

AWARENESS  
RESPECT  
ACCEPTANCE  
INCLUSION

# DISABILITY RIGHT ACTION GROUP (DRAG)

BY  
SARA SHAHID  
AHMAD ALI



Association of Women for Awareness and Motivation (AWAM) P-98/15, StreetNo.9, Block-B  
Al-Fayyaz Colony, Satyana Road Faisalabad-Pakistan  
Tel/Fax: +92-41-8554335 E-Mail: [contact@awampk.org](mailto:contact@awampk.org) [www.awampk.org](http://www.awampk.org)

## **DISABILITY RIGHT ACTION GROUP (DRAG)**

The organization, in a society, is a pattern of relationships between and among individuals and social groups. Owing to these specific attributes, people are engaged with activities and actions that increase their intra and inter-group interactions and strong cohesive bonds, paving the way toward an inclusive society. The Disability Rights Action Group (DRAG) a voluntary forum emerged in 2018 with the support of the Association of Women for Awareness and Motivation (AWAM) to dispel the stereotypes and myths associated with disability and persons with disabilities that exclude them from the mainstream of society. The DRAG is consisting of Business communities, Journalists, Academia, Medical Practitioners, and Civil Society Representatives who are leading the DRAG as an independent forum since March 2020. Primarily, the DRAG envisioned establishing an inclusive society where people with disabilities are treated as a diverse group with certain rights and obligations.

The primary motives behind establishing the DRAG include:

- i. Empowerment of persons with disabilities,
- ii. Increasing the visibility of PWDs in social actions,
- iii. Influencing the social behaviors towards the disabilities and persons having disabilities, and,
- iv. Increasing the level of social acceptance of persons with disabilities.

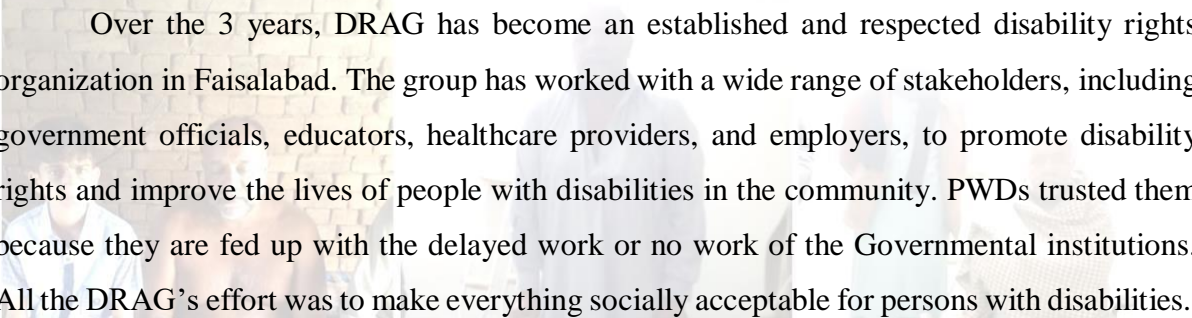
### **Objective**

The objectives to found the DRAG is,

- To eradicate the negative attitudes and discrimination toward disability that disempower Persons with disabilities and lead to their social exclusion and isolation.
- To Influence the Decision Makers to make policies against PWDs.
- To Provide Healthcare services to PWDs and make them fit to work.
- To create Awareness of their rights and reliefs which govt. has provided to them.
- To Eradicate discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, and communications.

- To empower people with disabilities by providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to become active members of society.
- To provide legal assistance to people with disabilities who have faced discrimination or violations of their rights.

