

Understanding INCLUSIVE PRACTICES in Schools

Examples of Schools from India

Edited by

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Seva-in-Action is a voluntary organisation working in the field of community based rehabilitation and inclusive education since 1985. Its mission is to develop an inclusive society which accepts human diversity and enables equal participation of persons with disabilities.

Disability and Development Partners (DDP) is a UK based international NGO. DDP works with organisations of and for disabled people to design, develop and implement projects and programmes in low income countries to produce material benefits for disabled people in the main areas of livelihoods, education and rehabilitation.

Photographs from: Government Lower Primary School Masturi Block, Bilaspur District, Chhattisgarh; ADAPT, Spastics Society of India, Mumbai; Government Main Higher Primary School (Main School) & Samvardhana Resource Centre, Ramanagara, Karnataka; Model Primary Government School; Teacher Training Institute (TTI) Mancaud, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

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Dedicated to
Those who are striving to make
inclusive education a reality

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Seva-in-Action is a voluntary organisation working since two decades in the area of education of children with disabilities. We work specifically with government schools and with the education system in planning and implementation of projects in the area of inclusive education. This study is the first attempt of Seva-in-Action to understand the micro level interventions and realities of inclusion and document evidence of inclusive practices in select schools. We hope that this would be a learning experience for all of us who are working towards inclusion.

We are grateful to Big Lottery Fund (UK) and Disability and Development Partners (DDP-UK) for supporting this documentation through the Education and Livelihood Opportunities programme and helping us to contribute to a better understanding of inclusive practices at the grass root level. In particular, we would like to thank Mr. Simon Godziek of DDP-UK for taking interest in this exercise and going through the final drafts. We are thankful to all the contributors for writing the case studies in a simple and lucid manner. This is meant to serve as an easy resource material for all those who are engaged in creating inclusive schools.

Thanks are due to the Advisory Committee that was formed to guide the research team with school selection and developing data collection formats for case studies. Inputs were mainly sought through emails and telephone discussions. The research team periodically sent updates and posed queries to the Advisory Committee, especially in the initial phase of the documentation. We are particularly thankful to Dr. Sonali Nag, Dr. Renu Singh and Dr. Sudesh Mukhopadhyay for their guidance and support. Dr Sudhish, SCERT, Chhattisgarh helped us in identifying the Block Resource Centre and we are thankful to him for the support extended during our Chhattisgarh visit. We are also thankful to Solution Exchange Education Community and all the members who responded to our query posted on the forum.

We would have liked to include more schools as examples where inclusive education is practiced, however, due to paucity of time and human resources, we were unable to do so. We would like to hear from

the readers about schools where children with disabilities are studying alongside other children and where schools have tried to incorporate inclusion within their overall mission. We would like to look at this compilation of examples as an ongoing process and would be happy to update this volume with additions in future.

Ruma Banerjee

Archana Mehendale

Manjula Nanjundaiah

Abbreviations Used

ADAPT	Able Disabled All People Together (earlier known as Spastic Society of India)
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
ADL	Activities of Daily Living
AIISH	All India Institute of Speech & Hearing
AMWs	Anganwadi Multipurpose Workers
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
B.A.	Bachelor of Arts
BIL	Barriers to Inclusion
BMC	Mumbai (Bombay) Municipal Corporation
BRC	Block Resource Centre
B.Sc	Bachelor of Science
CAPP	Culturally Appropriate Policy and Practice
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CDA	Child Development Aide
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CII	Community Initiatives in Inclusion
CICH	Centre for International Child Health
CP	Cerebral Palsy
CRC	Cluster Resource Centre
CRPs	Cluster Resource Persons
CWSN	Children with Special Needs
D.Ed.	Diploma in Education
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
DS	Development Scales
DSERT	Directorate of State Educational Research and Training
GDD	Global Developmental Delay
GOI	Government of India
GMHPS	Govt. Main Higher Primary School
HI	Hearing Impairment
HM	Head Master
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IE	Inclusive Education
IEDC	Integrated Education for Disabled Children

IEP	Individualised Education Plan
II	Intellectual Impairment
KG	Kindergarten
LD	Learning Disability
LRT	Learning Resource Team
MCGM	Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai
MD	Multiple Disabilities
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development, GOI
M.Sc.	Master of Science
NCERT	National Council for Educational Research and Training
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NIMH	National Institute for Mentally Handicapped
NIMHANS	National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences
NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
NIVH	National Institute for Visually Handicapped
NPE	National Policy on Education
NRCI	National Resource Centre for Inclusion
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
O & M	Orientation and Mobility
OT	Occupational Therapy
PE	Physical Education
PT	Physiotherapy
PG	Post Graduation
PIED	Project for Integrated Education for Disabled
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
RCI	Rehabilitation Council of India
SDMC	School Development and Monitoring Committee
SI	Speech Impairment
SIA	Seva-in-Action
SRC	Samvardhana Resource Centre
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
SSI	Spastics Society of India
TLMs	Teaching and Learning Materials
TOT	Training of Trainers
TTI	Teacher Training Institute
UEE	Universalisation of Elementary Education
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
VI	Visual Impairment

Ruma Banerjee, Archana Mehendale and Manjula Nanjundaiah

Children with disabilities have equal rights to education as children without disabilities. Inclusion of children with disabilities is based on respect for the fundamental human rights and dignity of each individual and it envisions an entire education system becoming more responsive to the needs of all children. There have been diverse principles, approaches and practices aimed at meeting the needs of these children within the mainstream education system so that children with disabilities study with children without disabilities in regular schools.

This documentation is a compilation of eight examples of how schools have tried to become inclusive. A peek into the micro level interventions happening within schools helps us to understand how children with disabilities are included and how they are learning with their peers who do not have such disabilities. It tries to answer the questions - what has been tried as inclusive education for children with disabilities and how does it work at the micro level. The case studies reflect specific interventions in terms of strategy, resources and need-based interventions, in terms of curriculum adaptation, resource support measures, school level policies, accessibility measures in terms of both physical and attitudinal, to enable learning of all children and to make class rooms inclusive and learner friendly. The purpose of this exercise was not to evaluate or assess the schools but to document their practices on inclusion. The idea is also not to become judgmental about practices being 'good' or 'best', but to showcase what has been tried, what works and what are the challenges involved.

This documentation tries to capture practices adopted in different places, both rural and urban and within different types of schools, both government and private. One of the case studies has also tried to look at the role of special schools and the changes they have undergone in order to make inclusive education a reality. With diversity in geographical, cultural and socioeconomic conditions, it was essential to understand inclusion from varied perspectives.

The purpose of taking up this documentation also relates to Seva-in-Action's work in the field of inclusion over two decades. We have been working with the state government in planning and implementing inclusive education in government schools and have always felt a need

to understand the micro-level interventions of inclusion and document evidences of inclusive practices in different situations. We think that this would be a learning experience for all of us who are practicing inclusion. Besides this, the recommendations on the basis of our documentation could be considered by policy makers and other stake holders in the field of inclusive education for planning policies and their implementation.

Methodology

Looking into the scenario at international and national level, there has been a clear shift in the paradigms of education of children with disabilities from segregated, specialised environments to mainstreaming children on the basis of equal opportunities and rights. This documentation was undertaken after doing a review of literature on inclusive education in the country and after collating the observations of the research team on the basis of their practical field experience. One of the starting points was the recognition of the reality that this shift from segregated to mainstream education is primarily observed in government schools which are directly under the control of the government. The urban and private education system, by and large, is yet to accept inclusion as a principle and allow or encourage mainstreaming of children with disabilities within their institutions. The review of literature also showed that there has been a lot of documentation done under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) on inclusive education. Studies on NGO interventions and home-based education as part of SSA are two major reports brought out in recent times. Some state governments such as Karnataka have also commissioned research on inclusive education in the past. However, these studies rarely provide us a picture of what happens inside schools and classrooms that have children with disabilities. Most of these studies try to capture the status and implementation of inclusive education at the macro level.

Scope

This documentation has focused mainly on regular elementary schools except one special school in Maharashtra where children without disabilities are also admitted to study along with children with disabilities. The schools are from different parts of India; urban, rural, those located in small towns and remote villages. The selected schools are located in the following states: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh.

Schools were selected in the following manner. The first step of the selection process was to circulate information related to this documentation widely in order to get a selection of schools practicing inclusion from different parts of the country and using different approaches and strategies. We circulated a query on the Education Community of Solution Exchange (hosted by UNESCO India) seeking suggestions about names of schools where inclusive education is being practiced and similar documentation that we could refer to. We received some very good leads for starting the study, especially Chhattisgarh, which was selected, based on the input we received from Solution Exchange. We also wrote to SSA offices in different states and received some inputs from them. Further, eminent experts working in the field of education and inclusive education were contacted for direction and suggestions. On the basis of information thus received, schools were shortlisted. At the beginning, fifteen schools were shortlisted based on the following criteria: there is a sizeable population of children with disabilities in the school, the school has children with various disabilities such as physical, sensory, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and the school has been practicing inclusion for a minimum of last five years. Since this exercise was not meant to be a survey, preference was given to identifying a few schools where we would get an opportunity to observe inclusive practices. During the course of selection, we were also conscious about identifying schools which offered different philosophies, approaches, measures, and methods for inclusion. The other criterion that determined selection was the availability of researchers/ documentationists who could visit the school, collect data and write the case studies. Later, permissions were sought from the schools to conduct this documentation and publish the same for wider dissemination.

Developing the data collection format and documentation

A data collection format was prepared to provide the contributors with an overall sense of direction and scope of the documentation. The data collection format included different sets of interview guides with teachers, children, peers, parents and school management, and observation guides. The format was first circulated among the members of the Advisory Committee for their comments. On the basis of the feedback received, it was decided to cover the following categories of disabilities: orthopaedic, speech, hearing, visual disabilities and blindness, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, children with developmental disabilities, autism, Attention Deficit and Hyperactive

Disorder (ADHD) and multiple disabilities. Some changes and additions were also made to the data collection format and the observation guide was elaborated on.

