

# **PRESS NEWS 2015**



**Special Talent Exchange Program (STEP)**

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# PSDP ALLOCATIONS: NO MONEY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

03 JUNE 2015

TRIBUNE



ISLAMABAD: No allocation has been made this year in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the welfare of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This is no different from the previous year's allocation.

However in 2011 Pakistan ratified UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Pakistan is therefore obligated to submit its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In this report a body of independent expert monitors implementation of the Convention by the States Parties.

Pakistan it seems lacks a focal point at National level to fulfill its international commitments. The report had not been submitted since 2013 because of the devolution of Ministry of Social Welfare and Special Education under the 18th Amendment.

“Every year huge commitments are being made by the government officials for the empowerment of PWDs. However after the 18th Amendment year on year we find no allocation of budget for their welfare in PSDP.” said Atif Sheikh, President of STEP. Talking to The Express Tribune Atif demanded that the government exempt all assistive devices from taxes in the upcoming budget.

Published in The Express Tribune, June 3rd, 2015.

**Source:**

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/896647/disabled-commitments-no-money-for-persons-with-disabilities/>

# THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE

Disabled commitments

## No money for persons with disabilities

No government allocation made in the PSDP for welfare of persons with disabilities

A SEHRISH WASIF

ISLAMABAD

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## CAN GET INFO ABOUT FACILITIES THROUGH NEW ANDROID APPLICATION

04 DECEMBER 2015

TRIBUNE



INTERNATIONAL  
THE NEWS

ISLAMABAD: The persons with disability (PWD) and their families would be able to get complete information about the facilities available for PWDs through a new Android mobile application -- DIVE -- launched on Thursday to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disability.

Through this first-ever Android mobile application for PWDs, information regarding the facilities available in both public and private sector such as lists of education and rehabilitation centres, employment opportunities, laws, guidelines for CNIC registration, will become accessible for every disabled citizen of the country.

The application, launched by Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP) with the support of International Foundation of Electoral System (IFES), was unveiled in a policy dialogue on 'Towards a disability -- inclusive post 2015 development framework Pakistan perspective' organised by the Ministry of Human Rights, Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP), National Commission on the Status of Women, Sight Savers, United States Embassy, National Forum for Women with Disability and Aurat Foundation. Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights Ashtar Ausaf was the chief guest on the occasion.

The policy dialogue brought together leaders of PWDs, development experts and decision-makers to initiate a process of inclusion of PWDs who are still the uncounted and unheard citizens of the country. Through this dialogue, policy recommendations are formulated for effective and inclusive implementation of international commitments of Pakistan such as UNCRPD and the perspective of the country on inclusive Sustainable Development Goals were shared with wider network of stakeholders.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Ashtar Ausaf stressed on collaborative effort to empower PWDs. "If a person is disabled. It is actually the disability of

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society to understand and accommodate that person,” he said. He said the issue is not only that of accessibility of infrastructure but also of the accessibility of our minds. He pointed out that the issue of PWDs should not be parked in the human rights ministry but it must be made part of all policy initiatives of the government.

Ministry of Human Rights Director General Muhammad Hassan Mangi said that the International Day for Persons with Disability reminds the government of their constitutional and international commitments. He said that inclusiveness of PWDs ensure in SDGs provide and extraordinary opportunity to implement the national and international commitments.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights Barrister Zafarullah Khan disagreed to the term disability. He encouraged PWDs to join mainstream and take inspiration from the persons with disability who made their name in the history despite their shortcomings.

International Foundation for Electoral System Country Director Ole Holtved said that STEP and ISEF are developing information resources for PWDs, opinion-makers and public at large such as through Android applications, material made available of the Pakvoter website and social media platforms and in direct interaction with decision makers and disabled persons and organizations. “We intend to continue these efforts and hope to continue them as we move forward to the next general elections in 2018 and beyond,” he said.

National Forum for Women with Disabilities Chief Executive Officer Abia Akram stressed for the need of making sustainable plans for the empowerment of persons with disability especially women.

Aurat Foundation Director Advocacy Rabeea Hadi talked about violence against women with disability. She said t that the worst they suffer is social isolation and discriminatory social mindset. “These girls are not taken out of the house and families try to hide them from society as it can create trouble in marrying off other siblings.”

She said that in most of the cases, the ovaries of girls with disabilities are removed by the family. “This leads to blindness and other complicated health issues,” she said. She said that during census and surveys, people tend to hide their disabled children. They are called with names like ‘langri’, ‘jhali’, ‘Allah log’, ‘pagli’, ‘anni’ etc. “And ‘baichari’ is the most popular word used in front of them.”

While talking about inclusive political participation, senior journalist Syed Sardar Peerzada said persons with disability remain unaware of the political situation mainly because Pakistani media is also not disability friendly. He talked about SDG goal 11, which stresses for accessible transportation and said that many disabled persons fail to get education due to lack of accessible transportation and infrastructure.

STEP Executive Director Muhammad Atif Sheikh said that around 10 per cent of Pakistan’s population suffers from one or the other form of disability and remain confined to their houses mainly because of the lack of information about the facilities available for them. “This application will contribute in removing this communication gap,” he said.

**Source:**

## BREAKING BARRIERS: SPEAKERS CALL FOR MAKING WEB ACCESSIBLE FOR SPECIAL PERSONS

18 DECEMBER 2015

TRIBUNE



Web experts call for the need to involve people with special needs in the process.

ISLAMABAD: To look for ways for making the web more accessible and useful for people with disabilities, a workshop was held on Thursday on web accessibility by the Internet Society.

While discussing a paper on web accessibility issues, Internet Society representative Shabbir Ahmed said that we often talk about minorities, marginalities, and racism, but we fail to talk about people with disabilities. “It is high time that we find a way to incorporate people with disabilities in our work and make use of their talent. The aim of gathering everyone here is not just to make web more accessible for people with special needs but also to find a way to involve them in the processes and operations,” he said.

Ahmed stressed that there was a need to implement standards, policies and laws to fulfil the legal requirement while also making websites accessible. “In terms of the accessibility of a website, its design and content both should be accessible.”

On a similar note, University of Engineering and Technology Professor Dr Sarmad Hussain discussed several applications and technologies that help people with special needs use the web. “Web access is important because the web is the main source of communication and a great tool for work in today’s age. Companies have a social responsibility,” he added.

Saima Yousaf, a freelance web expert and developer from Beyond Vision said that it is necessary for people with disabilities and impairment to use the web. “Before we find ways to make web

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accessible, we need to know the precise meaning of accessibility; it is to give equal access of information to everyone on a particular subject,” she said.

She further gave a presentation on her website and the different tools, techniques and features that can help make web accessible for people with special needs.

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) chairman Dr. Syed Ismail Shah said that the issue of accessibility requires parallel work. “A few years ago, PTA was supposed to keep a regulation and balance in the telecom sector. It played the role of a referee, however, that role is changing now and that is the reason why accessibility is PTA’s concern too now that it deals with voice and web and mobile applications”.

He said Pakistan has 20 to 30 million disabled persons that have the right to use the web. “I am honoured to be part of this because it taught me several things that will be worked on in the near future. I believe learning never stops and PTA is going to try its best to play a role in software development and work with telecoms to make web more accessible,” he added.

*Published in The Express Tribune, December 18, 2015.*

**Source:**

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1011950/breaking-barriers-speakers-call-for-making-web-accessible-for-special-persons/>