

Ability in Disability

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Youth with disability, especially in the villages, are an underserved population. Youth4Jobs has created a template for skilling youth with disability and linking them to organised sector jobs. The initiative mainstreams recruiting disabled youth by highlighting the business case of hiring these youth with special abilities. In the process, the organisation has demonstrated a scalable and replicable model for the policy makers. The work is important as the “Skill for India” mission cannot be achieved unless the unreached are made employable.



1. Background

1 out of every 7 persons in the world are disabled. 80% or about 550 million of the world's disabled are concentrated in the developing countries making the correlation between poverty and disability very direct. As a result, **Poor people are disproportionately disabled...and people with disabilities are disproportionately poor.** The disabilities of disabled people are accentuated by lack of social support and amenities and makes them highly vulnerable pushing them into marginalization. The disabled, especially children are deprived of basic health and educational facilities and as a consequence are not adequately prepared for employment opportunities in their adulthood. The disabled people's limited access to basic services pushes them further into the spiral poverty. It's a double bind as disabilities increase poverty and poverty accentuates disabilities, as it hampers access to services.



The gender disparity too is entrenched in Indian society resulting in high adversity for disabled among girls and women. In some parts of the country, they are even seen as bad omen. Women with disabilities suffer from double discrimination of gender and impairment. Disabled people are not seen as a productive force in the society, not even as contributors to production processes in the country's economy. They are seen as a burden and dependents in the social economy. Additionally social discrimination and stigma against the disabled people is widely prevalent, including social ostracism in extreme cases. All this compounds the burden on the disabled people accentuating self-stigma and lowering of self-esteem

In India, the major causes of disability are 'social ill-health' factors which have long since been identified. The rural poor are particularly vulnerable to endemic causes like acute malnutrition, poor sanitation (open defecation), large scale communicable diseases and extreme environmental degradation including high levels of water contamination.

Accidents arising out of negligence and lack of adequate protection & safety measures in residential areas and occupational hazards increase risk of physical disabilities. Though it is well known that early detection of impairment can treat majority of disabilities, there has been no significant improvement in public health measures of the Indian govt.

The latest 2011 population census reports that 2.21 % of Indian people are disabled. However unofficial estimates of various agencies, including World Bank estimate that the disabled population would be about 8% of total population.

Table 1

Proportion of Disabled Population 2011			
Type of Disability	Persons	Males	Females
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
In Seeing	18.8	17.6	20.2
In Hearing	18.9	17.9	20.2
In Speech	7.5	7.5	7.4
In Movement	20.3	22.5	17.5
Mental Retardation	5.6	5.8	5.4
Mental Illness	2.7	2.8	2.6
Any Other	18.4	18.2	18.6
Multiple Disability	7.9	7.8	8.1

2011 census clearly shows that more number of disabled live in rural areas than urban. As far as legislation goes, Person with disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act 1995 has been enacted to ensure equal participation and opportunities to Persons with Disabilities (PwD). This provides for education, rehabilitation, employment, non-discrimination and social security for persons with disabilities. It ensures 3% reservation for PwDs in poverty alleviation programs as well as in certain job categories. It casts obligations on central government, state governments and local authorities to ensure full citizenship benefits to PwDs. However lack of effective implementation hampers progress

1.1 Employment and Work Participation by Persons with Disabilities

PwDs talent, skills and potential mostly remain untapped and under-utilized. The education and employment rates for persons with disabilities are far lower than the non-disabled persons. The opportunities for PwDs, to earn is less and their expenses more resulting in them being one of the more impoverished communities in India. Even though the country is clocking an average annual GDP Growth rate of an average 7 percent, the employment percentage of persons with disabilities actually fell from 43 percent in 1991 to 38 percent in 2002 despite the galloping economic growth. From 2001 census, it is evident the percentage of general population (males) participating in the work force stands at 51.7% and for females stands at 25.6% whereas the comparative work participation rates for the disabled population stands at a dismal 25.8 % for males (almost half that of general population) and at 8.7

% for females. **ILO and World Bank studies show that this low labor market participation results in a 5-7% GDP loss.**

2. About Youth4jobs : The Beginning

Youth4Jobs was set up in 2012 as a not-for-profit organisation with a vision of “**A better Future for Young India**”. The Mission was “**Partnering with Stakeholders and vulnerable unreached communities to co-create pioneering solutions for an inclusive workplace**”. In corporate terminology, inclusion means integrating Scheduled caste and tribes, vulnerable persons like persons with disability (PwD), and transgenders into the workforce.