Pilot testing of the data collection formats was done in one urban private school and one rural government school to understand the nature of responses that the format would elicit and the time it would take for the researchers to collect the data. Based on this experience, a few changes were done to make the format more flexible.

During our visits to schools, we found that there were certain thematic areas that need to be captured by going beyond the school environment per se and such case studies were also included because they added to the richness of the approach. Although the data collection formats were used for all case studies, the actual case studies of schools did not follow a uniform pattern because the thrust and approach of every school towards inclusion differed. In fact, we encouraged every case study to focus on the strong, unique identity of every school's approach towards inclusion. The intention was to bring out the richness and highlight the specific dimensions of inclusion as observed in each school. This was essential to make the documentation rich with unique qualitative data. The data collection and writing of the case studies was done by practitioners of inclusive education and researchers. Some of the contributors were working at the same school.

This compilation is the first attempt of Seva-in-Action to document micro level interventions in the area of inclusive education, with the school as the unit of study. The understanding of how inclusion works at the school level and the essential ingredients that makes inclusion possible, is being shared through this compilation.

Respecting Equality and Diversity

Inclusive Education at Lady Andal School, Chennai

Mallika Ganapathy

twelve year old Vibhukishan talks excitedly about the Padma

T Bushan football league that he played for. He energetically tells about his role as a forward and goalie through the game and the six goals he shot.

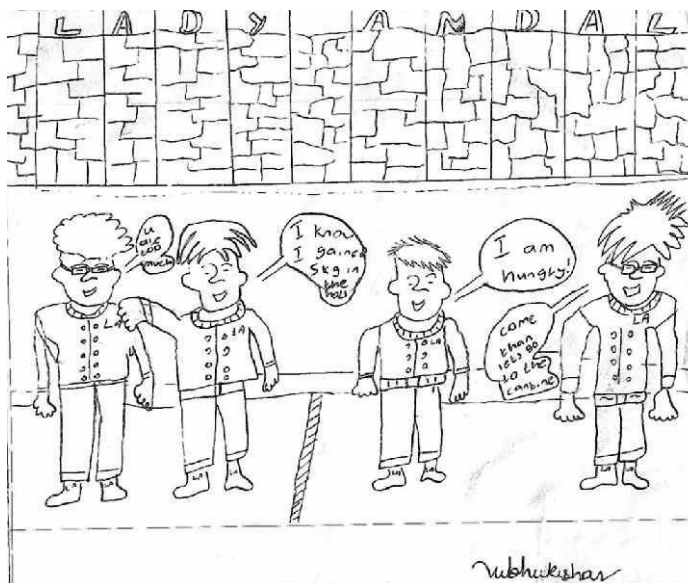
Who is Vibhu? He is a child studying in Grade 7 in Lady Andal School, Chennai. He is also a friend, an enthusiastic participant of activities in class, a football and basketball player, amateur artist and one who had a lot of difficulty in reading comprehension and writing. Vibhu was diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of six.

Through the years there have been many pits and falls. However, with the constant support of the school community, Vibhu is aware of his strengths and difficulties and handles it with a lot of positivity and grace. He tells us that in the early years he needed extra help on a daily basis from his teachers in the resource room and also a special evaluation method for all subjects. But now his visits to the resource room have come down to twice a week and he requires special evaluation for only two papers.



My School

Vibhu plays online games, chit chats in corridors and is a member of the 'boy gang' in class. When asked if he is happy at school, he responds without hesitation, "My teachers are very kind to me, my friends help me a lot and am very happy here".



The School - history and now

Lady Andal Venkatasubba Rao School was started in the year 1928 by late Lady Andal together with Justice Sir M. Venkatasubbarao when they established the Madras Seva Sadan, an institute to protect, teach and help destitute women and children. The Madras Seva Sadan is a registered charitable trust and social welfare institution comprising over 14 socially oriented organisations, out of which Lady Andal School is one. The school caters mainly to children from middle and upper middle class families. Currently there are 1300 children in the school from Grades 1-12 and 200 of these children have special needs. The school caters to a range of children with special needs children with learning disabilities, Autism Spectral Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, ADHD, Mild cognitive Impairments, Down's syndrome, and mild vision and hearing impairments.

Perspectives in inclusion

From the beginning the school has been open to taking in children with special needs, but inclusion began significantly in the year 1985. During this year, the school admitted a child with multiple sclerosis, who had

only a couple of months to live, into Grade 3. The school wanted to give the child the happy experience of being part of a mainstream classroom. In 1987, systemic intervention for dyslexia began. In 2003, Vidhya Sagar, a school for children with special needs, approached the school management to admit some of their children with Cerebral Palsy into Grade 11, which they did. Since then, the school has continued to show a positive and open attitude towards inclusion.

Lady Andal does not have a specific objective or policy for inclusion just a strong will to provide education for all children in an environment where everyone gets an opportunity to translate their potential into reality. It is a school that is a 'home away from home'; it is child friendly accept and respect all children is its motto; and the result is hardworking, confident and happy children.

The process

The process is a detailed track of the child from the time of admission to the classroom to extra curricular activities. It talks about the support services and community involvement.

The admission process

There is no reservation but admission is based on the ratio of special needs children in the classroom. Most children are age-appropriately placed in class; some children are placed one class lower if suggested by the resource head. Typically in a classroom there are about 3 children with learning disabilities. Children with autism and cerebral palsy who need a caretaker are one per section. The school charges a nominal fee of Rs. 400 for those children who use the services of the resource room.

Assessments

The child is sent to the Learning Centre (the resource centre) for an assessment of his current performance level in all areas. The assessment process for a child takes one working day. It is done by the head of the resource room, a special educator. The resource centre was set up in 1996 for systematic intervention for children with learning disabilities. It provides constant support for the child. The resource room contains five special educators, who work mostly in one-on-one remedial sessions and sometimes in small groups of two or three. Their main objective is to enhance the skills the child requires in the

classroom with relation to reading and spelling, math, writing and thinking skills. External expertise is sought in areas such as cerebral palsy or autism. Pull out programs using services of external therapists happens when the child requires more intensive intervention than is possible in the school. At present two children attend half-day sessions with an NGO and are back in the classroom for the afternoon session. The resource room team is responsible for the remedial therapy in terms of special education and occupational therapy and they are constantly in touch with the class teacher, the subject teachers and parents to update them about the progress of the child in all areas. The assessment is done using a battery of standardised tests. A few of the tests are CWS (Correct Writing Sequences), Schonell Graded Word Reading Test, Regan's Battery for assessing children with Learning Disabilities, Checklists for behavior modification, etc. Once the assessments have been done and the capabilities and difficulties identified, an Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is formulated for the child by the teachers in the resource room.

Orientation

Before the child goes into the classroom, the students, teaching and non-teaching staff are oriented by the parents and resource room teachers about the needs of the special child. This is done to sensitise the peers about the special needs of the child and help them feel comfortable and form buddy groups. Other than this, capacity building workshops have been organised by the school to enhance teachers' skills in meeting the social and communication needs of the children with cerebral palsy and autism in the classroom. The school management has also made a decision to identify two resource teachers who would get trained with the help of an external NGO to reach out effectively to children with autism.

In the classroom

Physical infrastructure and environment:

The corridors are wide and classroom entrances are broad. The classrooms in themselves are large, airy and well light. Other than this, there is no special infrastructure in the classroom. A classroom of 30 usually has five to six children with special needs, with one child having an aide. An aide is a caretaker identified and trained by the parents to help the child comply and participate in activities in the class and

school. They help the teacher focus on the whole class. Children with cerebral palsy are seated in the front row for easy access. Aide is provided for a child who is non-verbal and has sensory issues. Children with Aides are seated in the back row or in the side rows. The teacher allows the children with Aide to move out of the classroom if he/she needs a break. Non-verbal children are allowed access to laptops for communication. All the children are friendly and peers are always assisting special children and being sensitive to their needs.

Teaching methodology

The teaching methodology like in any other school is the usual chalk and board method; however, the teachers use information and communication technologies in teaching. Grades 1 to 10 have lessons supplemented by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for all subjects. Every class has a system, projector and a screen. Many of their online lessons are from e-patashala, an organisation that works with schools and provides them online supplements to concepts taught in the classroom. Teachers also make their own presentations. It is disabled-friendly in that there are provisions to zoom and highlight texts for children with vision problems or scanning difficulties. Content is simple, interesting and culturally relevant. It is presented in the form of mind maps, flow charts and concept charts with a lot of visuals, making learning suitable for all types of learners.

"In geography, children learn better with ICT as they are able to visualise abstract concepts for example, they learn better about latitudes and longitudes by manipulating the display on the screen. Especially, children with special needs benefit as they can control their learning. They are able to confidently manipulate and reinforce learned concepts independently." Geography teacher, Grade 4.

Overall, the attitude in the classroom is positive as the teachers practice and teach a sense of equality amongst the children irrespective of their academic achievements or difficulties. This has inspired many a student.

Teachers' attitude an inspiration

Parthasarathy says, "I like English; it's a funny language. I am not sure why I like it maybe it is because of the way my teacher teaches me the subject. I also like it because I am doing well in it after coming to Lady Andal.

Parent-teacher interaction

The parents of children with special needs are free to meet not only the teachers but even the principal when compelled to. The parents often informally meet the class teachers and subject teachers or the resource head to discuss progress and obtain feedback, sometimes even on a daily basis. Discussions include portions for the exam, the type of evaluation and question paper pattern. Day-to-day interaction involves feedback of the child's response in the classroom or behaviour. Parents are also encouraged to talk about the strengths and progress of the child as observed at home or other social or therapy situations. Non-verbal children with autism attend therapy sessions outside the school as the resource persons in school are not trained to teach them. In such cases, parents share the therapists work and response of the child with the teachers. The school on the other hand is currently equipping itself to teach children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) through workshops and training programs.

