Chapter – 1

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION:

In a society, all human beings are entitled to enjoy all the rights and opportunities offered by the nature, society & government. Besides that, a society as well as the state should ensure about such entitlement of any person. But it has been noted that some people cannot enjoy those rights properly and equally due to the loss of functional capacity resulting from the impairment of organ which causes physical or mental disability. Disabled persons are therefore often being neglected in a society in spite of their disability.

Most of the disabled persons in the world live in villages and belong to poor communities where they never see a rehabilitation expert. But this does not always mean that they have not gone through the process of rehabilitation. In many villages and homes family members, local craftsperson, traditional healers and disabled people themselves have figured out ways for persons with disabilities to do things better and move about more easily.

Disabled persons in India have been subjected to direct and indirect discrimination for centuries. They deserve a comprehensive legislation to tackle the blatant discrimination against them. With human rights organizations voicing their concern both nationally and internationally and also acting as their guardians, an increasing number of countries are now vigorously preparing policies favourable to the disabled people.
To bring disabled village children into the main stream of the society, each and everyone has equal role to play. In order to provide equal opportunity and to protect rights of persons with disabilities, different legislation and acts have been passed; such as “Rehabilitation Council Act” 1992, Person with disabilities (equal opportunities, protection of Rights of Full participation) Act 1995, “National Trust Act” 1998. These acts provide number of benefits, concession and reservation for the disabled persons. It is our foremost duty to create an awareness among the village people about information for disabled persons. In this connection it is to be stated here that “the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Bill, 2014” was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on February 7, 2013 by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Mallikarjun Kharge. The bill repeals/annuls the ‘Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995’.

It is an axiomatic truth that a society should have adequate infrastructure to provide proper education for all and the libraries & information centres are the basic tools in this regard. It is unavoidable that the libraries provide a vast resource of knowledge to all of us, whereby a person can access books, periodicals, newspapers, journals, magazines, pamphlets, research reports etc. which would act for the development of human society. Now-a-days, with the advent of digital libraries, collections are stored in digital formats and accessible by computers also. Each & everyday, a library meets different groups of people in question for their knowledge. Gradually people from the disabled group tried to come in the limelight of the society’s main stream. The uses of libraries by such group have been increasing recently all over the world. Parents of disabled persons also should
have access to such libraries & information centres for the development of their disabled member/child.

Mainly the library is committed to be self-evident in providing a learning environment which supports the information needs of the every parts of the society. However, from each regional library, an individual patron should expect two things: service and materials. The quality and the amount of each will vary somewhat significantly from one regional library to another. Libraries and library workers can play their part to hasten the process of full and total integration of the disabled persons in the society irrefutably in a big way.

In this study, I have attempted to highlight the different aspects of disabled persons including their social, mental, physical and educational condition. I have tried to get the overview of the following areas in my research topic on ‘Information support for the development of disabled persons with special reference to the people of East Midnapore, a district of West Bengal (India)’:

1. Whether all the services prescribed for the disabled persons are available at the libraries & information centres of East Midnapore or not,
2. Whether these services are effective or not,
3. What type of new services are to be implemented for their sake,
4. What type of policies are to be framed for providing such services to them,
5. What are the drawbacks in implementing such policies,
6. Whether the financial help from the Government is available or not,
7. In what extent NGOs or Governments organizations (central, state or rural) are eager to provide support for such implementation.
8. How to get back them to the main stream of livelihood by providing proper services.

**ABOUT THE AREA:**

Midnapore which is also spelled as MIDNAPUR or MEDINIPUR was bifurcated into East & West since January 2002. East Midnapore lies just north of the Kasai River and is an agricultural-trade centre on the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Amritsar. Kharagpur, across the river, provides major rail connections. Rice milling and the manufacture of chemicals and silk cloth are the chief industries of this area. Constituted a municipality in 1865, Midnapore is an educational centre, with numerous colleges affiliated to the Vidyasagar University. Rice, corn (maize), legumes, and oilseeds are the chief crops grown in the surrounding area.

Midnapore, the land of great persons like Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Birendra Sasmal, Matangini Hazra are only a few to name to mention. Haldia, the New Hope for the industrial revival of the State is in this district, along with the famous Seaside tourist spot at Digha. The New Note Press at Shalbani has added glamour to it. It is a vast district, greater than even about 50 sovereign countries both in terms of area and also in terms of population.

During the British Raj the town became a centre of revolutionary activities. The Zilla School, now known as Midnapur Collegiate School was the birthplace of many extremist
activities. Teachers like Hemchandra Kanungo inspired and guided the pupils to participate in the Indian Freedom Movement. Three District Magistrates were murdered in succession by the revolutionaries. Khudiram Bose and Satyendranath Basu are some of the young men to lay down their lives for the freedom of India. Khudiram was sentenced to death for a failed attempt to kill Magistrate Kingsford. Satyendranath Basu, along with Kanailal Dutta of Chandernagore killed approves Narendranath Goswami in Alipur Central Jail. Satyendranath was executed on the 21st November 1908.

