

Differently abled find helping hand in their struggle to book vaccination slots

MOHAMMAD.IBRAR@TIMESGROUP.COM

New Delhi:

For many disabled people, accessing the CoWin website is not an easy task. Those willing to get vaccinated have posted complaints on social media about how the website is not disabled-friendly and no assistance is provided to them.

To provide them relief, an organisation called Rising Flame has come forward to not only help the disabled register, but also book slots on the website for them to get vaccinated. The initiative was launched on May 26 when the organisation realised that the CoWin website and app were not following accessibility guidelines.

“Many visually challenged people posted on social media their bad experience of registering for the vaccine. Even if they managed to register, they had difficulty in finding the location of the vaccine centre. They faced problems at the centres too,” said Nidhi Goyal, founder and executive director of Rising Flame.

The organisation has so far assisted over 50 people with disabilities with registration and getting them vaccination slots. “Many wanted their caregivers to accompany them, so we registered for them too,” added Goyal.

The project was conceptualised on Global Accessibility Day, May 20. “We are facilitating access that the website should have provided. In fact, for the elderly and disabled they should have a different system. Several officials and organisations have written to the health ministry regarding this,” Goyal said.

As the literacy rate of the disabled is low, the organisation has formed teams in Delhi, Mumbai, Thane and Navi Mumbai to help them. “We receive many queries and requests. Many also complain about lack of information. For example, when chief minister Arvind Kejriwal makes an announcement, there is no sign language interpreter for the disabled to get information. They also can’t read the documents published by the government,” said Goyal.

The organisation has a helpline on which the disabled can call and send messages. Goyal said, “While it is easy to register, booking vaccination slots is difficult. The slots are usually available at bizarre timings. Moreover, the venue at times is far away and many people with disabilities are not comfortable travelling the distance.”

Rising Flame started working during the pandemic last year where they focused on and surveyed domestic violence in India.

BEACONS OF HOPE

In the midst of crushing despair and grief, there are also stories of selflessness, kindness and courage that restore one’s faith in humanity and inspire us to dream of a better tomorrow. If you know of any such individuals or organisations who are serving as Beacons of Hope, please share their story with us on www.TOIBeaconsOfHope.com Let’s light a spark and help dispel the dark.