The 15th NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Awards
Celebrating the Crystal Year
I write this message with a mix of emotions. It is the 15th and the final edition of the NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Awards. It has been an amazing journey and I feel proud, privileged and humbled when I look back.

We started this Award in 1999, immediately after our survey of the top 100 companies of India. The survey showed that the percentage of employees with disabilities in the public sector was 0.54%; in the private sector it was 0.28%; and amongst the multinationals it was only 0.05%. The objective was begin a discourse on equal opportunities for people with disabilities in the area of employment at a time when no one else was talking or even thinking about it.

The first few years were difficult. There were no people or organisations to award! We had to put all our partners and allies to search for possible nominations. Today, 15 years down the line, there are so many individuals and organisations doing exemplary work across the country that it becomes a tough challenge for the Jury to decide on the Awardees.

These role models must now carry the torch forward. It is therefore, time for NCPEDP to make way.

NCPEDP is inherently an idea centre. We are still perhaps the only organisation in the country to really look at disability as a cross-disability and a cross-cutting issue. It doesn’t give us any happiness to say so. We would like more and more NCPEDPs to come up across the country. In the meantime though, we are now set to germinate another thought and create a new movement.

As Graham Greene said, “A story has no beginning or end: arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead.”
Since its inception in 1996, National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) has been the frontrunner in promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities. The NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Awards was one such effort started at a time when no one else was talking about this issue. Today, we are in the 15th year of this Award. And we feel truly humbled to see that our past Awardees are now leading this discourse.

This year, along with NCPEDP, two Helen Keller Awardees were chosen among the top Innovative Practices on employment for people with disabilities from across the world by the Zero Project. These were presented as case studies at the Zero Project Conference in Vienna in February. Our work and our Awardees are now being recognised not just as national role models but also as models that the entire world can emulate. A look at the work of this year’s Awardees will only reaffirm this trend.

For 15 years now, NCPEDP with the support of Shell, has strived to bring the stories of these role models to the world. This year too, we have some very inspirational stories. I wish all of them the very best.
The Fifteenth NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Awards

The story of the NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Awards dates back to 1999, making this the fifteenth year of the Awards. Over the many years, these Awards have come to be recognised as the most prestigious Indian benchmark for honouring people and organisations that have worked towards a barrier-free, non-discriminatory and inclusive India. Though over the years many individuals and organisations have been honoured, two factors have remained constant. One, the highly encouraging increase in the number of nominations that we receive each year; and two, the truly diverse nature of work being done by the Awardees (and indeed, all the nominees) in their respective fields. Both these facts amply suggest that India is well on her way of recognising disability as an issue that needs to be addressed. However, like always, we would sound a word of caution. The fight for equal rights, access and opportunity for people with disabilities is an ongoing one. There is still much that needs to be done.

Nevertheless, please join us in felicitating the 12 Awardees of 2013, as we share their inspiring and motivating journeys. Heartiest congratulations to them for overcoming myriad difficulties in making our country – its institutions and workplaces more accommodating and inclusive!

Selection Committee

P M Sinha
Past President of Pepsi Foods Ltd., Chairman of PepsiCola International for South Asia, P M Sinha was also on the Executive Board of Hindustan Lever Ltd, and was Chairman of Stephen Chemicals, Reckitt Colman India and Bata India Ltd. He was also Independent Director of Bharti Airtel, Indian Oil, ICICI Bank, Lafarge India, and Wipro. He is now a Board member of Socio Economic Development Foundation (FICCI), Azim Premji Foundation, NCPEDP, and Society Urban Regeneration Gurgaon.

Dr Garimella Subramaniam
A journalist for nearly two decades, Dr. Garimella Subramaniam is Deputy Editor with The Hindu. He has been an active participant in the daily’s editorial conference since 2003. He is on the Board of Trustees of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind India and NCPEDP. Dr. Subramaniam holds a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is blind since birth.

Gurmeet Kaur
Manager, Corporate Communications with Shell Companies in India, Gurmeet Kaur is a double masters degree holder in Economics and Computer Applications. She has been with Shell for 15 years, and has worked in various roles such as IT, web design and analytics as well as undertaken global responsibilities. She has played an important role in implementation of Shell’s communication strategy in the country. She likes listening to old music, travelling and designing.