Geographically, east Midnapore consists of 25 blocks under 4 subdivisions, such as Tamluk, Egra, Contai & Haldia, which includes 21 police stations, 223 general post offices and 5 municipalities. Total number of mouzas in this district is 3198 and total number of gram-samsads is 2975. The main activities of East Midnapore are to provide educational facilities, health facility and drinking water, agricultural activities, irrigation system to dry areas, food generation with supply department, veterinary services and so many facilities.

BACKGROUND:

My thrust area covers the various aspects of disabled persons with proper information support. For this purpose, I have made a survey of villages located in the area of East Midnapore district, West Bengal. I have found that disabled persons of this area do not have proper opportunities and there are no choices to improve their quality of life. The
benefits of services offered by the government and non-government organizations towards the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities are not being fully availed by the target group due to lack of awareness among the community.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

It is known that any type of disability i.e. mental, physical, social educational etc among male or female creates impairment to their getting access to the information they desire to have. Disabled children cannot go to schools, public libraries or any information centre like any other normal person. In order to provide information support to these people, this study considers the following objectives:

1. To understand their physical and intellectual problem & their information needs
2. To determine the sources which provide information for village-centric disabled people?
3. To observe the level of information relating to the rehabilitation.
4. To identify the available facilities and concessions and reservation in government rules and policy.
5. To identify the role of educational provisions such as integrated and inclusive schools, special schools and home based training etc.
6. To determine the types of information for disable such as standardize aids and appliances their manufacture, guidelines for assessment, etc.
7. To provide information for future development.
8. To give back to them the main stream of livelihood.
9. To understand the present scenario of the popular educational institutions for providing facilities to the disabled people with the benefits they have acquired from them.

10. To know the trained qualified library staffs for assisting the disabled people in the libraries.

11. To identify the level of existence of library & information centres at the locality of disabled persons.

12. To identify the level of family and governmental support for the development of their disabled family member(s).

**SCOPE & COVERAGE OF THE STUDY:**

Obviously, there cannot be any development if there is no proper information. Neither the government nor the NGO can do miracles. Their efforts have to be supplemented by the people living in villages. In fact, a village can progress only when every resident tries to develop him or herself. Information support is therefore required not only at the organization level, but also at the individual level. While organization requires basic & background information for drawing and implementing realistic development scheme the citizens require information about education, healthcare & their avocation to improve their life. Such information support is awfully inadequate in our country. It may be mentioned that the information which are normally required for socio-economic development of any area are of two categories:

1. Information that is pivotal to the question of economic & social development
2. Information that has been generated for the different purposes but which is relevant to the aims & objectives of the development of community.

For providing the necessary support required for disabled persons, a proper information infrastructure has to be developed. This includes development of appropriate

1. Information products & services

2. Information Dissemination mechanisms

Information dissemination is solely dependent on the availability of information product & services. Little efforts are made to collect the scattered primary information which is of vital importance. We still have to depend on age old product & services of the second kind. This naturally cannot provide the needed information support resulting in very slow progress of disabled development.

Even if required, information product & services are available these cannot reach the end users unless there is a good mechanism. Information needed for disabled persons’ development are disseminated by various agencies either through formal publication or through designated official such as Gram Sevakas, Health worker & some NGOs or through Library & Information Centers. But the mechanism are not well established and well developed. As a result, the available information often does not reach the end user at proper time.
In this study twenty-five blocks under four subdivisions in East Midnapore District were selected to carry out this research work. The selection of this district was based on two major reasons. The first reason is that these blocks are under-privilege to a great extent and there is no proper information about disabled persons. Hence there is a remote possibility of getting any information about the Government Schemes.

Other major reason for the selection is based on the convenience sake for conducting such a study under local cooperation. The known popular NGOs (Avudaya/ অবুদায়, Haldia Samaj Kalyan Parishad, Vivekananda Mission Ashram etc.) are situated in these blocks. They arranged various identification camps and numerous children come from these blocks; the sample of the study has been drawn from several families of all the blocks.

In order to provide necessary support required for disabled persons, a proper information infrastructure has to be developed. Even if, required information products & services are available, these cannot reach to the end users unless there is a good mechanism.

The selection of the particular blocks of the area was based on two purposes. Firstly, the above mentioned blocks are not properly developed and hardly there is any adequate information about disabled persons. Another major reason is that the researcher is very much acquainted with the particular area of study.

The scope of the present study is concerned with the analysis of the response of the parents of the disabled persons during the period 2010-2014, which would support and
sustain the present scenario of the existing condition of the 25 blocks of East Midnapore for the disabled persons and formation their future & career with the supports of family, government & NGOs etc.