

Case Study

Interview unique number: 01
Interview date: 11/10/2019
District: Hazaribagh
State: Jharkhand

Name: **Lalita Kumari**

Age: **25**

Gender: **Female**

Education: **Graduation (BA-Sociology)**

Marital Status: **Unmarried**

Highest education: **Railway Board Competition**

Current self-employment/ employment status: **DPO Member and Self Employment**

Type of impairment: **Locomotor (Orthopaedic)**

Any other members with disabilities in family: **No**

Lalita Kumari, a 25-year-old woman with disability, lives in the rural setting of Jharkhand, India expressed her intense sadness about the struggles she had to encounter in pursuing education, vocational training, health services and dealing with gender discrimination with in the family and society.

She felt fortunate that her parents were supportive during her school education, but due to locomotor disability she faced difficulties in going to the school. Till she was 10 years of age, she used to be bodily lifted, however, after that with some guidance through an NGO in Ranchi, her father managed to get bilateral crutches for her. Lalita highlighted that commuting to the school and college was extremely difficult. While looking after Lalita, her mother had to compromise the household chores.

Lalita stated, “my family has supported me with my education but there was a lot of struggle. When I was very young, my mother carried me to school and later, I used crutches since the age of 10.”

Lalita said, “our government and private institutions as well as the policies designed for persons with disabilities, seldom ignore the adversities that the family members/caretaker undergo. Poor quality of life and limited life opportunities are harsh realities of not only persons with disabilities (especially of women with disabilities) but also of the family members/caretaker. We need social security systems as I have heard during the SDG-CRPD training in our country also, so that we and our care givers are not marginalised and face multiple discrimination on account of poverty, patriarchy, caste and disability.”

She indicated another significant aspect of her life and that is right to leisure, recreation and participation in cultural activities. As, when one participates in leisure, recreation and cultural activities, they tend to achieve a high level of physical, social, psychological, mental, spiritual and moral growth. Whereas, Lalita just like most other children with disabilities, was also deprived of participating in school extracurricular activities; for example, school activities and picnics.

Lalita states, “I was always eliminated or denied participation in school activities/picnics due to disability. We need to focus on happiness index of all, including children with disabilities.” Her eyes lit up with happiness when feelings such as sightseeing, shopping and picnic etc. are expressed in the group discussion.

Whenever her family thought of commuting with her, they had to consider the financial aspects, which usually left them with the option of leaving her home as for her public transport was not accessible and private auto/taxis were expensive. The issue of gender discrimination was very clear in her life. Being a woman, that too with a disability, she had to go through various family and societal restrictions and oppressing behaviours. For instance, if ever she got the chance to go on holiday outings, her family members did not allow her to go for the same. Her brother did not approve of her pursuing higher education and her sister-in-law disliked her because of her disability and stigmatised her because of her gait.

She stated, “brother discriminates against my higher education and sister-in-law wants to get rid of me because I am disabled. My parents want to give me share in the property but my brother and sister-in-law do not want to do that. Frequently I am facing verbal abuse and physical abuse by them as they push me and I fall. I thus lose self confidence and unable to fight back.”

Growing up, she somehow managed to receive training in nursing and dress stitching, which was conducted by the Panchayat. However, the venue of training centre was not accessible and equipments in vocational training centers were not available in equal numbers to all trainees. Women with disabilities (WwDs) were the last one to get access to stitching machine or nursing equipments for training use.

Inaccessible health facilities are also pointed out as a major concern by Lalita, as approaching the health institutions is difficult and once reached then long waiting in queues are tiring. Medicines prescribed are usually not available in the government hospitals and are required to purchase from the chemist. Even during emergencies, no priority is given to WwDs but other patients are attended first. She emphasized on spreading awareness on sexual reproductive health rights so that all WwDs shall stay healthy and safe.

Leela stated, "My sister is an ASHA worker. I am aware about the nutritious food provided at Anganwadi and I also know that pregnant women should get immunised and take supplements. Adolescent girls are given sanitary napkins by ASHA workers at subsidised rates."

She is highly motivated with her current work in DPO and wants to continue working as an active DPO leader. She states that, "as a DPO leader and being a woman with disability, persons with disabilities will be my priority. I want to have more decision making powers and I will be the first one to ensure that girls and women with disabilities in my area are empowered like me."

Lalita aspires to have an inclusive environment for WwDs and thus recommend the following:

- Accessible and affordable commuting and conveyance facilities for school, vocational centres and public places including tourism spots
- Availability of medicines and prioritise admission & health checkups in government hospitals
- Remove hatred
- Provision of assistive devices to WwDs with regular maintenance available at village level
- Accessible environment in all public and private infrastructure
- Skill development training to be given to WwDs for enhanced self employment and employment
- Job fairs for WwDs for direct connectivity with companies and service providers to recruit WwDs on merit
- Loan should be given to WwDs on concessional interest and relaxation in time so that they are economically empowered and are not dependent upon family members
- During elections, provision of inclusive and accessible voting facilities
- Explicit data collection of WwDs in the village which is lacking currently and it leads continued discrimination of WwDs in families and community
- Ensure safety and security of WwDs through funds received in Panchayat, schemes such as free volunteers availability for escorting WwDs to school, college, banking services, excursion, health centres, etc.
- Frequent social audits of WwDs to monitor their educational, medical, social, economical, political and cultural inclusion
- Rural / local government and Gram Panchayat policies that are available to other women should be made available to WwDs without discrimination