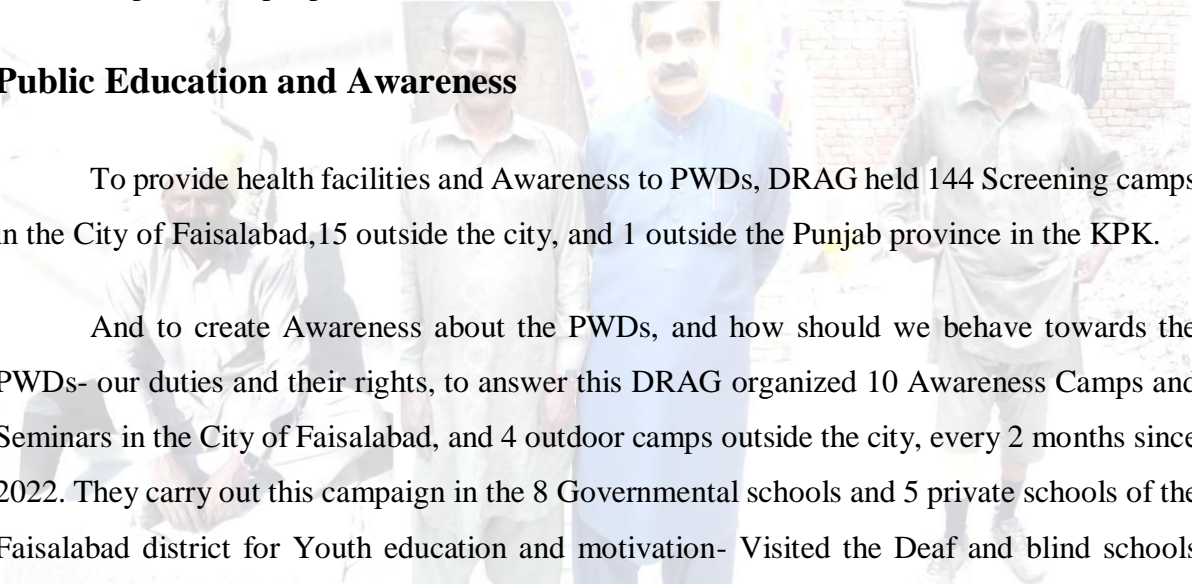
## **Interventions of DRAG**



Over the 3 years, DRAG has become an established and respected disability rights organization in Faisalabad. The group has worked with a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials, educators, healthcare providers, and employers, to promote disability rights and improve the lives of people with disabilities in the community. PWDs trusted them because they are fed up with the delayed work or no work of the Governmental institutions. All the DRAG's effort was to make everything socially acceptable for persons with disabilities.

DRAG mostly targeted the PWDs that are lower than the age of 18 because children with disabilities face unique challenges in accessing education and other opportunities, which may require specific attention and support. However, DRAG's work is not limited to children and encompasses all people with disabilities in the Faisalabad district.

## **Public Education and Awareness**

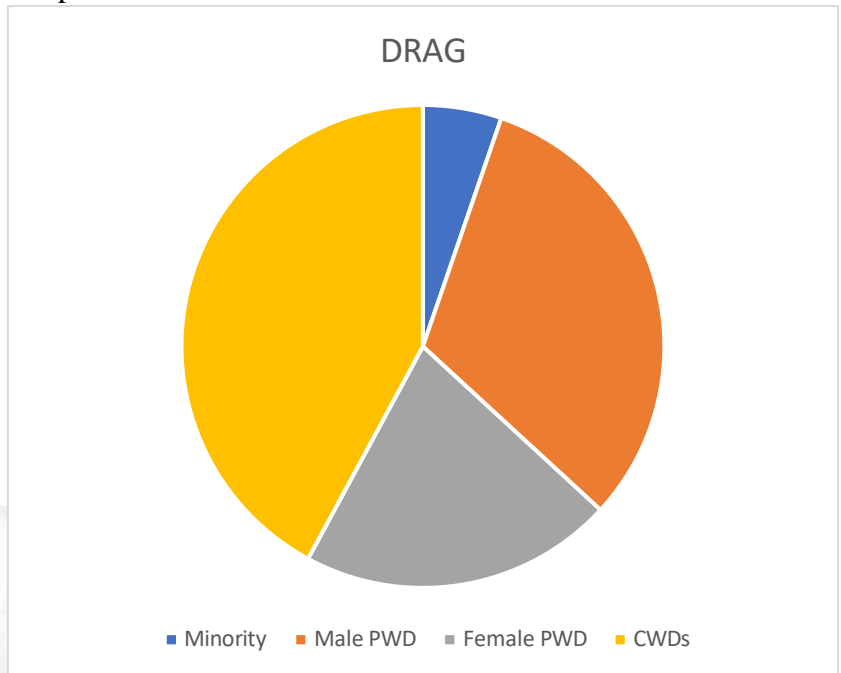


To provide health facilities and Awareness to PWDs, DRAG held 144 Screening camps in the City of Faisalabad, 15 outside the city, and 1 outside the Punjab province in the KPK.

