently able persons in these areas.

1. Grants or loans can be given to these people to encourage the differently able persons to enter into any profitable venture.
2. Actions should be taken to provide special equipments that the differently able people need since they cost more and without those equipments they are unable to get some services like medical care, education etc. Hence, equipments like wheel chair, Walking stick, Interpreter for deaf impairment, artificial legs, eye glasses etc.
3. Make special arrangements to get medical facilities from relevant authorities such as mobile health

service, special permit with the hospitals.

4. Establish educational institutes especially designed for special needs in these areas for these people so as to give them opportunities to have access to these facilities.
5. Conducting awareness programs for people in the society so as to promote the inclusive policy that enables the differently able persons to be part and partial of other people in the society.
6. Measures should be taken to identify the special skills that differently able persons have and actions should be taken to formalize the same. They can be trained in different areas of their capacity.
7. Develop special infrastructure facilities to enable differently able people to access the service facilities such as special crossings on the roads, roads itself. Hence, access by ramps, elevators, special parking places and other special arrangements have become required in many statutes.
8. Sports activities could be organized among differently able persons so as to bring out their abilities.
9. Actions could be taken to bring some changes in the present day's law to incorporate special provisions to differently able persons.
10. Job opportunities should be generated to these people and

organizations should give chance to capable persons from these group.

11. Non profitable organizations can be formed to look after the well being of these people in these areas and could be linked with other international organizations of this nature.

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