Youth4Jobs decided to focus initially on skilling this most vulnerable category, youth with disability, and placing them in jobs. Disability was chosen for several reasons:

- The core team of Y4J had worked for six years in skilling rural and tribal youth to the needs of the market when the Founder set up EGMM (Employment Generation & Marketing Mission) for the government of Andhra Pradesh. EGMM was the first state skilling mission of the country. To achieve scale, EGMM had introduced several organisations to the model of short term market linked skilling of rural youth. It made no sense for Y4J to work in an area where several organisations, nurtured by them in a government setup, already existed. Other factors further strengthened this decision to focus on skilling PwDs.
- These were, for example, the sheer scale of the problem. Statistics showed there were 60 million persons with disability of which at least 50% were youth. A study done by NCEPD revealed barely 0.1% were linked to jobs.
- Further, there were no organisations who worked in scale to train and link PwDs to jobs. There were several NGOs who had empathy for the PwDs and understood disability but they were bewildered by markets. As one NGO representative said, “The guards and the walls of the IT company look so forbidding. We do not know how to make a contact”. Lack of placements, even after one year of training in some cases, resulted in youth feeling frustrated even further.
- Moreover, there was a market opportunity. Some multinationals were keen to recruit PwDs, quite often, dictated by their global inclusive HR policy. But they did not find necessary supporting or facilitating organisation.

2.1 Challenges

Youth4Jobs team was confronted with several challenges. **The youth** were widely dispersed in the rural areas and hard to access. Their self-esteem was incredibly low as the entire family and society regarded them as useless.

Their education levels were also poor. **Companies** too had deep mindsets. Since even urban areas are not accessible, companies were ignorant about disability. Some felt it was expensive to hire; others thought it may have a negative impact on their existing non-disabled staff. Many companies did not have accessible offices or were not willing to invest in infrastructure to make the disabled productive. **The government**, on the other hand, believed in giving subsidies and doles. These were so high in some states that it acted as a deterrent to the youth to work and be independent. Also most livelihood funding went for projects which employed disabled youth to make phenyl, soap powder etc since they believed this was what they could do best!

3. Impact in 3 Years

The team had 3 core beliefs which helped them convert the “I Can’t” to “I Can” and become the largest organisation in this space, in a short period of three years:

- The poor have abilities. Y4J was only a facilitator to make these latent talents manifest
- A job to one young member in a poor family takes the entire family out of poverty in a sustained manner
- Transparency will dictate all partnerships.

Reached 0.15 million rural households

1 training centre to 18 centres

1 state to 9 states

Trained 7000 youth with disability

65-70% are placed

40% are girls

200 company network

Youth with disability opportunities widened from housekeeping to the organised growing service & manufacturing sector

Impact on Youth with disability: Kameshwari works in Google in facility management.



Kameswari, with a speech and hearing disability, is from Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh. Their family income was erratic as her father earned money painting walls; fell from a height and died when she was a child. Her mother could not raise Kameswari on her own. So gave her away to her sister and remarried. After her 12th

grade, she tried several times to get a job .But was always rejected on account of her disability.

She married a partially hearing and speech impaired boy recently. Even he was unemployed because of his disability. “No one looks at our ability. They only look at our disability and reject our job application,” she says. Youth4Jobs trained and placed Kameswari in **Google**, Hyderabad. She works in Compass, in the Kitchen Section. Her annual salary is **Rs.1,25,000**. Her husband, Suresh, had enrolled with Kameswari in the Y4J trainings. He was placed, after trainings in **Max retail**, where he works as a folding Assistant. His annual salary is **Rs.1,08,000**. Both of them were formerly poor without any livelihood options. Today, with their combined annual income of **Rs.2,00,000** they can live a decent life. Their self-esteem has increased and they walk confidently, with pride in their new uniforms.

