



### ***Puneet Singh Singhal***

***Puneet Singh Singhal, a resident of New Delhi, India. Despite an undiagnosed learning disability and stammering, Puneet has emerged as a strong disability activist. He believes that his life's journey is shaped by the intersection of poverty, domestic violence, and multiple non-visible disabilities. Puneet's mission is to advocate for a more inclusive and accessible society for people with diverse disabilities, including visible and non-visible ones. He founded a non-profit organization called SSSTART, which aims to normalize speech and communication disabilities. Puneet is also associated with prominent organizations such as Billion Strong, Diversability, and IUCN.***

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# **Vision for Promoting Disability Inclusion and Accessibility on a Global Scale**

*Puneet Singh Singhal, disability activist SSSTART Founder*

## ***Abstract***

**This article shares the personal experiences of its author with poverty, domestic violence, and non-visible disabilities. These experiences have shaped the author's passion for promoting inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) globally. The article highlights the importance of eradicating stigma and misconceptions associated with non-visible disabilities, creating a truly inclusive environment, and understanding intersectionality. The author stresses the need for customized support to achieve equity and for education systems to teach about neurodiversity and inclusion from a young age. The article also calls for universal design principles to enhance accessibility in the digital world. Finally, the author emphasizes the need for collective responsibility among nations, sectors, and individuals to work towards a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible future without any discrimination.**

***Keywords: Inclusion, disability, IDEA, ADHD, education, society, people with disabilities, diversity, environment, accessibility.***

## **Vision for Promoting Disability Inclusion and Accessibility on a Global Scale**

**In the bustling lanes of a Delhi slum where I grew up, I witnessed firsthand the multidimensional impacts of poverty, domestic violence, and the profound impact of having multiple non-visible disabilities. It was a crucible, an amalgamation of trials and tribulations that shaped my perspective and ignited my passion for making this world more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible (IDEA). Today, my vision for promoting disability inclusion and accessibility on a global scale is deeply rooted in the lessons learned from my personal experiences and the resilience that emerged from them.**

**In a world that's constantly evolving, brimming with potential, it's a disheartening paradox to see the stark disparities that exist. The World Bank estimates that one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability, yet they are often left on the periphery of societal discourse. The struggle is compounded for those like myself, grappling with non-visible disabilities like dyslexia, dyspraxia, and stammering, where the impairment is not immediately apparent, leading to a lack of understanding, empathy, and often missed opportunities for inclusion.**

**The first component of my vision is to eradicate the ignorance and stigma associated with non-visible disabilities. This calls for a shift in societal narratives to recognize and appreciate neurodiversity - the understanding that neurological differences like autism, ADHD, and dyslexia are natural variations of the human brain. We need to spread awareness and debunk misconceptions, showing the world**

**that these differences are not deficits but unique abilities that can contribute to societal progress in unparalleled ways.**

**I believe in fostering an inclusive environment that goes beyond tokenism. Inclusion is not merely opening doors; it's about ensuring everyone has an equal opportunity to participate, contribute, and flourish. This is only possible when we systematically dismantle the physical, informational, or attitudinal barriers that hinder their participation.**

**My vision revolves around creating a truly equitable society where resources and opportunities are allocated fairly, considering each individual's unique needs and circumstances. This means acknowledging the intersectionality of disability - how it overlaps with other aspects of identity, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status, to create unique experiences of oppression or privilege.**

**The quest for a diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible world is not a solitary pursuit; it's a collective journey that requires the participation and commitment of all stakeholders. I firmly believe that the IDEA paradigm is not an idealistic dream; it's a tangible reality within our grasp if we commit to the path of empathy, understanding, and action.**

**The journey towards IDEA begins with a crucial step - understanding. Understanding that people with non-visible disabilities, like myself, aren't seeking sympathy or special treatment. We advocate for equal opportunities, an equal platform to showcase our abilities and contribute to society. Understanding that disabilities don't define us, they are just one aspect of our complex**