And to create Awareness about the PWDs, and how should we behave towards the PWDs- our duties and their rights, to answer this DRAG organized 10 Awareness Camps and Seminars in the City of Faisalabad, and 4 outdoor camps outside the city, every 2 months since 2022. They carry out this campaign in the 8 Governmental schools and 5 private schools of the Faisalabad district for Youth education and motivation- Visited the Deaf and blind schools also. They visited the old age center because it encompasses not only the youth but all ages of Persons with disabilities. Continuing this, The DRAG team went 2 times to Radio FM-103 and is very active on social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp).

## **Identification and Enlisting**

DRAG- an organization for PWDs paid a door-to-door visit to the 82 Union Councils of the Faisalabad district (Out of 156), not only for awareness but for their legal and medical facilitation. Through these visits and camps, they identified approximately 7500 PWDs since 2020, 750 intellectually impaired others are physically and mentally impaired. Every month **Ch. Latif Gill** handled more than 500 cases of PWDs.

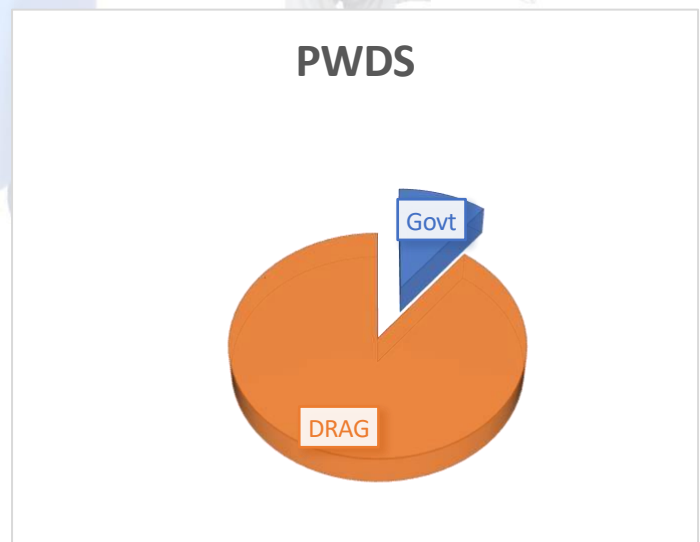


7337 PWDs are served with the certificate of disability and through this certificate, 5000 PWDs are given relief through Bait ul Maal and Govt. schemes, and approximately 200 CWDs are given B forms and certificates of disability with the help of the DRAG. Some PWDs died in between the 2 months when their certificates are proceeding because of the lack of management of the Governmental institutions.

### Facilitation

The DRAG has a marvelous system of service delivery mechanism they first go for Screening then applied the Governmental disability certificates, board, and then issue certificates although this process is slow from the Govt. side, DRAG successfully registered 7000 PWDs in the Faisalabad district in Govt. record previously it was only 2% but now due to DRAG, it is 15%.

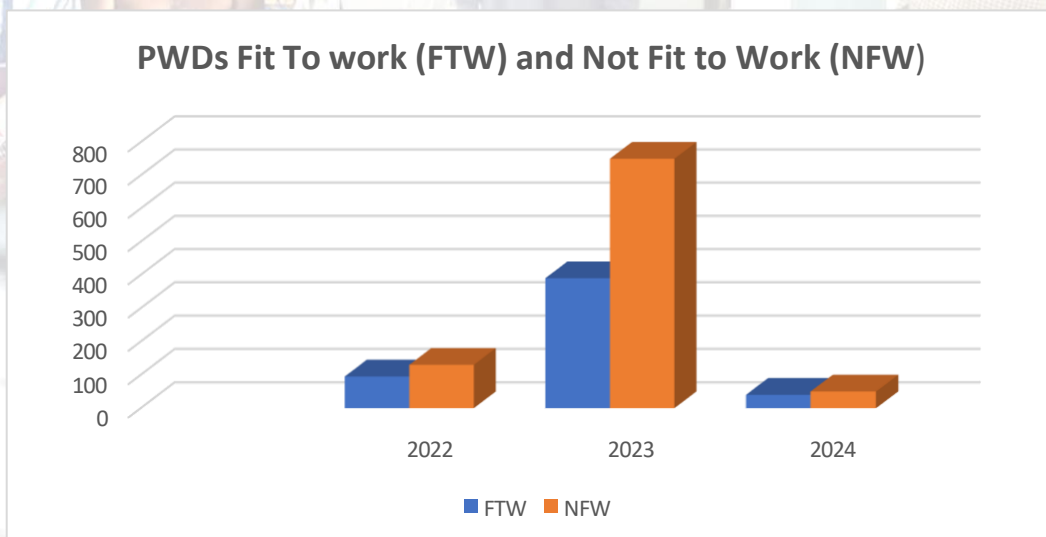
DRAG successfully distributed 250 assistive devices like Braces, hearing devices, and different devices for PWDs owing to these devices 3080 PWDs got the job from the private as well as public sectors. Some PWDs are equipped with Stitching, Cooking, and different skills from the Govt. institutions referred by DRAG to