Kameswari says, “From my village, I never dreamt this was possible. I thank God for sending me to Youth4Jobs. The people at my work are really nice. Both my husband and I are disabled and yet earning. Now, we can give our children good education and health,” she adds.

The work spread over three years has three phases: Building the model; Validating the work across three disabilities, and Scaling-up

4. Stage I: Building The Model

Youth4Jobs began their work in this area by partnering with SERP (Society for elimination of rural poverty), government of Andhra Pradesh, to set up the country’s first Centre for PwD Livelihoods (CPDL). As CEO, SERP, Rajsekhar commented, “What can be more beautiful for a youth with disability than linking him to jobs”. The MOU was a non-financial partnership, leveraging the government networks in the villages for mobilising youth into the training centre set up by Youth4Jobs in Hyderabad.

4.1 Leveraging the Government Network for Mobilisation

Mobilisation of youth is an important part of the skilling process. Since youth with disabilities are widely spread in different locations, locating them was the first challenge. SERP, one of the largest World Bank funded government project, had an extensive network of persons with disability organised into self-help groups. These women obviously understood the important of livelihoods in their lives. Thus the work became uniquely “of the disabled, by the disabled”. The Centre also got information about disabled youth in rural Andhra Pradesh through the Government of Andhra Pradesh’s disability data base called Software for Assessment of Disabled for Access, Rehabilitation

and Empowerment (SADAREM). This database provided information for all disabled peoples in the State giving their age, gender, type of disability, educational qualifications and social background.

Four young men and women called Job Resource Persons (JRPs), specially trained on disability issues by Youth4Jobs, went from village to village, identifying youth with locomotor disability who have completed their education upto the 10th standard. They had to address all opinion makers in the village like parents, school teacher, post master, etc to give the message that youth with disability can get jobs. As Rajamma, a JRP, said, “Parents of these youth find it hard to believe that their children could do productive work. They have no expectations from their children who are seen as a burden. So job to a disabled youth most often was faced by laughter and disbelief.”

4.2 Setting up a Training Centre

Youth4Jobs developed a 60 day training course which includes improving spoken English language skills, soft skills and life skills. The entire training pedagogy is interactive and fun filled with games, inspirational songs and uses mixed mode learning. Trainees were provided computer skills in the computer lab and encouraged to reach a typing speed of 30 words per minute required by the industry. Since youth with disability had incredibly low self-esteem, exercises were introduced to build their confidence. Sectoral modules in growing service sectors like retail, ITES, hospitality were developed with the help of industry. This helped the curriculum to be based on the changing needs of the market. This was followed by on-the-jobs training where rural youth were oriented to the needs of the various job roles in entry level jobs in growing sectors like retail, finance etc. All trainings were residential since 90% of the youth came from the villages. This also ensured good attendance in the training centre and the trainees maintain a certain uniform quality at the end of the training.



4.3 Inviting Companies to Hire because of the Business Case

Youth4Jobs was clear that if hiring youth with disability had to be mainstreamed, companies had to hire youth with disability because of the advantage it brought to their business. Several studies clearly indicated youth with disability do not drop out of their jobs and are productive. The mantra was **“Hire not because it is a nice thing to do but the right thing to do”**. This was not CSR or hiring from pity but hiring because these youth added value to the business.

There were several challenges however. Companies had deep mindsets. They asked questions like “Is it expensive to hire these youth?”, “Can I hire and fire them?”, “Will they go on leave because of bad health?” Youth4Jobs leveraged its existing large company network from its previous six years work with rural and tribal non-disabled youth to encourage CEOs and HR heads to visit these trainings. McDonald’s for example, took two trained youth and soon decided to have two in every outlet. Likewise several companies like Tata teleservices, Karvy, Cafe Coffee day took 1 or 2 youth and came back for more. Stories of their loyalty and productivity trickled in from the field. Like, in a mall, when a new retail outlet came up next door, many entry level staff left for a small salary increase except the youth placed by Youth4Jobs. Now the Manager became the best spokesmen for these youth in the retail chain. Such real life examples were matched by **industry studies** done with academic institutions like Indian School of Business. When companies hesitated to hire, these industry studies showed them hard data that they can.