Evaluation

The school has a special provision for evaluation of children with special needs. The teachers set up to five different question papers for the same class in order to help the children do well in their exams. The evaluation could be oral, in the form of objective type questions or in using a letter chart or word chart. In addition to this, there is a separate scribe room on the ground floor where scribing is done for some students. Sometimes if the child can study only one portion of the syllabus then he/she is tested based on only what has been studied. Thus, the evaluation system is very flexible and this is a very helpful to the children. Another reason for successful inclusion is that there is no obsessive focus on 100% result and the teachers are not awarded for producing good results. But this doesn't mean that the school doesn't produce results. Until now about 150 children with special needs have passed out of Lady Andal. They have appeared for the Matriculation and State board exams in 10th and 12th respectively. Some children appeared for exams by the National Open University.

- IV Fill in with blanks with an adjective in the brackets to make the sentence more interesting:



Example: The bird is singing a song.

The blue bird is singing a sweet song.

1. The tree is near the river.
(long, green)



The _____ tree is near the _____ river.

2. The tiger ate the rabbit.
(hungry, small)



The _____ tiger ate the _____ rabbit.

3. The fish swam in the water.
(clean ,little)



The _____ fish swam in the _____ water.

Differentiated question paper: The difference between the regular paper set for the class and the special paper lies in the picture cues and examples given. The adaptations and concessions during examinations for the children with special needs have been in the form of alternative forms to writing such as computers and letter chart; scribes; extra time; use of pacifiers (such as music through earphones), etc. ICT serves as another tool for ongoing evaluation in the classroom. The questions and options are projected on the screen and the children are given personalised remotes to answer. This is less threatening than ongoing oral evaluations.

Fearless Students!

Shithij, a student with autistic spectral disorder in secondary enjoys ICT. He is non-verbal. He does not fear evaluation as test results are not disclosed to others. During evaluation each child is given a remote to click the right answer and Shithij is very focused and prompt in clicking the answers.

Outside the classroom

Physical infrastructure

Outside the classroom, there is a whole other world for the children - with exciting social events, cultural activities, sports and much more to keep them busy. Changes in the physical infrastructure are minimal.

There is an elevator that gives access to all three floors in the school, two ramps from the ground floor corridor leading to the courtyard and canteen. What Lady Andal has in ample to give is attitude a calm, accepting and incredibly friendly inclusive environment. Children are very sensitive and spontaneously help children with special needs. It is a common sight to see a child with special needs being helped down the steps or wheeled around the corridors by his/her peers, sharing a joke and being part of the 'gang'. Being of help can sometimes give rise to pity. But this is not the case here. All practice respect and equality. This also helps the children be naturally included.

Labs and library

Lady Andal has a well stocked library, science lab, computer lab and a math lab. The materials in the math lab are particularly impressive as they help the child learn through multiple sensory stimulation. Materials address algebra, trigonometry, fractions, addition of rational number, etc. and are used to both introduce a concept as well as reinforce it. Children with disabilities use all these facilities. There are no special adaptations for children with special needs. However, in all these places, children work in multi-ability groups of five each. Peers assist each other with their task.

Supportive services:

The resource centre and the Occupational Therapy (OT) room provide constant support to the child outside the classroom.

The Resource Room (called the Learning Centre)

This comprises teachers and parents who volunteer. It was set up in 1996 to help children with learning disabilities. Remedial sessions are given based on the child's requirement. The class teacher and subject teachers bring to the attention of the resource head (also the Vice Principal of the school) any child they feel who has special needs. The resource head does an assessment of the current performance level of the child and decides the kind and frequency of remediation required. The remediation is aimed at the child gradually meeting all the demands of the class room. As the child shows improvement the sessions are reduced. Some children attend one-on-one sessions thrice a week at the resource centre and some others two sessions. The resource room has text books; reference material; materials for teaching reading and

spelling rules, grammar, readiness skills, etc.; graded story books for reading comprehension, alphabet puzzles and worksheets to help children with specific difficulties. The school has funded most materials. The parents club has also contributed to some of the material in the form of books. The materials are made and stored methodically with regard to the skills they address in reading readiness and reading, spelling, pre-math and math concepts, etc. The materials are selected and used by the resource room teachers according to the child's needs. Many of the worksheets are based on the class curriculum, adapted to suit the child's needs. These materials help children enhance their perceptual skills, reading and comprehension skills.

Use the Common nouns given in the lists on the left and the right to complete the story given below :



The king and the _____ decided _____ to have a picnic in a _____ just outside _____ their _____. They spread a _____ made _____ of _____ on the _____. The queen had brought along a _____ with lots of things to eat. She took some _____ and spread _____ and _____ on it. They also had _____ which she had baked herself. The king liked to have extra _____ in his _____. The _____ overhead was blue and _____ were singing in the trees. The _____ on their heads were studded with _____ and shone brightly in the morning _____.

Name :

Date :

Work Sheet No. :

Class :

Subject :

Teacher's Signature :

Sample worksheet: Picture to facilitate comprehension is provided in the worksheet.

The resource room also provides parents with a constant feedback on the child's performance and is a great source of strength and hope to most parents.

The Occupational Therapy (OT) Room

This is another support service on the second floor. With a trampoline, therapy ball, mattress, wooden board slide covered with felt, rope ladder, skipping rope, activities for fine motor skills and concentration such as beads, links, etc., it a great source of learning as well as relaxation for many children. All children up to six years of age visit the OT room for group OT every morning. At-risk children are screened and parents and teachers informed of intervention strategies. The school also facilitates pull-out programs, wherein children can leave the school during working hours to seek services that are not available in the school, such as speech and communication therapy, physiotherapy, etc. Mostly Children with ASD and cerebral palsy seek these services. They attend the main academic classes in the morning session and leave school after lunch break in order to attend other therapy sessions.

Community participation:

It has a rich community of parents, teachers and grandparents involved in a tapestry of social and cultural activities such as moms club, sports day, grandparents' day, field trips, farewell, etc.

Mom's club: Mothers of children studying at Lady Andal have come together to form a club that actively participates in the progress of the school. The club comprises parents of children with special needs and their peers. They believe in inclusion as much as the school does. Moms and dads are involved in scribing for children with writing difficulties, reading to children with learning disabilities twice a week for 40 minutes, organising carnivals and fundraisers once a year. Varalakshmi, a mom and member of the club, speaks highly of the inclusion process in the school.

Inclusion universally beneficial

"It has benefited the peers of special children as well. Values are instilled by observing and practicing. It is amusing to see how the extremely naughty children too mellow down when in company with the special children."

Grandparents' club: Another event unique to Lady Andal is the grandparents' day. It is the school's way of acknowledging the role that grandparents play in the children's life. The grandparents and children take turns performing skits, songs, dances and much more. Lunch is arranged after the entertainment is over and flowers are given out to all grandparents. It is a gesture of respect and recognition of the selfless work grandparents put in for their wards' well being.

What makes Lady Andal different from other schools?

Lady Andal is a regular matriculation school like any other. The strategies and teaching methodologies are primarily chalk and talk apart from ICT in learning. Yet what makes inclusion successful in Lady Andal is its openness and attitude towards children.

Transparency and accessibility Lady Andal stands apart

"There is total access to the management and teachers. In fact, one of the children affected by Cerebral Palsy goes directly to the principal whenever he has a grievance and insists on communicating with her by typing on the computer."

They believe in respect and equal opportunity for all children. This belief permeates through the entire system, from the management through the teaching and non-teaching staff, parents to the children. Nobody has any doubts about inclusion, at least not now.

Equality and respect the motto

Lady Andal is the best; they treat every child in a special way. If not for the school, my son would have been termed 'unfit'.

An interesting incident quoted by the head of the resource centre is that when inclusion began in 1987, there were mild protests from a few parents of the peers. They were unhappy and felt that their children's progress may slow down due to the inclusion of children with special needs. Their queries were answered and their concerns addressed by the school which made them understand that this would not happen. They were requested to wait for a month and then discuss the subject again. During this waiting period, parents realised their children (or their learning) were not adversely affected by inclusion of special children; rather they learnt better values and reached out to people even outside of school more warmly. This made the parents come back

saying that everything was fine with their children and in fact their children were benefiting from the inclusive setting. Since then there have been no queries against inclusion. On the other hand, parents have become active participants in the process volunteering to read and scribe for children with learning disabilities. As mentioned earlier, the rich community participation through moms' club and grandparents club has helped to sustain this positive attitude.

How can inclusion at Lady Andal be made more effective?

Although the warm, friendly and accepting atmosphere at Lady Andal makes inclusion easy, a few changes in the resource room and classroom would take inclusion to new heights in the school. Currently, the resource centre plays a major role for a child with special needs beginning with the assessment of the child to remediation to evaluation. The class and subject teachers are sometimes at a loss in meeting the needs of a special child in a group situation. The resource room teachers should transfer such skills to the class teacher. When this happens, the school will be able to reach out to more children and also take inclusion to new heights.

Presently children with autism and cerebral palsy are accessing services from outside. Teachers in the classroom and resource room are still unaware of how to reach out to these children. While feedback from external services is shared informally with the school, there is no in-built system for interaction between the resource room teachers and the external therapists. The management should sustain the efforts it has initiated to equip itself to reach out to this group of children effectively.

While ICT and labs do provide multi-sensorial ways of learning, these consist of a small part of the teaching methodology. The major part of teaching learning process is chalk and talk method. Gradual change in pedagogic practices with introduction of experiential, collaborative and interactive learning will benefit all children.

Looking to the future a common sense of purpose

In Lady Andal not just the children benefit from inclusion but the entire community benefits. The stage is set and there is a definite readiness for further development. With minor modifications and adaptations in the teaching methodology, Lady Andal will be able to take inclusion to a

new level. Inclusion in Lady Andal is effective because the school welcomes diversity and uses it as a resource from which the entire school community benefits. We all understand inclusion as an act of virtue but when we look deep enough within ourselves we realise that it is simple commonsense to include. We are all interconnected in a wide tapestry of life forms where even the extinction of a single cellular organism can cause our world to crumble. Like Jo Chopra rightly says, "People with disabilities enrich our lives in ways that we cannot begin to fathom. And those of us lucky enough to be ecologists in this particular ecosystem can make grateful lists of rocks they have disintegrated and nitrogen they've created from thin air. But that's just a bonus. Like the rest of us they are here because God made them. There is no need for them to justify their existence, for every cubic inch of space is a miracle."

