

Meeting of leaders of disability groups and professionals working for the disabled

**Public Administration Department, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar
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Report by Prof. Asha Hans and Prof. Narayan Pati

After the third internal workshop of the COS Project Prof. Asha Hans (Utkal University) and Kasturi Mohapatra (Open Learning Systems) organized a meeting of leaders of disability groups and professionals working in the field of disability in Bhubaneswar on February 21, 2005. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for interaction of the visiting partners of COS Project from Germany and UK with the leaders of disability groups and professionals working in the field of disability in Bhubaneswar. A list of the persons who attended the meeting is attached. Most of the people who attended were leaders of the disability movement having worked in the field of disability for more than 30 years. Most were disabled themselves.

The meeting started with a welcome address by Prof. Asha Hans. She gave a brief introduction on the COS Project and welcomed all the professionals and representatives of different organizations working for the disabled. She requested Prof. Narayan Pati (Utkal University) to chair the meeting and conduct the proceedings. Prof. Pati welcomed all the guests and requested all the participants to introduce themselves. Then all the participants introduced themselves and spoke about their organization and the work they are doing. This activity continued for about an hour.

It was designed as an informal meeting which would bring about direct interaction between the COS team and those invited. The meeting began with a participant wanting to know more about Autism and service program for autistic children. Prof. Evemarie Knust-Potter (Dortmund University of Applied Sciences) spoke on the issue showing how Autism could be recognized and what could be done. Later Kasturi Mohapatra gave local situation and what could be done. As it was an informal meeting the participant was later asked to get in touch with Dr. Pati for further suggestions. Mrs. Khurana (Ruchika) spoke about her work and the school initiatives in the field of disability.

Then Mr. Ashok Hans (Shanta Memorial Rehabilitation Centre) suggested that scope should be provided to the participants to interact at personal level. Accordingly, all the participants were allowed to interact at personal level. Lots of participants sought information from the COS Project Partners from Germany and UK. There were some discussions also among other participants regarding the programme they are conducting and how they will be able to help each other. Prof. Pati had a discussion with the Secretary of Parents Association for the Mentally Handicapped regarding a collaborative programme with the Chetana Institute for the Mentally Handicapped for the rehabilitation of Adults with Mental Handicap.

The meeting ended with thanks to Prof. Asha Hans for providing an opportunity to all these people to come together and share their experiences with the partners of the COS Project.