

Disability Is an Asset

Sara Minkara is the founder of Empowerment Through Integration (ETI), a global nonprofit committed to developing a more inclusive society. Here, she talks about the need to change the narrative around disability—and how every sector of society can benefit when people with disabilities have a seat at the table.

Transcript begins.

[Sara Minkara, a blind Muslim woman wearing a white hijab, sits for an interview in an industrial studio.]

SARA MINKARA: The stigma surrounding disability varies from culture to culture, but ultimately the assumptions come down to a point that people with disabilities are not capable, cannot be independent—there's something that needs to be fixed. The narrative that we should have is that, actually, disability is a beautiful part of our identity, it's a beautiful part of our society. It's an asset. When a person's not able to do something, it's not because they cannot. It's because the system is not accessible, it's because the system is not inclusive. So by recognizing that, by fixing the system on both the technical level and adaptive level, people with disabilities can really embrace their own disability in a positive way and see it as an asset.

[on-screen graphic: Disability Is an Asset]

MINKARA: My name is Sara Minkara.

There are one billion individuals in this world with disabilities. That's one-seventh of the world population. It's the largest marginalized group in the world, in many different ways, from the education sector, employment, health sector. So everyone needs to be involved in changing the narrative.

The global community has been moving towards recognizing that people with disability are a part of the system, to be at the table discussing the policies, as well. And we cannot talk about alleviation of poverty without talking about people with disability. We cannot be talking about educating everyone without talking about people with disabilities.

Disability rights is the next movement, in the sense that it's part of all other existent movements. In every single sector, in every single space, people with disabilities are people with potential, people that can contribute, key people that bring value. And when we don't integrate people with disabilities into society, we are losing out. Everyone is losing out.

It's not a charity-based perspective. It's not just human rights. It's a value-based perspective. The inclusion of all is a value for all.

[on-screen graphic: There Is No Justice without Disability]

End of transcript.