Supporting Inclusion from 'Integrated School' to the 'Mainstream School'

A case of JSS School, Bangalore

Archana Mehendale

Background:

The JSS High School is one of the schools among a host of educational institutions run under the aegis of the JSS Mahavidya peetham. It is recognised by the Government of Karnataka and is affiliated to the Karnataka State Secondary School Leaving Certificate Board. Located in a middle class neighbourhood of Jayanagar in Bangalore, the school is known to admit children from all socio-economic backgrounds from nursery to high school. This school has provided educational opportunities to children with disabilities even before it was prescribed through our National Policy on Education, 1986.

In 1984, J.S.S. 'Sahana' was established within the premises of the high school with only three children and a teacher in a small room. It was an integrated school which catered to children with special educational needs and was called 'Sahana' for short. In the initial years, the focus was on sensitising and training the teachers. Some of the teachers had special qualifications and others were parents of children with disabilities.

Children are admitted to 'Sahana' on the basis of a medical and an educational assessment. Earlier, admission was given to children of any age group but now the admission is restricted to those between four and eight years. Sometimes, a child may get admitted in the JSS High School at any grade but if the child is found to have any special needs, the child gets first referred to Sahana and is required to spend a few months or years until she/he can be sent to the mainstream school. Children are admitted to Sahana only if they have been toilet trained and if they do not have severe behavioural problems. Many children come from long distances because they have been referred to the school or have heard about the school. Parents of children coming from far off places wait within the school premises and take their children back after the school hours. Some parents have been coming for more than ten years and they feel that it is worth all their time and effort. About 15 to 20 children are admitted to Sahana every year. This is done in order to maintain a favourable teacher-student ratio. At present, Sahana has 14 teachers (both men and women) and children with

learning disabilities, intellectual impairments, hearing impairments, low vision, and autism. Some children have multiple disabilities. The teacher-pupil ratio is maintained at 1:8 or 1: 10. However, severely disabled children are not admitted as it requires a different kind of set up and custodial care which Sahana is unable to provide. All teachers are trained in special education and/or Multi-Category Resource Teachers' Training Programme which was also run by Sahana for assisting integration of children in mainstream schools.

The significance and relevance of Sahana in facilitating children's entry into the mainstream school is worth understanding. First of all, the work done at Sahana is highly respected by the management and the teachers from the High School. It is not relegated to a secondary status but in fact is seen as an important contribution of the school. Secondly, it receives adequate infrastructure, has a separate Principal and administration to manage its work. Thirdly, although its main aim is to prepare the children to get into the High School, it continues to offer educational opportunities of diverse kinds to those who cannot be mainstreamed. Fourthly, Sahana serves as an important support to all the children who are mainstreamed, thereby ensuring their positive learning experiences continue even after getting mainstreamed.

Approach and Methods used at Sahana:

The time spent by children at Sahana upon their admission is seen as a preparatory period and is planned in such a way so as to facilitate their entry into the mainstream school. In case of children who cannot be mainstreamed, it is seen to serve as an integrated school whereby the children follow the same syllabus and textbooks at their own pace and receive individual specialised attention from the resource teachers as they go through this process. The timings of Sahana coincide with the High School. When the school starts at 9 am, children who are yet to be mainstreamed study at Sahana, while those who have already been mainstreamed go to their respective grades in the High School. There is a prayer in the morning after which children have a Physical Training Class. At 1.30 pm, children with special needs who have been mainstreamed into the High School walk down to Sahana located on the ground floor for additional classes. The timetable of the mainstream school is organised in such a way that the last two or three periods are assigned to teaching languages and as children with disabilities are allowed study only one language, the children receive additional instruction and support from Sahana during those periods. Each of

these children is assigned to a specific group which they join. Some of the younger children who are yet to be mainstreamed leave at 1.30 pm while the older children continue to study with children who have come down from the High School. The school closes at 3 pm. In this manner, both the High School as well as Sahana have managed the class schedules keeping in mind the needs of children with disabilities.

Classroom arrangement:

Each class or environment has a close rectangular seating arrangement. All children wear the school uniform and come to school dressed very neatly. They sit around the teacher close enough for the teacher to physically touch every single child. Each teacher has about eight children in her circle. The teachers use blackboard placed behind them to write important words and questions. They generally use white chalk so that children can see clearly. Classrooms are multi-age, multi-grade, mixed gender and sometimes even mixed disability. The material which is required by children to do their particular work is kept on their desks and the teacher can easily see every child's work. Additional material and aids are kept adjacent to the wall in cupboards or shelves. Every classroom has several educational charts displayed on the walls.

Role of the teacher:

At the beginning of every year, teachers spend fifteen days preparing the baseline map of the needs of children. Based on this, they prepare a short plan for every child. In June, the plan for every child is discussed at the teachers' meeting and ideas are gathered from co-teachers. This is reviewed periodically and is monitored by a senior teacher. The teachers prepare Individualised Education Plan (IEP) for every child three times a year based on the syllabus and teachers' assessment. The IEP is monitored regularly and a daily diary maintained by the teacher for children. The teachers follow the same syllabus and the textbooks but adapt the methods of teaching and assessment. For instance, certain ideas that are difficult to teach (emotions portrayed in literature or scientific concepts) are simplified or dropped. Thus, the teachers adapt the curriculum and focus on the main achievable competencies. Children are assessed by the teacher through the work done in the class, the note-book work of children as well as tests given by the teacher from time to time. These tests are prepared in a manner appropriate to the child's level of understanding and competency.

Although the classes are organised as per individual subjects under study, there is a fair level of flexibility and the teacher sometimes teaches the subject which the children want to learn. Children also move from teacher to teacher for specific subject inputs.

The teacher is a multi-tasker. On the one hand, she may be asking a child to spell and on the other hand she could be supervising another child writing alphabet. All teachers also prepare different kinds of teaching aids based on the requirements. One of the teachers shared how difficult it was to teach a child the concept of ascending and descending numbers and how she experimented with various aids. Finally, she prepared her own material using sticker bindis which has been used with many children.

Preparation of teaching material is an important part of the teacher's job. Sometimes, teachers have to prepare material for individual children. In some classrooms, the teachers have stocked a variety of material that may be used for different purposes. This includes beads, bottle caps, empty plastic bottles, different kinds of seeds, match boxes, pins, straws, candy sticks, threads, boxes, etc.

Teachers use a variety of aids but children are encouraged to work independently under teacher's supervision and guidance. In a class where a child was learning to distinguish between the sound of 'l' and 'y', the teacher was using a mirror to show the difference in the lip movement. In another class, the child was feeling the movement in the throat of the teacher and was trying to reproduce the same for hitting the right pronunciation. Teachers use bold lettered flash cards for those with visual difficulties. They also use a variety of sorting puzzles. Teachers prepare different kinds of worksheets for children. Children are also encouraged to read aloud and help one another. Teachers use unique ways to drill in difficult concepts in Math. For instance, a child with mild intellectual impairment was asked by the teacher to recite all numbers till 100, repeat all the odd numbers and then even numbers till 100. Teachers generally have to use different material to teach the same concept to the child. For concentration, children are asked to put rajma beans into a small necked bottle.

Some children are so engrossed in their work that they do not even pay heed to teacher's instructions until the teacher physically draws their attention. At times, children are allowed to do nothing and watch each other or play in the classroom itself. Children have an excellent rapport with the teachers and the teachers too are friendly with the children.

The teachers interact with parents daily when they come to drop or pick

up their children. Feedback on what the child did at school and what should be done at home is provided in an informal atmosphere. In addition, annual parents' meeting helps the school and parents to discuss the progress of individual children as well as provide education and information on relevant areas to the parents. The school also offers counseling facilities. For the hearing impaired children, therapy is offered and parents are required to compulsorily attend such sessions held 2-3 times per week. The teachers tell the parents how to speak with the children at home. The parents observe how the teacher speaks with children and they then follow it up at home. The children do not receive any report cards. The teachers tell the progress of the child to the parents, give their observations in the diary and show the work done by children.

Teachers are also required to do behaviour therapy with children when the children are found to be needing the same. This is generally required when the child enters school and with children with particular behavioural problems. The teachers said that all children are different and have unique difficulties. Behavioural issues include both hypoactive and hyperactive children and the teachers often discuss the plan to address these challenges collectively. The teachers also find it difficult to have discussion about puberty and ensuing changes with adolescent boys and girls although it is very important. Furthermore, the teachers find it particularly very difficult to get the children back on track after the children return from vacations. Sahana seeks resource support from Spastics Society of India, Chandrashekhar Institute, NIMHANS and others. The teachers are also required to address the health problems that children come with including epilepsy, drowsiness, weakness which are often the side effects of medicines that the children have to take.

Organisation of preparatory and supplementary support:

When the children who are mainstreamed come to Sahana in the afternoon session, the teachers help them to revise the lessons completed, help them to do their homework, learn poems or multiplication tables. The teachers go through their school note books and help them to understand portions that they may not have understood. These children keep separate school books for use when they are at Sahana and they also receive additional homework from

Sahana. These children also follow a plan that is based on their textbooks.

For the older children, the afternoon session at Sahana is set aside for skill training. Some children are ready to go to the mainstream school within one or two years while others can take as many as five years. This depends on the age at which the child started the preparation at Sahana, the degree of disability and follow-up support provided at home by the parents. Children with hearing impairments are more easily mainstreamed as they have to work only on their speech, social skills and academics. Children with intellectual impairments and multiple disabilities find it difficult to get into mainstream school. These children continue with Sahana until they complete equivalent of eighth or tenth grade at their own pace. There is a boy with mental impairment who has been coming to the school for the past ten years. He has now learnt to identify a few words and is picking basic social skills of interacting with friends. The plan for this child is to focus on Activities of Daily Living, social skills and basic concepts and language skills.

Approach and Methods used at High School:

Whether a child can be mainstreamed or not is decided on the basis of assessments and observations made by teachers at Sahana. A child is taken into the High School as soon as Sahana makes a case for the concerned child. Such children are admitted without any further interview. Twenty children have so far completed Grade 10 through the High School after being mainstreamed from Sahana. One child with learning disability is currently pursuing studies in animation; one child with hearing impairments has got admission in an engineering college, one is already a diploma engineer.