**identities. And understanding that inclusion isn't a concession but a fundamental human right.**

**As we strive to improve awareness, education plays a pivotal role. Education systems worldwide need to be reimagined to accommodate diverse learning needs, teaching students about neurodiversity and the importance of inclusion from a young age. By instilling these values early on, we can foster a new generation that views diversity as a strength and inclusion as a norm.**

**Next, let's talk about accessibility. We live in an era where technology has seamlessly integrated into our lives, revolutionizing how we interact, learn, and work. Yet, the potential of technology to enhance accessibility remains largely untapped. Imagine an online world with universal design principles at its core - websites, apps, and digital platforms that are equally accessible to all, irrespective of their physical or cognitive abilities.**

**In the physical world, accessibility should not be an afterthought but an integral part of infrastructure planning. Accessible public transportation, ramped entrances in buildings, tactile paths, and signages are not luxuries but necessities that enable people with disabilities to navigate their environments independently.**

**Now, onto equity – the principle that everyone doesn't start from the same place and might need different resources to reach the same outcome. This concept is especially crucial when we consider intersectionality. For example, a person with a disability from a low-income background, like my past self, has a significantly different set of challenges than someone from a high-income background. Equity means acknowledging these differences and customizing support accordingly.**

**Diversity is not just about representation but about creating an environment where diverse voices are heard, valued, and have the power to influence decisions. This means fostering diverse leadership within organizations, implementing policies that protect against discrimination, and creating safe spaces for dialogue and collaboration.**

**We stand at a crossroads today. On the one hand, we have the status quo, a world where people with disabilities continue to be marginalized. On the other, we have the potential for a global society that thrives on diversity, champions inclusion, values equity and is universally accessible. The choice is ours to make, and I fervently hope that we choose the path of IDEA, for it's not just the right thing to do but the smart thing for a vibrant, resilient, and equitable future.**

**As we envision this future, we must recognize that this is not a task for a few but a collective responsibility. It involves collaboration across nations, sectors, and individuals - each playing a unique role in fostering IDEA. Governments must enforce and strengthen laws that protect the rights of people with disabilities, ensuring accessibility is a non-negotiable standard in public infrastructure, services, and digital spaces. Businesses and organizations can drive change by fostering diverse and inclusive work environments, investing in accessibility, and ensuring equitable practices.**

**While these systemic changes are vital, the role of communities and individuals cannot be underestimated. It's in our everyday interactions, attitudes, and choices that we shape the culture around us. Let's challenge our biases, learn about disabilities, and foster empathy. Let's choose to consume media that represent disability**

accurately and inclusively and support businesses that prioritize accessibility.

Advocacy is also crucial. As someone who has experienced the challenges of living with non-visible disabilities, I am dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for change. But advocacy isn't just for those who live with these challenges. Everyone can use their voice to amplify the message, challenge ableism, and advocate for inclusive policies.

Let's celebrate diversity, recognizing the strength that comes from a multitude of experiences and perspectives. Our global community's immense potential remains untapped simply because we've failed to provide the right environment for everyone to thrive. Let's acknowledge the achievements of people with disabilities, listen to their stories, and learn from their experiences.

Promoting IDEA globally isn't just about improving the lives of people with disabilities. It's about enhancing our shared humanity, enriching our societies, and fostering innovation. It's about creating a world where every person can contribute their unique strengths and thrive.

Reflecting on my journey from the slums of Delhi to becoming a passionate advocate for disability rights, I am reminded of the power of resilience, the strength of diversity, and the potential for change. I am reminded that no barrier is insurmountable when we have the will to change.

As we move forward, let's carry these lessons with us, creating a world that is not just inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible but also compassionate, understanding, and full of opportunities for all. It's a massive task, but I believe it's a challenge we can meet. The

**time for IDEA is now, and the future we can create is compelling. Let's step into it together with commitment, courage, and the belief that everyone deserves to belong, contribute, and thrive.**