Pooja Parvati
A development practitioner for over eleven years, Pooja Parvati is leading the Wada Na Todo Abhiyan (WNTA) Campaign on Post-2015 Development Agenda since January 2013. Prior to that, she was heading the Research Wing at Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA). She has studied at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and Delhi School of Economics.
Role Model Persons with Disabilities

- Ankit Rajiv Jindal
- Ashish Jha
- Bhavanishankar R.
- Kajal Dhawan
- Mahantesh G. Kivadasannavar
- Nita Paragbhai Panchal

What I am looking for is not out there; it is in me.

Helen Keller
Ankit Rajiv Jindal leads the thought-leadership & marketing engagement for Wipro Infotech and Global Infrastructure Services – a unit contributing over 30% of Wipro’s revenue. He is Wipro’s first and perhaps, also India’s first marketing professional with visual impairment. Ankit has challenged the conservative practice of job identification as he strongly advocates meritocracy and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. A technology enthusiast, he believes in technology’s power of being a great enabler and equalizer.

Ankit has worked with Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC) and KickStart Cabs, two unique social enterprises that are creating an inclusive environment. KickStart Cabs is India’s first inclusive cab service for persons with disability. With DEOC, he is a co-author of the corporate manual – ‘A Value Route to Business Success: The why & how of hiring persons with disabilities’. This is India’s first ready reckoner for corporates, sharing best practices for increasing and sustaining employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Ankit has an MBA from Faculty of Management Studies – Delhi, India’s premier B-school. He counsels aspiring candidates with visual impairment for admissions to leading B-schools. Many of these candidates with visual impairment have secured admissions in IIMs and other A-list B-schools.

He has acted as an ambassador for persons with disabilities at various industry forums, encouraging senior corporate leaders to promote employment opportunities and a barrier-free work-environment. He has also actively worked to promote inclusivity at Wipro and Infosys with their respective equal opportunity teams.

Ashish Jha is a person with visual impairment and a computer engineering graduate. He completed his B.Tech. (CSE) from Kolkata and is also a Computer Hacking Forensic Investigator (CHFI), an ISO 27001 Lead Auditor and a Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH). He currently works for IBM as a Tower Lead in the IT security domain.

Outside of his work at IBM, he imparts computer and soft-skill trainings at disability organisations. Having worked as Joint Secretary at the National Association for the Blind (NAB), Kolkata and currently as an executive member for Blind Empowerment Foundation, Kolkata, he has conducted several training programmes for improving computer skills among adults with visual impairments.

Ashish has presented many papers and has been a guest speaker at seminars organised by Confederation of Indian Industry and Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry. These sessions have helped many aspirants secure challenging jobs in various corporate sectors. He advocates for the use of computers and technology as a socially viable resource that can revolutionise lives. When not at his work desk, he is busy spreading computer literacy and helping individuals using screen-reading software like JAWS. He also provides workplace and technical solutions for people with visual impairments exploring JAWS’ accessibility with various applications.

His efforts have won him laurels, including the Role Model Award from the Government of West Bengal in 2010.
Bhavanishankar R. is a person with cerebral palsy who overcame many challenges to earn his degree in Electrical Engineering.

Apart from his work at Mphasis, Bhavanishankar is a well-known active open-source contributor to the Ubuntu community. He has contributed to this process in various roles, from being a developer to being on the Council Boards of the Ubuntu community.

Bhavanishankar is an active researcher, an avid traveller who has visited various parts of the world, and he has attended and spoken at conferences on open source. His current research is on speech based query and result retrieval system targeted at implementing speech recognition for computers and phones in Indian languages. He is active in mentoring on this particular area of work at the 'Google Summer of Code'.

Bhavanishankar has been awarded a silver medal by UNESCAP for his outstanding participation in Global IT challenge for youth with disabilities this year in Bangkok.

A firm believer in following excellence at whatever he does, Bhavanishankar believes that dedication is the key to success and that disability is in the mind of a person. He is a true inspiration for others.