In some cases, like **Gitanjali Jewellery**, began the hiring as a CSR initiative. But soon this became an integral part of their HR policy. The Rs.5000 crores Gitanjali jewellery group had set up a diamond polishing youth in the export processing zone in Hyderabad. The challenge they faced was, unlike Gujarat, diamond polishing was not a hereditary profession and there was no ready-made talent pool. Youth4Jobs realised that youth with severe locomotor disability could be trained as long as they had hand-eye coordination. Simple adjustable stools were designed for young boys and girls with lower limb defects. Working youth with severe disability with little or education won the productivity award every month. This led the company stepping up the hiring to 200 youth with disability. A special bus was arranged to transport them to their residential facility. The company won the President’s award for this work.

4.4 Lessons Learnt

- Disability trainings required some customised services to be introduced at the company end to ensure the youth are comfortable in their jobs and can be productive.

- It is not enough for the CEO to be sensitised. Supervisors and managers had to understand disability. This resulted in designing interactive company sensitisation workshops which all first time hirers had to go through.
- Simple work place adaptations had to be suggested by Youth4Jobs for different disability and different job roles.
- Third party study of the work showed that youth placed in jobs reduced attrition for companies when compared to non-disabled youth and worked harder
- Sectorial reports had to be brought out which highlighted best practises in companies which hired PwDs and showed job role matrix for hiring youth with different disabilities in different jobs.
- Word had spread that youth with locomotor disabilities were getting jobs with this new kind of training of Youth4Jobs. This resulted in youth with varying disability like speech and hearing impaired youth requesting for joining the training. Youth4Jobs had to develop tailor-made products to meet these growing requests to train youth with other disabilities.

4.5 Developing the Template of the Entire Value Chain

The lessons from the first year were incorporated into a template for the entire value chain of taking an unemployed youth to his first entry level job.

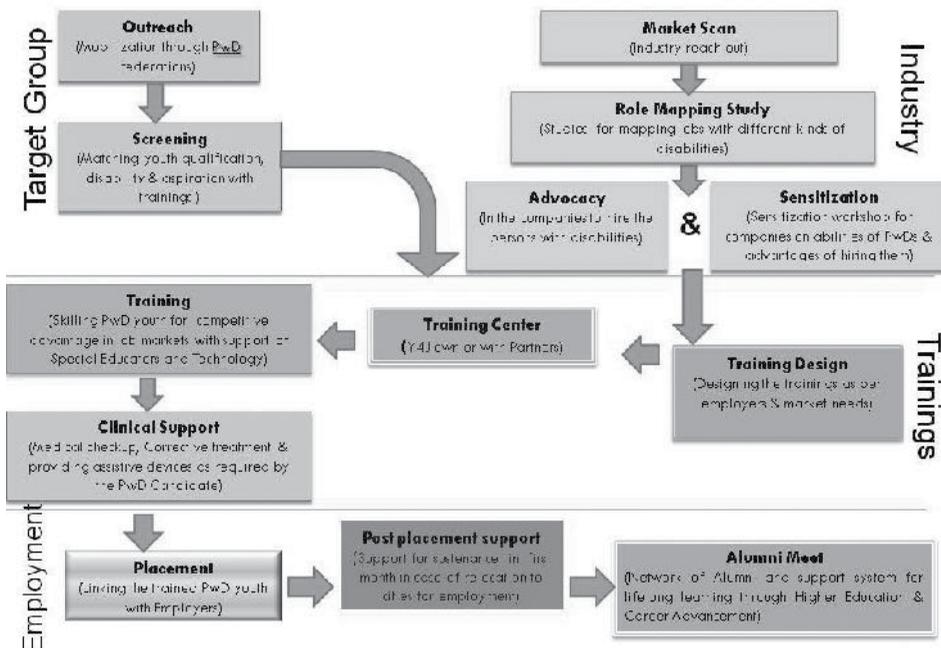


Figure 1: Value Chain/Process to Close all the GAPS



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5. Stage II: Validating Template Across 3 Disabilities

