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Duskin Leadership Training in Japan 19th trainee

Laxmi/ I would like to introduce my activities upon returning to Nepal from the Duskin Leadership Training Program. I would also like to explain the results of the Collaboration Forum in Pakistan.

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Currently, I am working as the founder of Access Planet Organization, where I am also the executive director. My focus areas are gender and disability. I am the 19th trainee of the Duskin Leadership Program. I participated in the Duskin Challenge Program in 2017 and 2018. My major focus of learning in the program was the accessibility, education, and employment of PWDs.

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My current area of focus is related to women's rights, technology and economic empowerment for PWDs. I would like to introduce quickly the Access Planet Organization, which is led by young women with disabilities. This organization works to promote rights, empowerment and inclusion of all PWDs, specifically young women with disabilities. This organization was launched in 2015.

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Now, I would like to talk about some of our activities and achievements related to our objectives. Technology is one of the main areas of focus for the Access Planet Organization. To contribute to improving the quality of education for youth with disabilities, technology is our major activity and contribution. We also conduct various workshops and training on technology for individuals with visual disabilities and women with disabilities.

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The economic empowerment of young women with disabilities is one of the important activities of our organization. We use major strategies for economic empowerment and career counseling. We conduct career counseling for young graduates with disabilities to guide them in correctly choosing among different kinds of career options.

We conduct various on-the-job training enhancement sessions to provide technological skills, training in social media and business development planning to those who are thinking about becoming entrepreneurs.

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Regarding economic empowerment, the sensitization of stakeholders is another key strategy that we are using. We sensitize stakeholders including businesspeople and government representatives. We have activities to improve economic policy and employment, especially for young women with disabilities. To mention other activities, we provide training in leadership skills and sexual reproductive health rights as well as providing training to ensure that the legal rights of women with disabilities are protected.

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Empowering women with disabilities through sports is another key strategy that Access Planet has been using. Sports are beneficial, especially for girls and women with disabilities because it enables them to feel physical and mental well-being. After participating in sports competitions these women told us not only about their physical and mental well-being but also that they felt some positive changes in how they viewed other players.

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Now, I would like to report the outcome of the Pakistan Forum in 2019. In order to participate in the Duskin Program, I was able to find out what the social business model actually was. Through the activities of Milestone, I observed the activities of PWDs themselves. The social business model was a quick key point that links to the empowerment of the individual.

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In Nepal, we had a follow-up session of the Pakistan Forum. My organization and I held an event for the empowerment of youth with visual impairments titled Promotion of Economic Rights of Youth with Visual Disabilities. It was an advocacy interaction program that occurred virtually, although we planned a face-to-face session. The situation, however, did not allow us. There was a presentation and panel discussion titled, Employment Status of Blind and Visually Impaired Youth in Nepal and the Way Forward. Each member from employers, employees, and workers participated in the panel discussion. We discussed what kind of accommodations and work environments are required for youth who are blind or visually impaired.

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We had the presence of employers, activists for the rights of PWDs, and businesspeople take part in the program. It was a good chance to exchange opinions regarding opportunities for inclusive employment. As a follow-up to this event, we organized a techno-based capacity development training course. This course aimed at employment for some trainees we sent to private companies for employment opportunities.

From here, I would like to talk about some of our involvement with the business sector and for more plans related to social business. With the support of a private megabank, we conducted training for trainers on computers and other technology. This training was conducted last June and July, during the lockdown period due to the COVID 19 outbreak. After this training, the young women with disabilities who participated in the training course became trainers and are currently working as computer instructors in schools and organizations for PWDs They are providing their knowledge of computers and technology to other youth at the grassroots level. Also, we had been involved in various interactive programs to promote the employment of PWDs and women with disabilities.

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Now, I would like to talk about Access Planet Organization and how we are planning for the future of social business. We are planning to conduct disability sensitization classes in private schools and colleges. In Nepal, the issue of disability is included in many educational courses, but to raise the level of consciousness and interest, we think the direct participation of PWDs is important. The small fees requested for these classes are used for the empowerment of PWDs. Another social business plan we have is for digital accessibility for youth with disabilities. When we become able to provide an authorized international training course, it will be one of our social businesses. Regarding business, we would like to work with entrepreneurs as part of CSR activities to empower youth with disabilities with technology.

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Finally, I would like to share my expectations. Nowadays, there are many PWDs who have expertise in business and other sectors. Economic empowerment is the key tool for PWDs. After economic empowerment, for the first time, we can claim our rights. I hope that this program and forum can be the place to consider and improve consciousness and interest in how to empower individuals economically in the Asia Pacific Region. Thank you for listening and for giving me the opportunity to speak.

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