

RAHUL CHERIAN

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Date of birth: October 5, 1973

About me: I am a lawyer, disability policy activist and a co-founder of Inclusive Planet, the world's largest social network for persons with visual impairment.

Area of specialization: Disability policy advocacy.

Current Position – 2008 till date - Head of Policy Initiatives for Inclusive Planet

As the Head of Policy Initiatives for Inclusive Planet, I have extensive experience in areas of disability policy reform and advocacy. I have gained significant experience with issues faced by persons with visual impairment during the course of my role at Inclusive Planet. I also have a personal experience of visual impairment as I had a brain hemorrhage that made me partially blind for a short period of time.

Summary of disability advocacy/policy experience

A) Indian Experience

- **New Disability Law**

India is in the process of enacting a new disability law to ensure that India is compliant with its obligations under the UNCRPD. I am on the legal expert panel constituted by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to give input on the new disability law which is being proposed. I worked closely with the team that prepared the draft of the new disability law and gave them inputs for addition in the draft law. I have also assisted various NGOs in understanding the draft of the new disability law and prepare their feedback on the draft for submission to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

- **Copyright Amendment for Persons with Disabilities**

I was instrumental in conceptualizing and executing a national Right to Read Campaign to bring about changes in copyright law to enable persons with disabilities access copyrighted work on an equal basis with persons without disabilities. As part of this initiative I was instrumental in bringing leading disability rights organizations in the country together to support the campaign. I was invited by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Copyright to make submissions after which the Committee in its report accepted the submissions we had made to them. I was also involved in suggesting the wording of the proposed amendment, which is currently awaiting introduction in Parliament. As part of the campaign, we organized nationwide road

shows and consensus building workshops for all stakeholders including persons with visual impairment, publishers and policy makers.

- **Disability policy for the State of Kerala**

I helped the southern Indian State of Kerala. The preparation of this plan involved collecting input from various stakeholders and building consensus on the approach to be followed in the plan. The next steps in the plan are to help the State Government evolve the budget to undertake activities ranging from early detection, intervention and rehabilitation to education, employment, accessibility and research. I am also assisting the State in improving the implementation and monitoring systems so that the 2025 vision will become a reality.

- **Preparation of alternate report on India's compliance with the UNCRPD**

I am one of those working on the alternate report on India's compliance with the UNCRPD. To enable me to fulfill this task, I have been trained (which training is continuing) by the International Disability Alliance. As part of this extensive exercise, I have gained insight into how to effectively monitor implementation of disability-related, schemes and policies as well as an in-depth understanding of the UNCRPD.

- **General Policy Advocacy and Advice**

I advise NGOs on various policy initiatives that they are involved in. Some of the policy initiatives I have provided advice include advice relating to electronic accessibility policy and telecommunication accessibility policy, both of relevance to the visually impaired community. I also provide ongoing legal support to several organizations including the Daisy Forum of India, Enable India, Ability Foundation and others.

B) International experience

- **Treaty for the Visually Impaired**

I was one of the experts who helped draft the TVI. Subsequently I have been assisting the World Blind Union in advocating for the Treaty at the World Intellectual Property Organization. I have been part of the WBU delegation at the World Intellectual Property Organization for the last 2 years. As part of my role, I assist the WBU Global Right to Read campaign members in understanding the legal implications in the wordings of various instruments proposed at WIPO. I have also briefed the Indian Government on the TVI and got the Indian Government to support the TVI at WIPO. I brief the Indian Copyright Office and India's negotiator at WIPO on the TVI.

Previous Position – 2003- 2008 – Managing Partner at IndoJuris Law Offices

From 2003 to 2008 I was managing partner at IndoJuris Law Offices, one of India's leading multidisciplinary law firms. In this position I provided legal services to some of the world largest companies as well as India's largest companies. I was also responsible for the office of IndoJuris law Offices in Chennai city, generating business, supervising all the lawyers in the office etc.

Additional information:

Educational background: B.A. LL.B. (Hons.), 1993-1998.

Excellent written and spoken English

Extremely competent in the use of computers