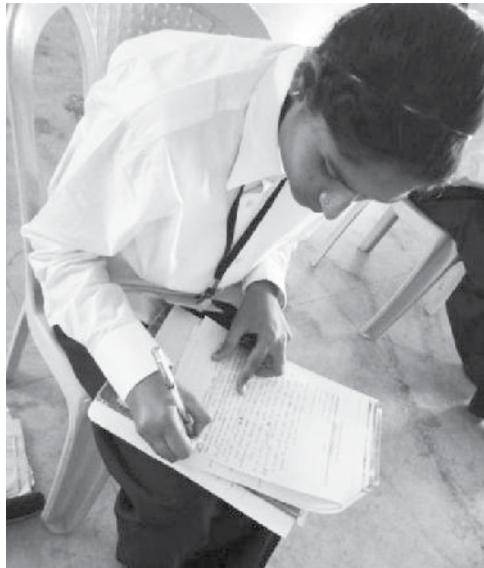
Validation was important for organisations like Youth4Jobs which create social impact as it helps strengthen the model to achieve the targeted objectives. This involved refining and fine tuning and testing assumptions made in the blueprint to strengthen the model and prepare the ground for scale.

The blueprint built was then tested across two more disabilities, speech and hearing impaired and youth with low vision.

For the speech and hearing impaired additional investments had to be made. Special educators and sign language instructors had to be employed. These government trained instructors had no understanding of the market and intensive training of trainers had to be conducted to help them deliver the trainings. The curriculum had to be designed with a pictorial content. The level of English and mathematics of the speech and hearing impaired was incredibly low, because of a lack of special educators in school. Companies were then invited to recruit from this new talent pool.

As the work evolved, Youth4Jobs found different entry points to companies. Like company sensitisation workshops and sign language workshop led to hiring in Google.

New partnerships were developed. In the field of retail, Youth4Jobs joined hands with TRRAIN, a not for profit organisation started by B.Nagesh, Chairman, Retail Association of India (RAI). A brand “Pankh” was formed to encourage the retail industry to hire youth with disability. This partnership of bringing different core competencies on one platform led to new curriculum development at entry level positions like cashiers. A report highlighting best practises was launched as a guide





Google India Pvt. Ltd. Hyderabad campus is among the largest campuses of Google outside USA and the largest in India with close to 10,000 people working. Inclusion of persons with disability in the workforce at Google Hyderabad started last year when Youth4Jobs was invited to conduct a sensitization workshop. It was a 2 hour workshop for Googlers on disability with simulations, activities and tasks to be performed while experiencing disability

To start with it was agreed to begin with the vendors in the services and facility management. The vendors were sceptical and doubtful but with numerous demonstrations they finally agreed. Post which Sensitization and Sign Language workshop for all the Vendor Managers, Supervisors, Team Leaders, were conducted by Youth4Jobs. The entire batch of prospective candidates were taken for the exposure visit to explain the job and also to understand their aptitude, interest and suitability. Simple workplace solutions were introduced like a badge stating “I USE SING LANGUAGE” for the deaf candidates. Candidates with orthopaedic disability were accommodated in suitable job roles like customer help desk, checkouts and data management. ITI (Industrial Training Institute Certified) candidates with speech and hearing impairment were placed as technicians in building maintenance department. All the candidates regularly participate in Google Events and in one of the competition three deaf girls won prizes. After three months review, it was found that performance of the PwD candidates was better than other non-disabled candidates. All the PwD candidates are happy as they are treated equally. Navya, a deaf girl joined dance classes organized for Google employees. 25 youth work presently and a scale up plan is in progress.

to the retail industry resulting in commitments to hire by the leading retail chains like Shoppers Stop,Max,Lifestyle etc.

New sectors were continuously opened up like Media & Entertainment where Youth4Jobs worked with Prasad's EFX to train and place youth in restoring old film. Youth with disability got into the newly emerging gaming sector.

Mekala Trinadh gets into Electronic Arts and Games, India

Hailing from an impoverished agricultural family in East Godavari region of AP, he struggled to secure employment owing to his disability, even though he could talk and communicate well and was a graduate. His life changed when he was waiting at a bus stop to go to school. A reckless driver hit him and ran over his leg. The leg was beyond saving and therefore had to be amputated. He always believed that despite being an amputee he was more than capable enough to get a good job and make a living. Reality though was not so kind. His parents had taken a Rs.2 lakh loan for his education and pulled his sister out of college.