Children who study in the High School are found to enjoy math more than languages. They find the teachers in the regular school to be stricter compared to those in Sahana and therefore prefer the latter for social interactions. Although they have made friends in the class, they prefer to play with friends from Sahana and come to talk occasionally with the teachers as well. Some parents of children do not want to send their children to the mainstream school as they are not sure if the school would be as protective and sensitive as Sahana. In such cases, Sahana offers counseling to parents and children so as to prepare them for the challenges and realities of the High School.

The school organises about 2-3 meetings every year between resource

teachers and regular teachers. Training of teachers is required but is not sufficient to ensure inclusion. The leadership at Sahana and the High School consider experience and sensitivity of teachers to be equally critical in the process of inclusion. Regular teachers are not trained by Sahana, but they know how to handle these children since inclusion has been practiced for years in the school. If the teachers are unable to handle any matter, they discuss the matter with the teachers at Sahana. If any child needs help with homework or in remediation, this is also discussed with the teachers from Sahana who address these needs during the afternoon sessions.

All the children who are mainstreamed follow the same textbooks and attend all classes (except two additional languages) and activities conducted by the High School. The assessments are also common with other children and children are promoted from one class to the other based on their learning attainments. Sometimes, assessments for the mainstreamed children are adapted based on their capacities. For instance, the oral tests are dropped for children with hearing impairments. Instead, they are given written work or project work to complete.

There is no special arrangement in the High School classes where children with disabilities have been mainstreamed. There are children with different kinds of disabilities in the same classroom and the teacher handles all of them in more or less a uniform manner. For instance, in Grade 1, there were six children with hearing impairments and one with mild intellectual impairments. But the children do not necessarily sit in the front rows. They do not sit together but with other children without disabilities in different rows. Most of them sit on the aisle making it easier for the teacher to speak to them and see their work. The children participate in the regular class-work activities such as copying from the blackboard. The teacher speaks slowly and clearly with children having hearing impairments but the children generally communicate with each other using sign language. The children mix very easily with other children in the class and also help each other to do work neatly. The class strength on an average is sixty and children with disabilities do not receive any special individualised attention. Some of the teachers also use activities like group work and use teaching aids during the classroom transactions but these activities are common for all children and are not particularly initiated for the benefit of children with disabilities. Some teachers carry a cane or a ruler in their hand, but this is used only to point to the black board or to a particular child. In all the activities conducted, the children with disabilities also participate

actively. The teachers do not perceive these children as an additional burden and treat them like other students. There is a better bonding outside the classroom among children with disabilities as they all come from Sahana. Parents of children with disabilities are called by the school only if there are matters to be discussed. However, there have been no behavioural problems found among the children who are mainstreamed. The teachers think that children with disabilities who are mainstreamed from Sahana are very bright and good at studies. However, the children find the protective and special atmosphere of Sahana more attractive and wait for the afternoon session so that they can go back to their earlier teachers and friends and get individual attention.

Parents of children who have been mainstreamed felt that all government school teachers should have training in inclusive education so that their children do not have to commute to far off places to reach schools which practice inclusion. The schools should also be supplied teaching learning materials that will help the teachers to teach children with special needs effectively. They observed that children face discrimination outside the school but not in the school where they are treated equal to other children. Children play together irrespective of their age, gender and disability. They sit together and eat during lunch break, often reserving more time for fun than for eating.

In sum, JSS Sahana offers a valuable opportunity for children to be prepared prior to their mainstreaming and also offers support throughout the time they spend in the mainstream school. Simultaneously, the regular school has made changes so as to enable these children to continue receiving the support of Sahana school, whenever required. The mainstreaming of children is accepted as a given and the teachers do not treat children differently. Thus, mainstreaming has helped children immensely at the social level and the pedagogical inputs provided by Sahana serve as a strong foundation.

Block Resource Centre as a Support System for Inclusive Education at the School Level

A case of Masturi Block, Chhattisgarh

Ruma Banerjee

Introduction

Academic resource support system has been an important component in developing and implementing inclusive education program in the Indian context. Providing equal opportunities to children with special needs has been recognised in the National Policy of Education in 1986 which incorporated the component of education of children with special needs in mainstream schools. The Project for Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED) under the Ministry of Human Resource Development was one of the land mark projects in the field of education for children with disabilities which implemented the paradigm shift from segregated education towards inclusive education. The strategy of PIED project was based on developing resource centres at the block level to implement inclusion. The resource centres were expected to play a pivotal role towards capacity building of the education system for providing education to children with special needs. The process was to train the regular teachers in the block through short term training and thereafter select a few teachers and equip them to become resource teachers for cross disabilities (all disabilities such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disabilities and locomotor disabilities). An important component of this approach was the recognition that education of all children, including children with disabilities is the responsibility of regular teachers.

Resource rooms played a significant role in bringing together the resources for children with disabilities to the block level. This provided supportive measures to meet the needs of children with disabilities besides building capacities of regular teachers and other functionaries in the school system for implementing inclusive education. The Block Resource Centres are responsible to provide and monitor quality of education for all children. This case study explores and tries to showcase the role of one Block Resource Centre in facilitating inclusive education by reaching out to children with disabilities in schools in Chhattisgarh. It was a great opportunity to visit one of the pioneering blocks of IE in Chhattisgarh which was selected under PIED project for

implementing integrated education for the disabled children and continues to be one of the resources centres under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Bilaspur district.

History of Inclusive Practice in Masturi Block

Masturi block is situated in Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. A majority of the population in this block belongs to backward and scheduled castes and their predominant occupation is agriculture where they work as daily wage labourers. The block has 17 clusters in a radius of 78 kms. Under SSA, the data collected about children with disabilities reveals the following:

Children with Disabilities between 6-14 years age group, Masturi Block-Bilaspur

Children with disability	Total Population of 6-14 years			Enrolment in school of 6-14 years			Out of School Children		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
Total	379	289	668	359	268	627	20	1	41

Work on inclusion started in this block since 1989 when this block was selected as one of the 10 blocks under PIED project under the then undivided state of Madhya Pradesh. One of the reasons for selecting this block under PIED was presence of large number of children with disabilities.

In 1987, PIED was initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), in association with UNICEF and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). The aim of the project was to strengthen the IEDC plan (NCERT, 1987). Instead of confining the program to a particular institution or school, PIED adopted a "Composite Area Approach" that converted all regular schools within a specified area, referred to as a block, into integrated schools. These schools had to share resources such as specialised equipment, instructional materials and special education teachers. One key aspect of the project was the teacher training component. The teacher training program, available to teachers in each selected block, followed a three-level training approach:

- Five day orientation course for all the teachers in the regular schools,
- Six-week intensive training course for 10 percent of the teachers, and

- One-year multi-category training program for eight to ten regular schools. Mr. Chauhan, one of the key informants for this case study, was one of the 10 resource teachers selected under PIED to undergo all the above training programmes.

The success of the PIED project led to an increased commitment by the Department of Education to integrate students with disabilities.

Block Resource Centre (BRC) in Masturi Block under SSA

The BRC as an important component of academic resource structure has played an important role since the District Primary Education Programme was launched in early '90s in the country. The programme was developed with the objective of providing quality inputs for education and facilitating improvement of achievement levels of children. The role of BRC encompasses an overall development and monitoring of quality of education in their respective blocks. The BRC in Masturi block is a newly constructed building near the highway. There are 10 resource persons in the block for providing overall resource support to schools including one specialised in disabilities, Mr. Chauhan. He is a regular teacher trained in disabilities and working since PIED times in this block. He is dynamic, sincere and committed to inclusive education. The BRC itself is accessible with a ramp. The first impression that this centre provides us is that of a centre with all the resources and necessary information on education. It comprises of four rooms with the larger room allocated for conducting training programmes. The Resource Centre for IE is located in one of these rooms at the BRC.

Role and Functions of BRC at Masturi Block

The Resource Centre for IE is located at the BRC. It is equipped with teaching materials and equipments for meeting the educational needs of children with different kinds of disabilities. There are teaching aids to teach language and for sensorial development such as developing tactile sense, pre-Braille activities, basic number concepts, colour plates, etc. Besides this, it also has a speech trainer for children with hearing loss. Most of the materials are procured and ready made. There is a computer with software for visually impaired. A number of learning aids such as Braille slates, abacus, embossed maps, etc. were procured

from National Institute for Visually Handicapped for teaching students with visual impairments. A number of teaching materials for visually impaired was seen at the centre as Mr. Chauhan has also had intensive training in visual impairment, besides being training in cross-disability. The materials are mainly used for the training purposes and for parents' orientation programme. During vacations, children with disabilities are brought into Block Resource Centres and they undergo residential training programme as per their requirements so as to prepare them for inclusive education.

Identification, Assessment and Support services for Children with Disabilities

The support to schools by the BRC starts with identification and assessment camps. With the general survey of the children, identification of children with disabilities is also done. Teachers are provided with identification formats based on which the children with disabilities are identified on the basis of visual, hearing, intellectual and orthopaedic disability besides multiple disabilities and autism. After the identification, the BRC conducts medical assessment camps for providing supportive services such as aids and appliances, surgeries, medicines for epilepsy besides confirming the disabilities for availing other government facilities. The resource person also assists the schools in providing other facilities as per the norms of the state government, including scholarships and transport facilities. Mr. Chauhan shared that incentives are a motivation for parents with disabilities for enrolling their children into schools. Especially in rural areas with poverty and disability going hand in hand, such incentives are a boon for the family.

Teacher training for capacity building in Inclusive Education

The BRC has a major responsibility in the capacity building of all regular teachers in the block who undergo refresher training every year. During vacations, ten days training is provided to teachers in a phased manner. Out of the ten days, one day is for training teachers regarding the need for including these children in the mainstream and the role of teachers in practicing inclusive education. Besides this, regular teachers are selected for further ten days training by the BRC in cases where they have children with visual and hearing disabilities. The objective of this

training is to equip the regular teachers in specific skills as orientation and mobility, writing Braille, Taylor Frame, simple sign language so that the regular teacher can provide basic skills for facilitating inclusion. Teachers are also deputed for the 90 days contact program of Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), which is conducted by an NGO Ankur in the nearby district. This training is developed by RCI and affiliated to Bhoj Open University, Madhya Pradesh is meant to orient teachers in inclusive education with a cross disability approach. The training is conducted through distance mode by NGOs with two contact classes. The purpose of deputing these teachers for cross disability training is for implementing inclusive education state-wide in future. The BRC also conducts two day training for the Head Masters to orient them regarding inclusion and also for sensitising Cluster Resource Persons on inclusion.

Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) Workshop

These workshops are conducted for all teachers. During these workshops TLM for children with disabilities are also organised where the teachers do make TLMs depending on their class room needs for children with disabilities.

Working with the Children with Disabilities at School level

The main objective of the BRC is to develop quality of education at school level through its various activities and capacity building programmes. Therefore, working with the schools is an important component of the BRC. Regular follow-up is provided by the resource persons to the school where children with disabilities are included as a priority. It was observed that Mr Chauhan would visit these schools to mainly assist the teacher in teaching children with visual impairments with special equipment like Braille or abacus and also to explain the teachers the use of TLMs for these children. BRC also provides support to teachers and Head Masters in developing inclusive education programmes through their school planning activities and to make it mandatory to include children with disabilities in all extra curricular activities. The BRC also had the responsibility for providing individualised support by special educationist from the District level. The district has special teachers in the area of visual impairment and intellectual disability. The BRC ensures that these special teachers

provide individual support to the child. As the block has children with visual impairments, the special teacher starts from pre-Braille activities and thereafter Braille training, Orientation and Mobility Training (OMT), etc. The special teachers are mainly itinerant teachers visiting schools and they are also responsible to maintain individual education programme for every child.

The role of resource persons like Mr. Chauhan is not limited to providing academic resources to schools and children with special needs but also extends to helping the families and the community at large. The impact of the resource person's work at the block can be observed in the changes and development that have been brought about in the community and in the system. One of the qualities worth mentioning is the sensitivity towards children's needs. Rapport with the parents and the community is an important component for bringing inclusion. While walking through the village to reach the school, there were many people from the village talking to Mr. Chauhan and discussing matters related to their children. It reflected the respect of people he had earned during his tenure as a teacher. Understanding the child with disability as a child first is an important aspect in enabling inclusion and understanding the child needs creating awareness amongst the family. Mr. Chauhan had a special skill in convincing parents with visual impaired child who visited the school during our visit. He explained to the family the significance of education, he also motivated the family to enroll the child by assuring them about other facilities. It is a reality that disability and poverty go hand in hand therefore sharing about pensions or scholarships available for these children do enable inclusion in the rural context.

Support to the School to Enable Learning of all Children

Mudpal Primary school is one of the is a lower primary schools in this block with classes from Grade 1 to 5. It is a government school in the midst of the village with enough space to play. The teacher pupil ratio is 1:35 with lower classes having 25 children. Here the children were seated on the floor and the teacher was teaching the class with the help of black board and charts wherever available. All the teachers, including the Head Master in the school have undergone the three days orientation to inclusive education. The school has eight children with disabilities, three with visually impairments, two with locomotor problems and three with intellectual disabilities.



Since the children with visual impairments are in Class 2, their teacher is also trained with special teaching techniques such as Braille and Taylor frame. During math classes, the teacher explained to the whole class by writing on the board and then giving them an assignment to work with. While the children without disabilities were working, she called the children with disabilities separately and explained to them through the Taylor frame the number concepts from the lesson she was teaching. She made sure that these children are not seated at the back but in front so that she could pay attention to them while teaching.

There was the usual support from peer group in this school, especially during outdoor activities. There was no discrimination between children and everyone was a part of the system. This is one of the schools where the BRC had equipped the regular teacher with the special skills for teaching children with visual impairments so that she is not dependent on the resource teachers for basic teaching to children with visual impairments. This approach of equipping the regular teachers in minimum skills for teaching visual impaired children developed confidence among the regular teachers that they can also teach with these learning aids and they are not totally dependent on resource teachers who visit the school twice a week. This is the very essence of inclusive education.

Though the teachers knew some basic skills, she also received support from the BRC through Mr. Chauhan in planning and teaching these children. In term of TLM there were not many things available but the teacher utilised materials available in the surrounding area to make teaching interesting. Evaluation system for these children was adapted. Many times, language component was assessed orally. The test papers were adapted for these children using Braille or Taylor frame.



Case study of Jitendra, a Shiksha Karmi in the government school

This case study is about the role of the teacher and resource person in making a child independent to live in the society. Today Jitendra, who has blindness, is a Shiksha Karmi or a para-teacher in the government school in Masturi block. Jitendra started his education when PIED scheme was initiated in this block. He joined regular school in class 6th after getting his education till class fifth from the residential school for blind. He was one of the disabled children in the school which was covered under the PIED project by Mr. Chauhan. In the initial years, Jitendra had to face many barriers mainly attitudinal barriers from his peer group and also teachers which made him to think that regular schools did not have any place for his education. But the resource person, Mr. Chauhan, provided him with the necessary educational support. He prepared talking books by transferring all the lessons on audio tapes so that Jitendra could cope with the mainstream education. The regular teachers over a period of time were trained to work with these children. In his high school he had to opt for music instead of science due to his disability. Music was not offered in the government school, therefore Mr Chauhan helped him to join classes in a nearby Navodaya school in order to prepare him for the school exams. As Jitendra passed his school he did his high school and later on joined D.Ed. Jitendra could cope with the challenges during his education because of the inclusive set up which enabled him to develop the qualities and competencies that made him overcome his inhibitions and societal barriers as a person with disability. During his higher education, he received a lot of support from his peer group. He is aware of inclusive education programme under SSA but he has not received any

orientation as of now as he was appointed in 2009. His was in the first batch of teachers (Shiksha Karmis) with disabilities (total blindness) to be appointed. He is of the opinion that totally blind children should join regular schools only after primary schooling in special schools for the blind so that they are equipped with special skills and have the better capacity to adjust to inclusion.



A regular class teacher - person with disability (blind)

Conclusion

Chhattisgarh is one of the states where education has been a priority area for the government. Innovative strategies as reading week has enabled to make education as a mass movement for all, cutting across age group and for disabled and non-disabled, the affluent and marginalised. History of inclusion and steps taken to ensure education for children with disabilities will develop many more persons like Jitendra coming from this system with confidence and becoming role models for both the non-disabled and the disabled children.

An Evolution from Segregated Education to Inclusive Education

From The Spastics Society of India to ADAPT

Varsha Hooja

Dr. Mithu Alur pioneered services for children with multiple disabilities in India in 1972. Her daughter, Malini, was born with cerebral palsy and there were no services in India for children with cerebral palsy. She set up the Spastics Society of India (SSI), now called ADAPT (Able Disabled All People Together) on October 2, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. The organisation was based on the Gandhian principles of service or seva, upliftment of oppressed people, social justice and human rights.

It was the first innovative model for the education of children with neurological and physical disabilities. The first special school for children with multiple disabilities, called the Centre for Special Education, was set up which provided education and treatment facilities under one roof. The services have since then expanded rapidly and now include training programmes for teachers, therapists, parents and government officials, vocational skills development, low-cost intervention programmes in the slums of Dharavi, advocacy and awareness programmes and policy research.

The students follow the same syllabus as other schools. Slight modifications in the curriculum and educational reforms that were introduced on a macro level enabled the students to graduate and move on to college. Our students have become accountants, computer experts, journalists, librarians and set up their own businesses. Some have gone onto Higher Education doing their Masters and PhDs. Today, this model has spread round the country to 16 of the 31 States.

However, although the Spastics Societies had phenomenal outreach, it was only the tip of the iceberg. After 25 years of providing pioneering services, a doctoral research by Dr. Mithu Alur in the area of policy in the country entitled *Invisible Children: A Study of Policy Exclusion* revealed that children with disabilities in India were excluded from the services of pre-primary education, immunisation and nutrition of a major policy programme existing in the country, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) which operates amongst the poorer sections of the population in India, for pre-school children in the age range of 0-6 years.

The Government's own statistics for disability reported that 98 per cent

of disabled people and children were out of the ambit of services (GOI 1989). Only 2% of people with disabilities were being covered. The ICDS policy of non-inclusion of disabled children into their programmes was symptomatic of the wider malaise in Indian Society, indicating an overall policy of social exclusion.¹

It became critical to change this situation. Believing that non acceptance springs from segregationist practices and that the voluntary sector who had played a major role historically, would need to spearhead the action by a desegregation of their own institutions moving towards a social model of inclusion, Dr. Alur initiated the National Resource Centre for Inclusion (NRCI), a five year Indo Canadian project with the Roeher Institute supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to address the macro-micro implications of inclusion of children with disabilities, into existing mainstream school resources in the country.

A number of international documents including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994), UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) to which India is a signatory recognise the human right of all children to inclusive education.

The Society therefore reoriented its policy and moved from segregated education to inclusive education both at its own centres and in mainstream schools. The project period ended in 2005 and ADAPT now continues to work within an inclusive framework.

The National Resource Centre for Inclusion (NRCI)

NRCI focussed on how inclusion could be actualised through change at three levels:

- micro level of classroom and school values, culture/policies/practice
- meso level of community
- macro level of policy, legislation, political culture of the local, state, national, and global level.

Inclusive education goes beyond the mandate to include children with disabilities into mainstream schools. It is the most effective approach to

¹ Alur, M. (1998) *Invisible Children: A Study of Policy Exclusion*

address the learning needs of all students (Booth 2000 and Potts 1984, Ainscow, 1999, 2000, 2002, Dysen 1998, Armstrong and Barton, 1999, Eigner 1998, and Hegarty and Alur 2002).

Inclusion for us refers to all children facing barriers to learning. This includes children who are socially disadvantaged due to poverty, girl children, street children, children from the slums, dalit children and children with disabilities. One of the aims of NRCI was to demonstrate how all children can learn side by side regardless of disability, gender, class, religion or caste.

