enabling universal access and preservation of knowledge through libraries: copyright matters

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**Creating accessible format materials in Nepal: outcomes and challenges of a capacity building project Implemented by Accessible Books Consortium (ABC) at WIPO**

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**Introduction**

According to the National population census report, there are around 95,000 people with visual disability in Nepal. According to a recent survey, the number of students with visual impairment in secondary school and higher education is just about 1500. One of the major reasons of such low number of persons perusing education is non-availability of books in accessible format.

**Critical gaps for low availability of accessible books:**

* Capacity of accessible book production is very less.
* The Copyright Act, 2059 (2002 has comprehensively mentioned the copyright authorities of producers and publishers however this act doesn't mention anything concerning accessible publication and its copyright exemption.
* Publishers are not trained to produce accessible digital copies of their books
* There is no Non-text book production in accessible format
* There is no online distribution system or any other proper mechanism distribution of accessible books to print disabled students.
* Students do not have assistive technology to read accessible digital books. For example: None of the students have daisy players. Negligible number of students has smart phones with voice applications.

**The real solution:**

* More Collection of talking books or accessible e-text books in the library
* Train the publishers to give their books in digital accessible format (EPUB or )
* Library service with proper distribution system of accessible books
* Assistive technology in the hands of end users so that they can read the accessible books
* Appropriate training to persons with Visual disability so that they can use the assistive technology.
* As is clear from the existing practice that in Nepal there are very critical gaps in all aspects of the solution.

**Latest development for accessible publication**

There are some very encouraging developments in the world related to accessible books. These include: Online Library system such as Book share, International Exchange of Accessible books using WIPO Enabled TIGAR projects etc. can provide accessible books to person with print disabilities in Nepal. How-ever, for using such services and providing it to end users Nepal should have library infrastructure which could enroll persons with visual and print disabilities and make sure to provide the content with adequate copy protection to them. The organizations serving persons with visual and print disabilities would produce accessible books like audio books and e-text in English and Nepali languages and distribute equipment for reading these books. Publishers need to be trained in production of digital books so that these are born accessible.

**Adoption of latest technology for enhancing accessible books:**

Following activities are required to enhance learning capabilities of people with visual and print disabilities.

* Conducting orientation and awareness workshops
* train the mainstream publishers to produce digital copies of their books in accessible formats like epub or word file
* Prepare digital e-text master copies of text books of a leading publisher in English and Nepali Languages.
* Set-up library management software
* Setup accessible digital book storage and distribution systems
* Make this library a part of international network of accessible materials libraries. Connect the library to bookshare online library
* Connect the library to the TIGAR project of WIPO to enable international exchange of accessible books.
* Create an affordable playback system providing digital book reading equipment to students and provide connectivity of such equipment with the library Training to end users to use book reading equipment to download and read books
* Partner with appropriate government agencies so that after the project period the agency could provide resources for production of accessible text books and assistive technology to end users.

**Status of current technology related to accessible books for Nepali languages**

Following are the recent availability of technology required for accessible book production in Nepal.

* Optical character recognition : Not available for Nepali language
* Text to speech engine : Available for Nepali language
* Braille translation software : Available for Nepali language

Now if we come to the availability of assistive technology in the hands of end users, it is almost nil. Students do not have assistive technology to read accessible digital books. For example: None of the students have daisy players. Negligible number of students has smart phones with ANDROID and IOS platform.

**Collaboration of ADRAD with ABC and WIPO:**

Name of the project: Capacity Building Project for Accessible Publishing under the campaign of Enhancing Learning Capabilities of Students implemented by

Action on Disability Rights and Development (ADRAD- Nepal). The project intended to produce 140 books of educational material in full DAISY text or full DAISY audio, for students in grades 1-12 and undergraduate students. Obtained the rights from CDC to adapt and reproduce, and make available across borders in accessible formats. Educational materials in accessible formats being available to approximately 1500 primary, secondary and undergraduate students who are visually impaired in Nepal

**Result of the project:**

* Produced 140 Accessible books (Approximately 25,000 pages). The books have been uploaded in the TIGAR FTP server.
* 125 are produced in DAISY format and 15 are in EPUB format.
* 67 books are produced in English language and 73 are in Nepali language.
* There are 91 books are for school level students, 12 books are for higher secondary level student and 37 books are for university level student.
* 15 GB books (in ZIP) are uploaded in TIGAR server.
* Loaning of 100 ANDROID Devices (Tablets) as playback device of the accessible books.

**Beneficiaries:**

* There are all together 376 beneficiaries have been orientated about the use of Accessible publication and the availability of the curriculum and textbooks in accessible format. The end-users have enrolled in various schools and colleges.
* Among the end-users, 100 students have been trained about the use of ANDROID playback device (Tablet). There are 23 most useful applications installed in each of the tablets and the orientation session covered the demonstration of these useful and accessible apps.
* Government departments: 5 officers
* Publishers (commercial and governmental): 5 technical persons
* NGOs: 25 persons working in publication
* Schools: teachers 11
* There are 13 persons empowered and enhanced capacity of producing DAISY and EPUB platform for accessible publishing.
* There are 30 Girls/ women with visual disabilities who received the ANDROID Device as playback tools.

**Further initiatives for promoting accessible publication:**

* The effective means to be adopted in developing technical capability of producing accessible books by applying EPUB platform.
* The books on the open market are an exciting development when they are produced accessibly. E-publishing technologies to be adopted by all service providers to enable persons with print disabilities to read content at the same time and convenience and at no higher cost as their sighted peers which are the fundamental rights of persons with visual and print disabilities.
* Private Publishers adopt policy providing access to their books to print and visual impaired persons by collaboration with ADRAD.
* Fulfilment of the commitments of the Government providing educational rights based on article 24 of UNCRPD. The accessible books are prerequisite for inclusive development which is mentioned in article 9 of the convention.
* Nepal Government to ratify the Marrakesh Treaty so that it is mandatory for the Government to facilitate access to published works for persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired, or otherwise Print Disabilities.