He heard of Youth4Jobs, got trained and employed in the design company Electronic Arts Pvt. Ltd. based in Hyderabad. He was the first employee with disability.

His mother cried when she heard her son was earning an unimaginable salary of Rs.20,000 a month, which exceeded their annual erratic family income. Says Mekala, "I will now ensure my sister goes back to study."

To ensure transparency and seamless data flow, as a preparation for scale, **an IT based MIS system** was developed and tested. This gave data of key indicators like number of youth enrolled, placed, companies with salary details, post placement details. Learnings from the field could be analysed and the trainings and placement network strengthened, where gaps existed.

5.1 Lessons Learnt at this Stage

- Y4J had to strengthen its mobilisation structure as the government of Andhra Pradesh was in transition. This resulted in developing a strong network with NGOs, Associations of the disabled and incorporating this as a key element into its template
- Parents were important stakeholders and invited to the trainings during enrolment and after their children get a job
- **Youth with disability could be placed in most sectors, hitherto thought as impossible!** A meticulous job role matrix needed to be done to understand skills required for the job and fit the youth in with simple low cost work place adaptations.
- Companies had begun looking at Y4J alumni as an “alternative labour pool”. But since the numbers each company absorbed were small, Y4J had to reach to larger number of companies. This led to building partnerships with industry associations like FAPCII (Federation of AP Chambers of Industry) and HMA (Hyderabad management association)
- The work was **innovative**. This led to Y4J **winning several awards** and the Founder being invited to share this new model in prestigious conferences, national and international (like TEDxBerkeley). This gave visibility to the work
- The Founder was commissioned ILO country strategy for PwD& Labour market which became one of the most widely circulated documents. Y4J also actively participated in policy making committees. **This made it uniquely an organisation which worked at the grass root and policy.**
- Social media like Face book was used effectively by the team to reach out to different stakeholders

6. Stage III: Scale Up

Having built strong building blocks, and a replicable model, Youth4Jobs developed a map for scale, to states where requests came for the trainings from NGOs or the government. This helped the work to be **demand driven** as it scaled across geographies. Axis Bank Foundation offered to fund this ambitious program, since nothing like it existed in the country and it fulfilled their CSR criteria of skilling vulnerable youth. “Project Parivarthan” was

launched by Shika Sharma, Managing director of Axis Bank, who gave a clear signal to all the bank team to support this innovative and impactful work.

This helped Youth4Jobs foundation scale across the country in a short period of three years, training 7000 youth with disability



Figure 2: Y4J National Presence

7. Analysis of 7000 youth with disability trained to date

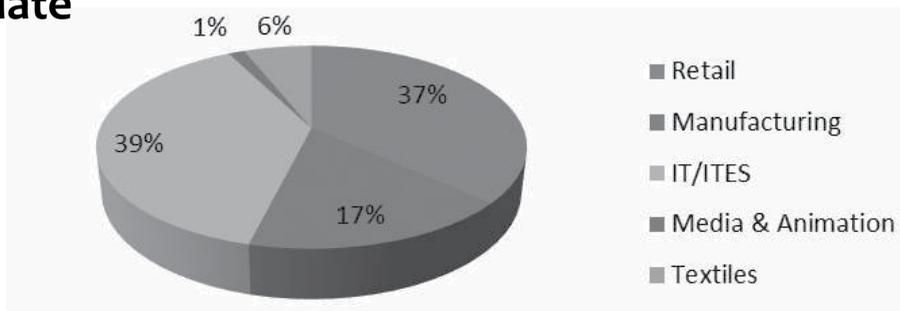


Figure 3: Sectors Employed In

Y4J opened up new sectors for youth with disability like retail, media and animation

- Companies experience the business case
- Lower salary bands were unemployed PwD with education below 7th grade