Kajal Dhawan is a young deaf woman and a graduate from the reputed University of Delhi. She is currently working in the International Division of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a job that requires her to interact with high ranking dignitaries from various Ministries, Diplomatic Missions and industries.

Kajal is an accomplished sportsperson and has represented India in badminton in competitions in Taiwan and Malaysia, winning numerous medals at national and international levels. She is an ace softball player and had captained the Delhi University Softball Team. She has won the Delhi University Best Sports Woman Award in 1999-2000 and 2000-01.

Kajal is proficient in Sign Language and has a keen interest in issues relating to deaf women. She combines her passion for sports with her interest in empowerment of people with hearing impairments in her role as Sports Secretary of Delhi Foundation of Deaf Women. She has conducted workshops, lectures and sports events for empowerment of deaf women and has travelled abroad and across India in this role.

Kajal is also a trained beautician and has a distinction in textile & fashion designing. She was part of the organising team of Deaf Expo 2010 and 2012 and the Chairperson for conducting Miss Deaf India 2012. She has won accolades for her work, including the National Award from the President of India as an Outstanding Employee with Disability and the Lalji Mehrotra Foundation Award for Outstanding All Round Contribution. She has also won the Best Actress Award at a Deaf Film Festival.
Mahantesh G. Kivadasannavar
Founder Managing Trustee | Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled | Bengaluru
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Mahantesh G. Kivadasannavar is a change agent and has been a leader and role model through his work over the last 20 years. He is a person with visual impairment and has a M.A. and M.Phil. in English Literature. He is the Founder Managing Trustee of Samarthanam, president of FORD (Federation of Organisations working for Rehabilitation of the Disabled) and Founder Director of B Care, an organisation working in AIDS prevention and rehabilitation. His efforts have led to the successful integration of thousands of young persons with disabilities into mainstream education and training. It has resulted in successful placements in corporates and organisations leading to true empowerment of persons with disabilities enabling them to lead a life of dignity and independence.

Mahantesh has travelled widely through his involvement in a variety of projects with organisations such as the World Blind Union, World Blind Cricket Council and DAISY. He is the Vice-President of the World Blind Cricket Council. He and his team have successfully hosted the first ever T20 World Cup Cricket for the blind in India that saw 9 international teams participating. He has been recognised with many awards for his efforts towards empowerment of people with disabilities. This includes the Aryabhatta International Award in 2009, the National Award from the President of India for Child Welfare in 2010, the NDTV Award for his services towards blind cricket, and the PMI Award for project management.

Nita Paragbhai Panchal
Secretary, Disability Advocacy Group (DAG) | Ahmedabad
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Nita Paragbhai Panchal is a leading voice in the disability rights movement in Gujarat. She is Secretary of the Disability Advocacy Group (DAG) and has been an integral part of DAG since 2005. DAG was formed by persons representing different disabilities and works on a wide range of cross disability issues. She is the editor of DAG’s newsletter ‘Avsar’. Nita is also MIW (Making it Work) Coordinator in a project implemented by Handicap International.

Nita brings her own lived experiences in her work towards equal opportunities for people with disabilities. She became a paraplegic and a wheelchair user after being trapped in the debris for 2 days following the earthquake in Bhuj in 2001. She was a young school girl at that time but her courage and determination helped her through the long and tough rehabilitation process that saw a yearlong surgical procedure.

Nita has been part of several advocacy campaigns including campaigns for food security and Census 2011. She actively uses Right to Information Act for improvement in various disability services. Nita has successfully advocated for placement of persons with disabilities in various agencies. She has directed her efforts in motivating and encouraging persons with disabilities in availing employment.

Nita has won a gold medal in wheelchair race in a Paralympics competition in Bangalore in 2007. She has authored two books in Gujarati ‘Garbh se kabra tak: Viklang mahila ni Samasya’ and ‘Niyati ne Padkarnara’.
Role Model Companies/NGOs/Institutions

- Café Coffee Day
- Capgemini India Pvt. Ltd.
- RR Donnelley
- Scope International Pvt. Ltd.
- v-shesh
- Wipro Ltd.