independently run their businesses. CWDs- are supported by the DRAG so they can continue their education and be the better version of themselves because the ratio of CWDs to PWDs is 65 to 35 percent in the DRAG forum.

## Connectivity with Service Delivery Departments

DRAG submitted the 3000 applications in the Bait ul Maal for the PWDs who are not fit to work for their scholarships as they don't want PWDs to be dependent on others. The 250 PWDs are equipped with the skills of NASH E MAN and TEVTA and are now working independently and contributing to the success of the DRAG. For health measures, DRAG meets the Governmental Department (Dolphin Force) and strives collectively for education and awareness.



DRAG is not only active in the public but also in the private sector for the PWD's health and measures. They also contacted 280 people in the private sector for assistive devices for PWDs.

## Structural Hierarchy

DRAG-a strong working body comprises of 4 members.

- Chairperson is Chaudhry Latif Gill
- Program Director is Umer butt
- Managing Director Shahzal Gill.
- The public relation officer is Dr. Asma

There is no hegemony of anyone in the DRAG, the procedure to choose the Chairperson is the elections in the DRAG body anyone can participate in it and people of the DRAG through the plebiscite can choose it.

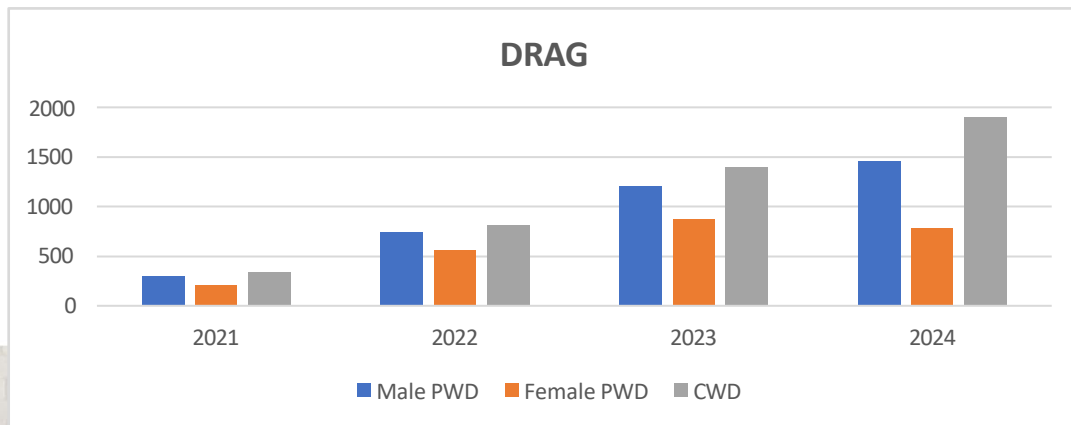
Other members of the DRAG are 55 but it exceeds in number because the DRAG members are in every part of the country serving the PWDs. As DRAG is open for everyone but the first three months supervise the work of the internees, then it hires permanent members for this organization.