The first step was to redefine our own goals and objectives. This we did by writing up a Charter of NRCI. Our own admission policy was redefined. With the new admission policy, apart from the child with cerebral palsy, children with Down's syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), and sensory dysfunction were included within the centres.

Full-time inclusion into mainstream schools is only one paradigm of inclusion and often not practical. Therefore over the years, other paradigms were also developed:

- Paradigm 1: Socially disadvantaged students without disability (with a special focus on the girl child) were included in NRCI centers.
- Paradigm 2: Students with and without disability from NRCI were included in mainstream schools.
- Paradigm 3: Inclusive activities were carried out with regular schools promoting part inclusion.
- Paradigm 4: Mainstreaming children with disabilities: NRCI bridged the gap between special schools and regular schools by adopting the role of being a resource centre.

The SSI's special school set ups were desegregated. We admitted children without disability from the nearby slums, demonstrating how education for all can take place, including the child with disability. Our centres became Demonstration Resource Centres.

Models of inclusion were set up in the inner city slums and in regular schools. Students with disability were given a head start through our enrichment programme and placed into regular schools. We have now over 70 partner schools.

At our own inclusive centres, we admit students from all socio economic groups. Despite spreading awareness about the importance of education for the girl child in the nearby slums through house to house

visits and addressing meetings in the community, boys still outnumber the girl students, perhaps due to genetic pre dispositions when it comes to certain disabilities.

The schools follow the SSC (Secondary School Certificate) Board and also offer the NIOS (National Institute of Open Schooling) curriculum. In addition, there is a pre-vocational stream for students unable to attempt the regular curriculum.

Students follow a structured timetable, working on academic subjects in the morning and co curricular activities post lunch. All festivals and national events are celebrated with great gusto and students are taken for field trips once a month.

We have a large volunteers base from the community who are now empowered to raise scholarships and sponsorships and initiate inclusion.

Inclusive Education Practice in Early Childhood in Mumbai

On the community level, to address the exclusion of children from the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, a second research project was started with UNICEF under the aegis of CIDA to study the mechanism or intervention strategies needed to put children with disabilities into existing programmes being run by the Government so



A Community teacher addressing the needs of all learners

that Inclusive Education could take place within the Government's framework of services. The focus of the project was socially disadvantaged children with special emphasis on the girl child and the child with disability. The project was carried out in Dharavi, Asia's largest slum.

The principal investigators of the project, Dr. Mithu Alur, India and Dr. Marcia Rioux, Canada, designed the intervention strategies, tracked project developments, and provided an ongoing evaluation of intervention efforts.

There were two key components, intervention and research. We worked with 6000 Households and families and set up inclusive anganwadis with 600 Children to demonstrate inclusion.

The training and empowerment of the teachers was a very critical component. A capsule of training was designed and implemented to develop women from the community with basic school education into Anganwadi Multipurpose Workers (AMW's) by providing them with skill to support their teaching.

We worked with the neighbours, the Local Leaders, the Mumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), Doctors, School Principals and Non Government Organisations (NGO) to spread awareness about inclusion.

The research documented progress in both children with and without disability across all parameters of development (social, emotional, communication, creativity, motor and functional skills) through two new scales that had been developed: Development Scales (DS) and Barriers to Inclusion (BIL). Shifts in the attitude of teachers, parents and the community were also recorded.

At the end of the project period, all children were admitted into local regular schools. From this and the NRCI evidence based research also emerged a series of instructional resource material: the 'How to Series of Inclusive Education' consisting of Flip Charts, Manuals, Audio Visual material and films. Called the Culturally appropriate Policy and Practice (CAPP), the material focuses on inclusion being actualised through change at three different levels.

- CAPP I (the whole policy approach to Inclusive Education) is on the macro level of policy, legislation, political culture at the local, state, national and global level.
- CAPP II (the whole community approach to Inclusive Education) is on the Mezzo level of community workers and local administrators and bureaucrats.

- CAPP III (the whole school approach to Inclusive Education) is on the micro level of classroom and school values, culture/policies/practice.

The CAPP is relevant for any organisation, or agency, working to address the crucial need of bringing children with any disability into inclusive settings. Although the research was carried out in India it can be used anywhere in the world. CAPP II has since been endorsed by the Ministry of Human Resource Development as a training tool for their institutes across the country and at present is being used as a training tool by a team of resource persons in a pilot project with the ICDS in Maharashtra.

The Process of Change

Inclusive practices do not develop in a vacuum. Organisations are made up of people. Our staff were practitioners who had many years of experience with children with disability and had been trained as special educators and specialised therapists. Going by Gandhiji's advice "Be the change you want to see in the world", the process of transformation had to begin within the organisation. We had to become inclusive ourselves. Rigorous, intensive in-service programmes exposed the staff to principles of human rights and inclusion. In-service training proved to be an effective tool in bringing about a change in attitudes from segregation to inclusion amongst our in-house staff through information dissemination and awareness on the other disabilities.

Inclusion of children need not only be done by professionals. But it usually is, creating a barrier. Dr. Alur's aim was to introduce a more cooperative and collaborative partnership instead of an authoritarian and hierarchical one. Professionals had to be retrained and she developed the Three R's for professionals:

- Retraining into a new context and culture.
- Relocation away from the Institute to the Community which meant developing more community based initiatives.
- Redeployment of time.

Transforming Pedagogy

Training programmes for teachers had been initiated since 1978 to address the lack of trained personnel in the area of special education. With our shift to inclusive education, changes were brought about in

the existing courses and now the philosophy of inclusion is a part of the revised curriculum in all our courses. Our teacher training course (PG Diploma in Special Education (Multiple Disabilities: Physical and Neurological)) aims to provide training in teaching strategies and classroom management for all children irrespective of race, religion or ability. The course is aligned to the goals of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan of providing quality training to increase the access of children with disabilities in mainstream schools.

Community Initiatives in Inclusion (CII): Asia Pacific Course for Master Trainers

The Community Initiatives in Inclusive Education is a course for trainers and planners of community disability services organised by the National Resource Centre for Inclusion (NRCI) The Spastics Society of India, with the support of the Centre for International Child Health (CICH) London. The course aims to prepare participants to be management personnel, able to run, plan, and to train others to run community disability services, within an inclusive framework. The course is concerned with community issues and is firmly rooted in the social model of disability rather than a medical model. The curriculum is a blend of theory and practice encompassing teaching strategies, visits to special, mainstream and inclusive schools, placement in the community and preparing action plans for inclusion.

As a Resource Centre, ADAPT is also requested to train teachers in inclusive education under the governments ICDS and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programmes. Training programmes for therapists conducted by ADAPT also promote the philosophy of inclusion.

Transforming Parents into Partners

Being a parent, Dr. Alur had always built partnerships with parents. In the earlier segregated model, they had been trained to understand techniques of management of their child and their family at home. In the new model of inclusion, they were included as valuable members of the team.

Initially parents did not want to move from a segregated, caring special school to a regular, mainstream one where the teacher was not trained to handle their special child. Their fears pertained mainly to apprehensions about the reaction of non-disabled peers, the teasing

and adjustments their children would have to make, the attitudes of teachers and how their children would be supported in the regular school, and whether their children would be able to cope academically. Regular meetings were held to understand parents' fears about the transition to a regular school. Instead of having a specialist resource member of our staff provide all the ongoing support to children, parents and mainstream teachers were helped to provide the additional support required. The dependency of parents on NRCI gradually reduced. They took ownership of the inclusion process, sorting out any barriers that came in the way of their child. Seventy percent of parents now secure admission for their children into the neighbourhood schools.

Principles of Inclusion

There is unfortunately a mystique attached to special education and inclusive education. Inclusive Education is Good Quality Education that focuses on teaching students in a way that is most appropriate for them. It is student centric as opposed to subject centric. There are certain key principles of inclusion that have been incorporated into our teaching. Some of these are:

Differentiated curriculum: Each child learns at a different pace. The content to be taught needs to be differentiated according to the needs of each child matching the child's abilities. Differentiation of each child's needs makes the learning and teaching flexible.

Multiple ability teaching i.e. teaching groups of children with different abilities in the same class using group work, differentiated curriculum, cooperative learning and collaboration. This allows children to progress according to individual rates of learning, instead of one standardised manner. Teachers are encouraged to plan for a wide range of abilities, and adjust to individual needs, enabling slower children to catch up to their classmates.

Multiple intelligence: Human beings display a wide variety of abilities. Educators need to be aware of the importance of all of these intelligences for a child's development and academic success. Opportunities should be provided for children to express themselves in multiple media visual art, music, drama, dance.

Learning styles: All of us need different strategies to learn. A good teacher incorporates different approaches (visual, auditory, tactile) to cater to the needs of all children in the class.

Community involvement: Mothers and family participation has emerged as a key factor for successful educational programs. Good services provide equal accessibility to all parents and children.

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning: Teachers, parents, and others can collaborate in determining and meeting the needs of any student. Peer tutoring like peer teaching and child-to-child learning, small group teaching helps in building support system and effective teaching. It leads to Cooperative learning.

Sustaining Inclusion

Probably the most critical factors in sustaining inclusion are the continuum of support and teacher education. Placing excluded students within a mainstream setting does not, of itself, achieve inclusion. The need for support and professional development for mainstream schools to further their inclusive practices has been recognised for a number of years. (Zeladha, in Armstrong and Moore 2004)

Our experience has shown that to sustain the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools, it is critical that the children, parents and schools be provided with a regular and ongoing continuum of support. Attention needs to be paid to various seemingly insignificant aspects. We therefore took on the onus of becoming a Resource Centre for Inclusion.

Inclusive Education Coordination Committee (IECC)

To provide this support, Dr. Alur set up the Inclusive Education Coordination Committee (IECC). The mandate of the IECC is to initiate and monitor the inclusion of children with and without disability into

Resource Support provided by the IECC:

- *Orientation programmes for their staff,*
- *Dissemination of information on the availability and applicability of the State Board Concessions,*
- *Guidance on curricular modifications and assessment techniques,*
- *Designing furniture and wheelchairs,*
- *Identification of architectural barriers like inaccessible entrances, buildings and toilets and suggesting modifications for the same.*

mainstream schools. The team comprising of teachers, therapists, social workers and researchers from the organisation also provides the continuum of support to partner schools where our students have been admitted.