True **happiness** is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy **purpose**.

Helen Keller
Café Coffee Day

Café Coffee Day, a division of India’s largest coffee conglomerate, Amalgamated Bean Coffee Trading Company Ltd. (ABCTCL), is an ISO 9002 certified company. ABCTCL popularly known as the Coffee Day group grows coffee in its own estates of 13000 acres and another 7000 acres managed by it. They are one of India’s leading coffee exporters with clients across USA, Europe and Japan.

In 2005, they collaborated with Enable India to hire people with disabilities for their outlets. At Café Coffee Day, employees with hearing disabilities have been identified for specific F&B roles like a brew master and many of them are turning into very skilled coffee makers. Some ‘Silent Brewmasters’, as they are called at Café Coffee Day, have been promoted to leadership roles as managers of the café team. There are a few cafes that are completely managed by employees with hearing and speech disabilities. Many of them even have loyal visitors who frequent these cafes because of the inclusive nature of the outlets and the excellent service provided.

Café Coffee Day has always believed in equal opportunity and thus employees with disabilities enjoy the same growth curve as any other employee. They have dedicated trainers in every region who ensure that the ‘Silent Brewmasters’ receive regular training and certifications to enable them to get better opportunities. They even conduct in-house brew master contests where employees get to showcase their skills.

This initiative not only results in qualified people with hearing disabilities get jobs, but also ensures that Café Coffee Day gets trained and committed people. Café Coffee Day has also worked on Sign Language training for its managers and employees.

Ranked as the 2nd Most Trusted Brand, as per Economic Times survey, 2009-10, Café Coffee Day has a socially – inclusive, employee – first recruitment and employment policy. Their employees with disabilities have proved that impairments cannot come in the way of performing their duties, willingness to excel and achieving their dreams.
Capgemini has a deep-rooted belief in equal opportunity for all. The inclusion programme was designed and started in July 2012 in India to offer non-discriminatory working environment to persons with disabilities. This programme aims at providing a non-discriminatory environment through the employee life cycle (hire-to-retire), so that each employee feels engaged with the organisation.

The inclusion initiative has four pillars: (a) Accessibility, (b) Career, (c) Engagement and (d) Evangelism.

In association with Diversity and Equal Opportunity Centre (DEOC), Capgemini has conducted infrastructure accessibility audits for its Bangalore and Mumbai offices, and reviewed and modified policies and processes related to diversity, recruitment, on-boarding, travel and emergency evacuation to ensure non-discrimination. For safe evacuation of persons with disabilities during emergency situations, the company introduced a buddy system. It also conducted accessibility testing for internal IT applications to be compliant with WCAG 2.0 standards and modified its intranet portal ‘Talent’ accordingly.

Capgemini launched a ‘Disability Self Identification Form’ soliciting employees to voluntarily share their disability/medical condition and seek any adjustment/assistance that they may require. Currently, 96 employees have filled this form making the programme highly successful.

All new recruits undergo training on disability sensitisation and etiquette, and over 4,000 employees have been trained so far. Apart from this, sensitisation workshops and Sign Language trainings are conducted periodically for various teams. Capgemini introduced a dedicated ‘Inclusion’ page on Capgemini’s Intranet. The portal hosts information on disability rights, best practices, dos and don’ts on inclusion, and success stories.

Capgemini has also partnered with Enable India, v-shesh and XRCVC for inclusion of people with vision and hearing disabilities. Since January 2013, 32 new employees with disabilities have joined Capgemini, including ten people with hearing and two with vision disabilities. For team integration, Sign Language interpretation support, peer group sensitisation and Sign Language training is provided.

Capgemini was the runners-up in the Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion category at the SHRM Annual Conference Awards, 2013.
Established in 1864, RR Donnelley (Nasdaq: RRD) is a Fortune 250 global provider of integrated communications management services with more than 60,000 customers worldwide. Since its inception, RR Donnelly has had a history of supporting programmes that create a workplace in which behaviours, practices and policies promote and respect inclusion. One such RR Donnelly flagship initiative is Project Udaya.

