

LETTER TO EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Profile of Clients at the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, India

The National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (NIEPMD) was established in 2005 at Chennai, under the Government of India's Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. The first of its kind in Asia, the Institute was given the mandate to develop state-of-the-art service models and human resources, and undertake research related to persons with multiple disabilities in India.

Since one of NIEPMD's objectives is to provide services to persons with multiple disabilities, an attempt was made to study the age group, gender, month-wise distribution and the geographical locations of the clients registered at the Institute, along with their sources of referral. Client records of those who registered over a two-year period - from April 2009 to March 2011 - were studied.

In 2004, there were 46 clients with multiple disabilities at NIEPMD, and the number grew to 329 in 2011. As of April 2011, the total number of clients with multiple as well as single disabilities was 3221. 26.1% of those registered were in the age group of 3 - 6 years and 22.5 % were below 3 years, indicating that most clients were identified during the key formative years. 67.5% of the clients were male; a pointer that there were more men with multiple disabilities than women. About 15.46% of the clients had been referred by friends of the family, while 12.37% were referred by parents of those who were already availing of the services at NIEPMD. The number of clients who were referred by medical doctors increased from 15 in 2009-10, to 23 in 2010-11. The impact of raising awareness about the Institute through advertisements was demonstrated by the increase in the number of clients being referred - from 0 in 2009-10, to 45 in 2010-11. The months of June, March and October witnessed the registration of a higher number of clients, at 13.92%, 13.06% and 8.76% respectively. More than 90% of them are from Tamil Nadu, the state where NIEPMD is located.

Earlier, apart from estimates provided by the National Statistical Sample Organisation survey of 2002, no data were available with the Government or any of the other agencies regarding the incidence or prevalence of multiple disabilities

in the country. Even the definitions and terminology were not clear. The statistics available with the Institute have helped to delineate about 28 categories of multiple disabilities from among the population of persons with disabilities. These data can be of help in policy making, programme planning and research.

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