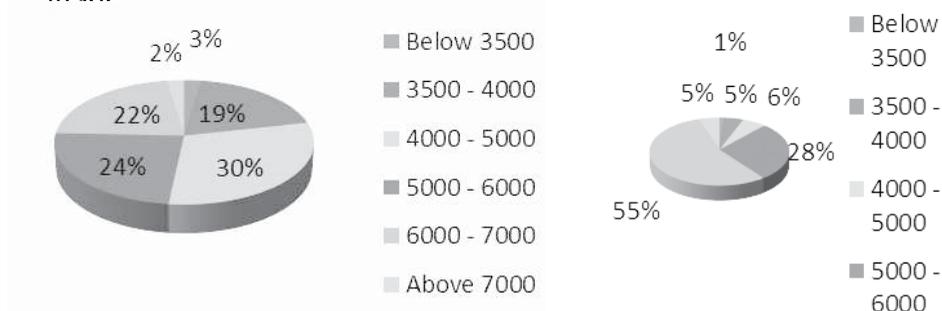


Figure 4: Salaries Increase From Year 1 to Year 3

YEAR 3

YEAR 1

***Does not include other benefits**

Mallika Reddy from the first batch earns Rs.1,20,000 annually as a trainer in a government project.

Table 2: Salaries are Saved and Quality of Life Improves



Clearing High Debt	32%
Savings	22%
Assets	15%
Sibling education	25%
Health	6%



Sign Boards



Safeguard Jacket for Visibility

Valeo in India has 5 Production Sites and 1 R&D centre and employs about 2500 employees supplying to major OEMs in India. Valeo, headquartered in France, follows a matrix organization with Sites reporting to France and in India. As part of the company’s mandate Valeo wanted to initiative inclusion of persons with disability in the workforce. But the company didn’t know how to go about it and was on a look out for a partner to support. Youth4Jobs was recommended for this intervention. Valeo has identified 1 site for pilot namely AVCL (**Amalgamations Valeo Clutch Private Limited**). AVCL produces Clutches for passenger cars and heavy commercial vehicles contributing to better vehicle performance including Fuel efficiency.

8. Approach

It was a holistic approach with five key processes:

- **Role Mapping** of various jobs to clearly understand the tasks viz-a-viz disability
- **Designing work place solutions**
- **Sensitization Workshops for engaging** all the stakeholders – Senior Management, Senior Manager, supervisors and colleagues of the PwD candidate through sensitization workshops, FGDs, etc.,
- **Identification and Linking of PwD youth**
- **Integration in the HR policy and Replication** In first 3 months’ total 25 youth with mixed of speech-hearing impaired and locomotor disability got selected in the areas of packaging, kitting, supply chain management and quality check. Among them 3 of them got employee of the month award in the 5th month of their employment. It was also observed that their performance was higher than non-disabled candidates, with better attendance, productivity & quick learning abilities. Now on successful inclusion of PwD candidates in one plant, replication process will start across others.

Youth4Jobs has also positioned itself as a one stop shop for companies wanting to hire persons with disability. It works now with several companies giving customised services.

9. Way Ahead

Youth4Jobs has set itself ambitious targets of reaching out to 1 million households and training 20,000 youth with disability with placements. The **challenges** are getting good staff across states, like English teachers in north India or sign language instructors in Jharkand. Other challenges are instilling the value system across staff in all states, with the rapid expansion. While this is being addressed by hiring persons not based on educational qualification but their passion for work, it still needs to be continuously addressed. Youth4Jobs is also bringing out short videos depicting how values of every person build the organisational culture.

In a pioneering manner, Youth4Jobs has demonstrated a scalable and replicable model for a most vulnerable unreached segment of society – youth with disability. The model works across geographies ranging from poor states like Jharkand to southern districts like Coimbatore. The heart of the work is bringing different stakeholders on to one platform: youth, their parents, associations of disabled; companies and the government. And a belief in the ability of the disabled. The model thus is win-win for all. For families, the hitherto perceived “useless’ youth becomes a role model for the entire community and supports the family. For companies, they have access to a more productive and loyal workforce. For governments, it helps reap the demographic dividend and achieve MDG goals. And most importantly for youth with disability, a steady job helps them to educate their family; health indicators improve resulting in a better India and a better world.