Launched in 2010, Project Udaya is designed to provide equal employment opportunities to people with orthopaedic disabilities. As part of the programme, candidates are sourced through a consortium of NGOs, who partner with RR Donnelley in the screening and selection process. Participants typically undergo three months of rigorous training in skills relevant for today’s business environment, and performance is tracked through a systematic monitoring and feedback process. The programme also includes modules on experiential learning that require candidates to attend two weeks of internship in an operations environment. In addition, individual mentors from various operations teams are assigned to guide and encourage participants throughout the course.

Till date, the programme has seen nearly all participants graduate and qualify for placement at RR Donnelley. Among these, 27 participants have received permanent placements within RR Donnelley. Over the years, each participant group has crossed a new milestone. The most recent group saw external placements conducted for the first time, with 15 candidates getting placed in reputable companies.

Udaya’s current, and fifth, programme includes a ‘Train the Trainer’ module for representatives from various organisations/NGOs in collaboration with the NASSCOM Foundation. The module aims at helping volunteers learn the fundamentals of Project Udaya and implement it in their respective organisations.

At RR Donnelley, the programme has helped to heighten engagement levels especially among the mentor group. Participants from the programme continue to be role models not just for people with disabilities but for all their peers.
Scope International Pvt. Ltd.

Scope International, the captive outsourcing unit of Standard Chartered Bank, employs around 11% of the bank’s global workforce of over 85,000 employees. The spirit of Diversity & Inclusion helps the bank reach out, understand and appreciate the world better. Scope has undertaken several initiatives to strengthen the spirit of Diversity & Inclusion, and one such initiative is the recruitment and induction of people with disabilities.

In 2012, the Consumer Banking business took a pioneering step and recruited a group of employees with hearing disabilities. They were given focussed training and assigned to the shop floor. A dipstick study after 6 months revealed that their performance was better than employees without disabilities. The Consumer Banking success story was showcased to other business units to promote replication. As other businesses rose up to the challenge and volunteered to hire people with disabilities in their businesses, the organisation created certain enablers to facilitate this process, which included:

- A comprehensive policy covering all areas of employment
- A Sign Language interpreter available at the premise every week
- Manager sensitisation and peer sensitisation including Sign Language training
- Buddy allotment to enhance the joining experience for staff with disabilities
- An inclusive induction programme along with other new joinees and the interpreter
- Regular Sign Language training for staff
- All service conditions for people with disabilities are same as those applicable for others and include equal pay, leaves, holidays and health benefits

Scope currently has 106 employees with disabilities that include people with hearing and physical disabilities. This success is not just due to CSR, but a strong business component behind it, which lies in the value employees with disabilities bring to the organisation.

Scope now has an internal target to take the percentage of employees with disabilities to 3% by the end of 2014.
v-shesh
www.v-shesh.com

Founded by Shashaan Awasthi and P. Rajasekharan in 2009, v-shesh is an impact enterprise that prepares students and job seekers with disabilities for suitable opportunities. It has a strong focus on employability and on making the first job connection. v-shesh provides job posting, counselling and training services, equipping job-seekers to perform to their best potential in a corporate setting. It has made over 450 job connections for persons with disabilities in the last two years. Of this, deaf job seekers form largest group served, but since last year v-shesh has been working with other disabilities, including cerebral palsy, learning disability and vision impairments.

v-shesh facilitates disability inclusion at workplace in policy and action, through a range of pre and post-recruitment services. This includes disability awareness workshops, disability audits, inclusion solutions, job analysis sessions, etc. More than 50 awareness sessions have been organised with 50 plus organisations so far.

