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DEPwD and EDII partner with Corporates to empower 3000 Persons with Disabilities

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New Delhi/Ahmedabad, Sept 21: The Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), in collaboration with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, organised a Roundtable Meet for Corporates

to 'Support, Activate and Build Assured Livelihoods (SABAL) for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) under CSR Actions'.

Rajesh Aggarwal, IAS Secretary – DEPwD, **Dr Sunil Shukla**, Director General, EDII, **Dr Raman Gujral**, Director, Department of Projects (Corporate) at EDII, as well as senior officials from DEPwD and CSR leaders from leading corporate entities attended this groundbreaking meet. The 'Meet' took up the agenda of sensitizing society at large and instituting interventions and measures that ensure the establishment of 3,000 new enterprises PwDs, including 1,500 technology-driven and 1,500 general enterprises.

This pivotal roundtable meeting brainstormed on creating a better world for PwDs through an effective synergy between government, corporates, and institutions. The discussions revolved around the specific objectives of ensuring empowerment of PwDs through sustainable enterprise creation; creating a set of best practices in the context of infrastructure, perception, environment, security, and other facilities to promote their complete inclusion in society; floating ways to ensure an integrative working environment; deciding on an inventory of business opportunities that PwDs could tap into to create own enterprises; aligning the project and its interventions with sustainable development goals and breaking the professional segregation in society that relegates disabled PwDs to lower-paying jobs.



Based on the tangible discussions and takeaways, the participating corporates identified some primary areas of cooperation. Some of the activities identified to achieve the goal of creating 3000 PwD-led enterprises included: Awareness Campaign to Ensure Community Integration of PwDs; Immersive Life Skills for Adolescents with Disabilities; Sourcing Business Opportunities for PwDs; Sensitization workshops for PwDs; Credit Linkage Support; Entrepreneur Growth-cum-Counselling Programme (EGCP) to Support PwD-led Enterprises and Micro Skillpreneurship Development Programme (MSDP) to enable unemployed PwDs to set up their business.



Secretary, DEPwD Rajesh Aggarwal started his speech with the message that India has reached the moon but there are many challenges that persons with disabilities are facing today. In India, our attitudes are inclusive but infrastructures are yet to be inclusive. He opened up the conversation for supporting Divyangjan through various initiatives including donations through CSRs in providing aids and assistive devices, upskilling, providing loans and mentorship to PwDs, mapping of jobs following the 'coolability factor', providing reasonable accommodation, providing leaves for health issues and spreading the message across distribution networks of the companies and hiring PwDs. He also stressed upon the attitudinal changes of the society at large towards Divyangjan.

Kishor B. Surwade, Deputy Director General DEPwD spoke about various initiatives and schemes of the Department including National Action Plan for Skill Development of PwDs, assistive devices, scholarship to Divyangjan and rehabilitation services.

A video was screened explaining the features of newly launched DEPwD PM Daksh portal for skilling and employment of Divyangjan

Dr Sunil Shukla, expressed, "It is high time that we, as a society, think about inclusive development wherein empowering PwDs must be high on our priority. On a regular basis, we need to curate sustainable business opportunities, and viable entrepreneurial prospects and ensure that the PwDs get suitably trained and handheld. It is also important to establish best practices at workplaces and at various levels of the social framework to foster equality and inclusivity at all levels."

Dr Raman Gujral, discussing the various projects undertaken by corporates to empower PwDs, said that EDII has so far trained 8,533 PwDs through 266 skill training programmes, leading to the establishment of 1,247 enterprises. EDII houses the Centre for Empowerment of the Differently Aabled (CEDA), supported by the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Directorate of Social Defence, Gujarat State Handicapped (Divyang) Finance & Development Corporation, Government of Gujarat, on its campus.

A brainstorming session was held between the officials and corporate leaders present in the conference room. The one hour long round table discussion included topics related to accessibility, aids and assistive devices, AI for PwDs, Job mapping, entrepreneurship opportunities and disability sensitization.