

“Inclusive Digital Libraries”

Capacity Building In Developing Countries Making Information Accessible To All Including Persons With Print Disabilities.

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DAISY Implementation in Nepal: Existing Challenges and solution

Presented by
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The chairperson of this session, respected chief guest, distinguished participants from National and International Digital arena, representatives of various governmental and non-governmental agencies, ladies and gentlemen

It is my privilege and honor to highlight the basis of promoting access of persons with Print and Visual disabilities in Information and Communication through digital library in Nepal.

Before I highlight the initiatives taken in Nepal for promoting DAISY implementation, I would like to emphasize here that at present, Persons With Disabilities are not the part of compassion or sympathy. They are also contributing in National and International level by their own innovation and competence. So, today is not the time to keep them away, but bring them forward to the mainstream of the development to ensure equity, justice and inclusion through the advancement of Digital accessibility.

1. BACKGROUND:

The expansions of the modern technologies that have promoted the inclusion of Persons With Disabilities in all spheres of lives minimize the barriers of prejudice, infrastructure and inaccessible design. However, these are welcome change in the new era of Information and communication technology, access to information is a fundamental human right. It is now realized that the access to appropriate technology creates adequate opportunity for the Persons With disabilities that promote their overall development and empowerment, opens door for the equality, non-discrimination and participation.

Any newly developed information technology must take into consideration the needs of the readers from the beginning of the development of these technology, otherwise that might be the violation of their human rights since latest technology are still outreached to more than two-third of the world's Disability community living in developing countries while the situation is more worsening in the under developed countries like Nepal.

2. LEGAL GROUND FOR PROMOTING ACCESSIBLE ICT IN NEPAL:

The "Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities" (CRPD) starts with preamble(v) "Recognizing the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, to health and education and to information and communication, in enabling persons with disabilities to fully enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms".

The Convention has also specified in article 2 the definition of communication particularly underlying for the accessible information and communication technology.

Since, Nepal has already ratified the CRPD and its Optional Protocol thus it has obligation for the fulfillment of the provisions mentioned in the article four under General obligations that emphasizes for state parties to ensure and promote the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability. To this end, the state parties should ensure "To undertake or promote research and development of, and to promote the availability and use of new technologies, including information and communications technologies, mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies, suitable for persons with disabilities, giving priority to technologies at an affordable cost"

It is more relevant to highlight the article 9 (2 f, g, h), that mentions about accessibility in Information and Communication Technology. To this end, States Parties shall also take appropriate measures to:

- (f) Promote other appropriate forms of assistance and support to persons with disabilities to ensure their access to information;
- (g) Promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet;
- (h) Promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.

With the best implementation of the provisions mentioned in the aforementioned articles, the governments in developing countries can be made more responsible towards promoting accessible Digital system in the existing libraries to benefit persons With print and visual disabilities.

3. INTRODUCING DAISY IN NEPAL:

The Persons with Visual disability have begun the use of computer with adaptive technology to surf the Web, either by using screen reader or Braille displays made available in institutional and individual levels in Nepal.

The DAISY specifications are transforming the reading and learning experiences of thousands of people who have print disability in some of the major cities in Nepal when the DAISY Nepal Foundation in collaboration with Nepal Association of the Blind and Kaski Association of the Blind are working to making DAISY books available countrywide.

DAISY has been benefiting the persons with blindness, low vision and learning disabilities. The groups of people like aged persons, persons with cerebral palsy, illiterates are also likely to be benefited by the DAISY books to be made available in various local languages in Nepal in the days to come.

The paper presenter started initiatives for adoption of DAISY in Nepal after joining International Training Program in New Delhi in October 2003. Mr. Hiroshi Kawamura, The chairperson of DAISY For All project visited Nepal in 2004 and cooperated for establishing National Focal Point in Nepal. Working as a coordinator of DAISY Nepal Foundation, the presenter convened focal point training in Nepal in August 2005 including 8 participants from Nepal and one participant from each of Pakistan and Bhutan where as Ms. Miki Ajuma from Japan, Mr. Dipendra Manocha, Mr. Prashant and Mr. Santosh from India were assigned as International Trainers.

4. THE PRESENT STATUS OF DAISY IMPLEMENTATION IN NEPAL:

The DAISY Nepal Foundation (DNF) has been working as a consortium of the organizations working for the cause of Visual and Print disabilities in Nepal. The DFN has been facilitating for promoting DAISY through the Government program, introducing DAISY in various colleges and Universities, orientating the end users and facilitating the organizations working for the production and playback unit of DAISY books in Nepal.

Presently, the DAISY books are being produced in Nepal Association of the Blind and Nepal Association for the Welfare of the Blind. The Special Technical Aid and Research Foundation is facilitating for the quality control. National DAISY library has been established in PN Campus, pokhara in collaboration of the campus and Kaski Association of the Blind. Until the date, 300 DAISY title books of different subjects of secondary schools, college and University level have been produced. The Nepal Association of the Blind has developed the Braille Transcription Software and Nepali TTS. Beside that, the initiatives from the Government levels have also been observed such as;

- ❖ The Government of Nepal has been supporting for the production of DAISY Books in KAB through the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Welfare.
- ❖ The Department of Education cooperated for producing "A handbook to facilitate for production and Playback of DAISY DTBs to the end users "
- ❖ The Tribhuwan University is supporting the Digital Library in Pokhara through PN Campus.

5. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF DAISY IN NEPAL:

Nepal has enacted the ICT policy but the perspectives of Persons With Disability and accessible ICT has not been introduced. The Government has allocated very tiny resource for the availability of DAISY DTBs.

The TTS and Braille Transcription software has been developed by the NGO sector but the Government has not paid due attention for the development of accessible ICT and DAISY expansion within the program of department of education.

6. SOLUTION/ CONCLUSION:

Since the convention on the rights of Persons With Disabilities has clearly defined the accessible formats to be developed usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible which enables them to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, the countries specially in the developing world should ensure to PWDs and access not only to the physical environment and to transportation but also to information and communications technologies usable both in urban and rural areas which help to promote their inherent dignity and ensuring Human Rights.

In this instant, the foremost responsibility of Nepal for promoting access to accessible technology is to enact the policy for the accessible ICT for Persons With print and visual Disabilities and make available, introduce the DAISY DTBs in the Libraries of Colleges and Schools in all part of the country. To domesticate the CRPD and with best implementation, the E-Education for students with Visual Disabilities should immediately be started from school level.

The Government should allocate regular resource for DAISY promotion, develop the Braille translation software, TS in Nepali and other local language.

Last but not the least, I may take an opportunity to extend appreciation to the organizers for providing me this opportunity to present this paper which is indeed a great privilege to the Nepalese persons With Visual and Print Disabilities.

Thank you.

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