While majority of v-shesh’s trainees work in IT/ITES and banking, a good number are employed in hospitality, retail and financial services. They have been placed in some of the top organisations such as Wipro, Infosys, TCS, Cognizant, Accenture, Mphasis, Mercer, Northgate Arinso, HP, EMC2, Thompson Reuters, IBM Daksh, Scope International, ANZ, Barclays, BankAm, RBS, IndusInd and Axis Bank.

v-shesh has innovated with various recruitment models. Two models that have been successfully implemented are ‘Train-and-hire’, where trainees prepare for specific roles and get hired after assessment; and ‘Learn-and-earn’, where trainees work as interns.

v-shesh partners with respected educational institutions like NISH Thiruvananthapuram, Sanskardham Mumbai and NDFC Pattambi to offer regular employability training at partner’s locations. v-shesh works closely with Vocational Rehabilitation Centres to promote hiring drives at many locations. v-shesh is also partnering with NASSCOM Foundation and Wadhwani Foundation to mainstream disability hiring in workplace.

v-shesh is structured as a business in its efforts to build a self sustaining organisation. It is itself an example of diversity both in terms of gender and disability.
Wipro Ltd.
www.wipro.com

Wipro was incorporated in 1945, and was engaged at the time in consumer products business. It later diversified into areas including engineering, information technology, IT services and consulting, and is now a recognised leader in each of these fields. Wipro has evolved into a leading global organisation spread over 57 countries, and has pioneered many innovations.

Today the Wipro brand is synonymous with innovation, technology, integrity and inclusion.

Each year, Wipro has enhanced its efforts in creating an environment of inclusivity. Its inclusive framework has helped attract, retain and grow talented employees with disabilities. This framework contributes towards an inclusive supply chain and a more responsible society.

Wipro’s efforts have been focused on areas including:
- Accessible information systems
- Barrier free communication and employability of persons with disabilities

• Barrier free infrastructure
• Inclusive recruitment & selection
• Collaborating with its eco-system to promote inclusion

Wipro adopts an approach of meritocracy in hiring candidates with disability and has placed them in many mainstream roles. As an equal opportunity employer, it consciously leaves the choice of role to the applicant and does not limit the opportunities for persons with disabilities to only ‘identified’ roles. Processes like performance appraisal, promotions, compensation reviews and assignments are made available for all employees based on merit and requisite competence.

Wipro has involved its eco-system in creating awareness and sensitivity. Its programme in creating accessible infrastructure across rural schools was well appreciated. It is now working with mainstream schools to create an environment that would promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in these schools.

Wipro has evolved a training programme for its software developers that would enable them to create accessible software applications, and this may help its customer organisations to become more inclusive for persons with disabilities in an era where most organisations use IT as the business backbone.
The Disabled-Friendly Corporate Logo was designed in 1999, when the NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Awards were first instituted. The brief for the design was simple – it was to portray the partnership between the Indian corporate sector and the disabled citizens of India. What emerged was a simple, yet striking, graphic representation in blue and yellow – the international colours of disability. The logo symbolises an ideal relationship between companies and people with disabilities. Visually, it portrays two sides of the same coin, or in other words a yin and yang relationship. It seeks to reinforce the fact that people with disabilities bring to the table qualities such as commitment, productivity, talent and loyalty. It also tries to spread awareness amongst corporates that they should practice non-discrimination at the workplace, and ensure that it is barrier-free.

The fact that many companies and organisations have realised the economic benefits of employing people with disabilities, is evident from the increasing number of nominations that we receive each year. And while many of these corporates are implementing policies that are already in place globally, it is highly encouraging that others have developed and instituted their own disabled-friendly corporate policies.

As a supporter of the disability sector, we urge you to do your bit by influencing policy at your own workplace, opposing instances of discrimination, and persuading others to offer equal opportunity to people with disabilities.

Universally, we have the tradition of celebrating fortunate milestones in our lives by commemorating the number of completed years. These milestones are associated to certain valuable materials that impart a sense of worth, for instance completion of 25 years is Silver and 50 years is Golden Anniversary. These are age-old traditions that are still acknowledged in today’s time.

Commemorating 15 years is known as Crystal Anniversary.

This year NCPEDP-Shell Helen Keller Awards is celebrating 15 years of recognizing talent and perseverance of people working towards the betterment of people with disabilities. These Awardees are as rare and unique, as are the precious crystals. To distinguish their true brilliance, the brochure for this year makes use of the “Crystal” for its theme.

The pages reflect crystal textures from Light Sapphire, Emerald, Topaz and Amethyst signifying the clarity, precision and grace with which the Awardees have brought about groundbreaking innovation.