## Plan of Action

Helped in generating the disability certificate or a PWD certificate that holds significant importance for persons with disabilities. It allows disabled individuals to avail the benefits, facilities, and concessions offered under different government schemes. Issued usually by the medical authorities, this document validates the type and extent of the disability a person has. With the aid of the certificate PWD gained the following services

- Scholarship schemes that are available for students with disabilities
- Reduction in income tax
- Discount on railway fare
- Reservation in government jobs
- Loan facilities for starting a new business
- Free travel facility in state transportation
- Access to assistive devices and prosthetic aids at subsidized rates
- Unemployment allowance (applicable for educated disabled persons)
- Group insurance (applicable for government employees with disabilities)
- Subsidy to buy adapted vehicles and many others

Door to Door campaign and Awareness create empathy; so, when you try to understand one another, it will stop that stereotyping mindset and create an inclusive and safe environment. By self-educating, you can find ways to create change and spread the word to others. DRAG actively indulge in Raising awareness through campaign and Seminars because, through disability awareness, the misconceptions and stereotypes surrounding those with disabilities can be brought to the forefront. When these are gone, attitudes and behaviors become more positive and impactful.



## Networking and Alliances

In order to thrive, everyone in the world requires partners or networks, and the Disability Right Action Group (DRAG) is no exception. DRAG has forged collaborations with various organizations and individuals to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. Notably, DRAG partnered with the esteemed right-based NGO, AWAM (Association for Women Motivation and Awareness), which focuses on empowering persons with disabilities. Additionally, DRAG collaborated with numerous healthcare workers, journalists, and lawmakers to amplify their efforts. Through these partnerships, DRAG not only raised awareness about disability rights but also breathed new life into the lives of countless individuals. Furthermore, DRAG is associated with the PAK STAR WELFARE CELL, a testament to its commitment to working with like-minded entities to drive positive change.

One noteworthy achievement of DRAG, in conjunction with AWAM, was the successful screening camp that resulted in the issuance of 50 certificates for minority PWD women. This initiative marked a significant step towards recognition and inclusivity for these women. Moreover, the joint campaign conducted in Quilim played a crucial role in increasing awareness about disability rights. By working together, DRAG and AWAM were able to make a profound impact and foster a more inclusive and understanding society for persons with disabilities.

Overall, the collaborations and collective efforts of DRAG with AWAM, healthcare workers, journalists, lawmakers, and others have strengthened their advocacy and brought about positive change in the lives of PWDs. Their dedication and teamwork serve as an

inspiration to continue promoting the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in the broader community.

## **Funding**

**Ch. Latif Gill**, the chairperson of DRAG, has personally funded the organization since 2020. Prior to that, DRAG and AWAM used to collaborate, but since 2020, they have been functioning as separate entities. One notable aspect of DRAG's approach is their decision not to accept Zakat and Fitrana, as they are wary of potential political exploitation. Given that Ch. Latif Gill is a political figure, he is committed to ensuring transparency in all aspects of the organization's operations.

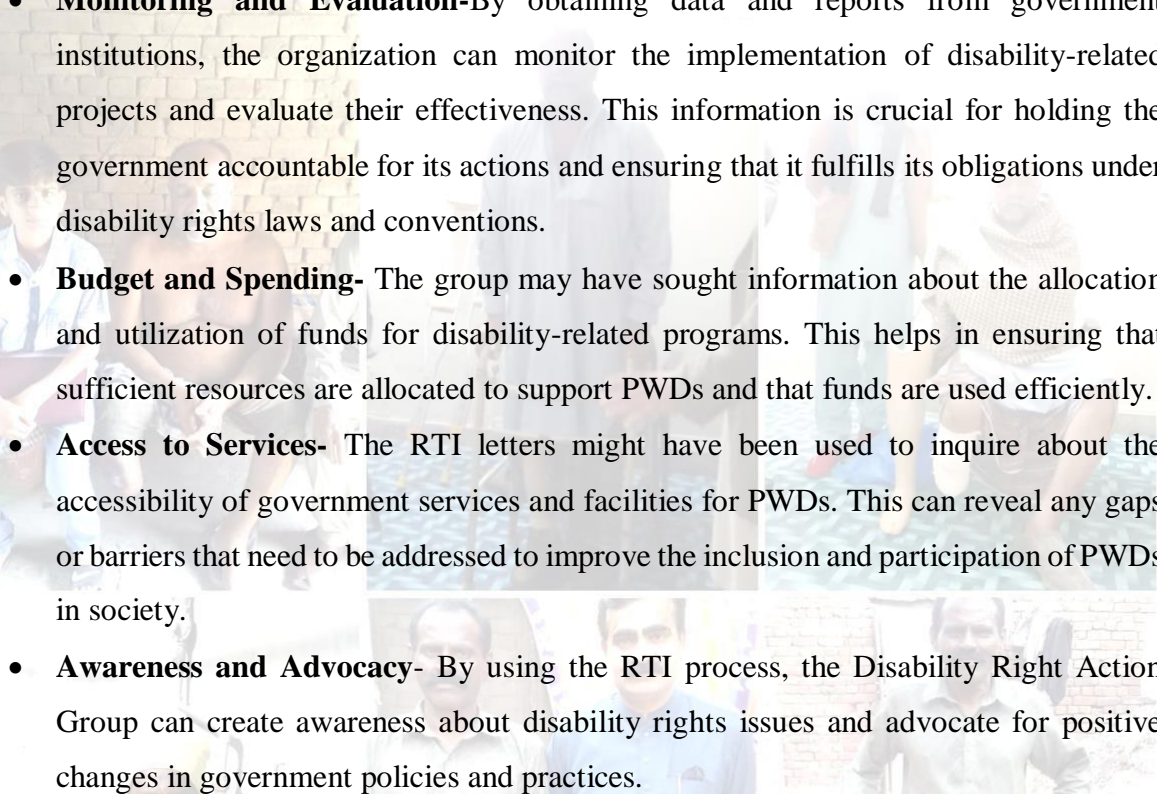
## **Major Achievement**

- Facilitated acquiring Disability Certificate – a mandatory document to claim or access reserved facilities and dedicated services for the person with disabilities. Approximately, the DRAG has facilitated 5000 persons with disabilities to obtain disability certificates [from January 1, 2021, to December 31, 2024].
- Convince Govt. to give a 50% discount on all kinds of traveling to PWDs
- Reservation in government jobs for PWDs.
- Convince the Govt. to make accessible ramps for PWDs in the Govt. buildings.
- Provide Loan facilities for starting a new business for PWDs.
- Provides assistive devices and prosthetic aids free or at subsidized rates.
- Provide Subsidies to buy adapted vehicles and many others
- Facilitated the PWDs to make the certificates in Tehsils also- decentralized from districts to tehsils.

## **Use of Article 19-A**

It's commendable that the Disability Right Action Group took the initiative to write 21 Right to Information (RTI) letters to different government institutions. Using the RTI is an essential tool for promoting transparency, and accountability, and ensuring the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are upheld. By sending these letters, the organization has demonstrated its commitment to advocating for the rights of PWDs and seeking access to relevant information from the government.

The RTI letters could have various objectives, such as:

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- **Seeking Information-**The group may have requested information about government policies, programs, and initiatives related to disability rights and services. This information can help them understand the current status of disability rights and identify areas that need improvement.
  - **Monitoring and Evaluation-**By obtaining data and reports from government institutions, the organization can monitor the implementation of disability-related projects and evaluate their effectiveness. This information is crucial for holding the government accountable for its actions and ensuring that it fulfills its obligations under disability rights laws and conventions.
  - **Budget and Spending-** The group may have sought information about the allocation and utilization of funds for disability-related programs. This helps in ensuring that sufficient resources are allocated to support PWDs and that funds are used efficiently.
  - **Access to Services-** The RTI letters might have been used to inquire about the accessibility of government services and facilities for PWDs. This can reveal any gaps or barriers that need to be addressed to improve the inclusion and participation of PWDs in society.
  - **Awareness and Advocacy-** By using the RTI process, the Disability Right Action Group can create awareness about disability rights issues and advocate for positive changes in government policies and practices.

The success of these RTI letters depends on the responsiveness and cooperation of the government institutions receiving them. In some cases, government institutions may be prompt in providing the requested information, while in others, they may delay or deny access to information. If the latter happens, the Disability Right Action Group may need to pursue legal avenues to enforce their right to access information.

Overall, using the RTI process is a crucial step toward advancing disability rights and fostering a more inclusive society for PWDs. The information obtained through these letters can empower the group to make informed decisions, advocate for change, and monitor the government's actions concerning disability issues.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the interview with the Chairman of the Disability Right Action Group (DRAG) has shed light on the critical work being undertaken by this organization in advocating for the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Through their unwavering commitment and tireless efforts, DRAG continues to create awareness, promote inclusion, and fight for equal opportunities for PWDs in society. The interview has provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by PWDs and the significant progress made in advancing disability rights. It serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of collective action and collaboration in ensuring a more inclusive and accessible world for everyone.