The Committee first identified the barriers to inclusion in the existing school situation in Mumbai. They found that the key barriers were in the areas of attitudes, access, curriculum and class size and training and support systems.



Ayush Srinivasan in class with his buddy

Ayush Srinivasan had Cerebral Palsy (Spastic Quadriplegia) and studied at NRCI Bandra Centre until Std IV. The team felt that he should be included into a mainstream school.

Including Ayush began with counseling of his father who was a single parent and his extended family who was involved in his care. The family then identified a school within their vicinity. The team met with the Principal and conducted an orientation for all the staff (teaching and non-teaching).

The team also provided the school staff with remedial support in terms of, arranging for writers, class work notes, guiding the parent to follow the lower level math curriculum. The team also suggested modifications in the assessment and examination papers. An occupational therapist designed special furniture for Ayush.

An attendant was arranged to look after his toileting needs. Ayush was very popular in his school. His family has been very supportive and work regularly in co-operation with the school staff and the resource team.

After 5 years of inclusion, the resource input required were minimal and usually concerned availing concessions from the State Board as the school management had taken full responsibility for Ayush's performance and progress. Today, Ayush has graduated from school and is pursuing higher education.

Attitudes: Fear and insecurity were the main emotions of the parents of the child with disability / disadvantage. They also felt that the teacher's attention would be divided and this would be reflected in peer attitudes, isolating the child with disability.

Access Difficulties: Physical inaccessibility also leads to exclusion from extracurricular activities. Toilet facilities are a neglected area and are not geared to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Most schools



Rahul Sonawane happy to be included

Rahul Sonawane studied at our centre in Dharavi, the Sultan Noorani Memorial Karuna Sadan has intellectual impairment. He was admitted into the Sant Kakkaya Municipal School (Marathi No.1) at the age of 9 in Std. 1 in 2002. Despite his learning difficulties, Rahul displayed a very good grasp and keenness to learn. The team saw in him the ability to gain from a mainstream environment in his social development.

The school was identified by the parents. An orientation was conducted to sensitise the management and train the school teachers, providing inputs on teaching strategies information on concessions available, classroom management techniques with respect to toileting, placement in class, buddy system and work habits. His peer group was also sensitised.

The above inputs were provided on a regular basis (approximately twice a month). These reduced over a period of time and at present the class teacher has assumed responsibility of his overall progress. Need-based resource support is occasionally provided by the team approximately twice a year.

Rahul has a lot of friends and enjoys going to school. Interactions with his peers and teachers' positive attitudes have resulted in Rahul's metamorphosis from a withdrawn child to a friendly, young boy.

are not accessible in physical and practical terms. Transportation to schools was another key barrier.

Curriculum & Class Size: Due to the large number of students in a class in the government aided schools, the teacher finds it difficult to provide the additional input required by a child with disabilities. The regular mainstream curriculum is very rigid and expects the student to modify to its demands.

Training & Support System: Mainstream teachers were apprehensive about their capacity to include children with disability, as they had no previous exposure or training. The other support system viz. therapies (PT, OT) are also not available to any child with disability attending a mainstream school. There was very limited follow up of therapy once the student was included.

Based on this analysis, the IECC initiated and provided a Continuum of Support to our students and partner schools comprising of schools run by the Municipal Corporation, State run schools as well as private schools. In addition, students included access the therapy and counselling services at the ADAPT centres.

After Inclusion

The attitude of teachers has to be addressed periodically. It is more sympathetic than empathic. One child was not permitted to use the lunch room with the other children since the school authorities were afraid that she would fall and get hurt. So she remained behind alone in her class. The IECC met the school authorities and explained the philosophy of inclusion. One of her friends began to take her to the lunch room. This sometimes required her mother to intervene but the child was included.

This empowerment of the mainstream schools by way of a continuum of support has lead to a slow process of taking ownership of the inclusion. Some of the schools have taken their own initiatives in making the adjustment process easier for children with various forms of disability.

What have been the Lessons Learnt?

- Inclusion is possible
- Special education has to be demystified

- Training is a key component if we wish to achieve inclusion
- Inclusion does not demand a highly technical programme with expensive equipment nor does it require the continuous support of well-resourced specialist services.
- Community resource can be used to achieve inclusion.
- Even Anganwadi workers can teach children with disabilities.
- Lack of funding should not mean certain children are segregated.
- Demonstration of inclusion is necessary for local administrators, and street level bureaucrats to understand how to do inclusion.

Inclusion is a process and we are happy to say that we have taken the first steps in this journey.

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Parental Initiative for Inclusion: Kindle Care High School

Archana Mehendale

Background and History

Parents with special children often have to face rejection and indifference from educational institutions. A majority of private schools do not want to take children with special needs. Even if the only expectation of the parents is to allow their child to be with children of her own age so that she can live and grow up in a 'normal' society, few private schools are ready to fulfill even this minimal expectation. Mr. and Mrs. Sood had to face a similar predicament with respect to their daughter Karishma, a special child. That was the time the couple decided to start their own school that would provide space to their daughter Karishma and many other children who deserved a space in the mainstream society. This led to the establishment of the Kindle Care School in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

The couple had to struggle for many years in order to set up the infrastructure, get appropriate teachers and also for admitting children. Mrs. Sood who worked as a teacher in a private school gave up her job and took charge of setting up the school. The family put in their own resources to start the school. During the initial years, the only children who came to the school for admission were those who had failed to get admission in other private schools and in some sense were the 'rejected lot'. Most of them also came from the working class and disadvantaged sections of the society. The Sood couple willingly took all the children who came to them and started the school with their daughter Karishma as one of their first students. The fees charged were minimal and some parents who could not afford to pay fees were also given free education. During this time, the couple tried convincing some of their acquaintances and friends from middle and upper class backgrounds, who were sending their children to special schools, to instead send them to this 'regular' school. Slowly there were more children from different backgrounds and this created a fair mix of children with different socio-economic profiles and with varying abilities. The parents of the children became the ambassadors of the school and through word-of-mouth publicity, the enrolment at the school increased. This is what the Soods had wanted to create-an inclusive school with all children working together regardless of their differences.

About the School

As the main reason for founding the school was to ensure inclusion, the school's mission is to provide education to all, irrespective of their disabilities, within a regular school setting. This is based on the belief that if children with special needs have to live in 'normal' society, they need to be given the opportunity of interacting with other children right from childhood. If schools can become inclusive, the society will also become inclusive. The founders also believe that the purpose of education is to build children's potential and ensure their holistic development. Therefore, education should focus not only on the academic curriculum but also on giving opportunities to children to showcase their talents, work together and build confidence. Further, they believe that for children with special needs, the aims of schooling are not about mastering the three R's but about learning social skills and developing psychological confidence in their abilities. Keeping this in view, the school provides opportunities to all children.

The Kindle Care School is a recognised, unaided school affiliated to the Andhra Pradesh State Board. It has classes from nursery to high school. There are about 30 children in every class and the teacher is able to give attention to all children. The school has taken children with various kinds of disabilities including mental impairments, Down's syndrome, children with autism, learning disabilities and visually impaired. The teachers are not trained in special education but have received direction and guidance from the founders and the Head Mistress. According to the founders, the most important requirement for a teacher is sensitivity and acceptance of the child's individuality. In the past, they had hired special educators but found that they offered standard plans and were unable to bend and flex as per the child's individual needs. As every child is unique, the teachers need to learn and adapt for every child.

Methods of Work

Initially, the founders consulted with experts at National Institute for Mentally Handicapped (NIMH) at Secunderabad and also participated in their courses. This helped them to structure the work with children having special needs. The NIMH also helped them with the assessments of children and also referred children to the school. Nowadays, the school is utilising the services of other private providers as well. When children are taken in, the school conducts a basic assessment and observes the child. The child is generally placed in the age-appropriate

grade. The school considers this as a non-negotiable because it believes that the child needs to continue with the same peer group for psycho-social reasons and therefore should not be detained. Thus, classes at Kindle Care School are organised as per the age of the child and the child continues throughout with the same class cohort. Even if the child is unable to cope at the same level as his peers, the child continues with others in the same class. The school does not expect the same learning outcomes from their special children. Every special child is allowed to go at his or her own pace and engage in academics as per their individual capacity. There are no pressures to perform as per the standards set for every grade. In the past, the school had tried preparing special textbooks and workbooks for special children but this was scrapped because the students felt discriminated while using a different textbook in class with their peers.

All children with disabilities attend their regular class. They listen to the teacher reading lessons; try to follow it using the textbooks like other children and also attempt to write as per their capacities in their notebooks. The children do not always understand the subject or concept being taught, but they are free to ask questions to the teacher. The teacher treats them like other children in the classroom, asks them questions, and asks them to read or write on the blackboard. Whenever children in the class are assessed on tests, the children with special needs are given tests in a different format and at a level that they can handle. For instance, instead of asking them to write short notes, the questions are converted into objective questions with multiple options or questions where the students are required to mark true or false. Sometimes, the assessments are creative and may ask the children to draw about the subject instead of writing about it. Children with special needs are very attached to the classroom and to their peers. Being with them, children learn by default.

Special Section

Regular class teachers are unable to provide any special inputs or individual attention to children with special needs. So, for a couple of periods every day (as determined by the class teacher), the children are sent to a special section. This section is handled by a teacher who is not trained but has been told what to do by the school Head Mistress. This position is rotating and different teachers have been in-charge of this special section. In the special section, the teacher receives children with special needs referred from different classes. They come in at different

periods and go back to their classes for other periods. Children prefer being in the general class and not in the special section. The special section is like any other classroom with benches arranged in rows one behind the other. There are a few charts on the wall. The special section does not have much teaching learning material. The teacher revises specific portion from the textbooks and asks children to write them in the notebooks. She gives individual attention to children. Whenever there are children referred from higher classes, another subject teacher comes to assist the teacher in the special section. Children are asked to perform tasks repetitively under constant supervision. Children from higher classes are given tasks that they do individually but children from lower classes have to be helped to do their tasks. In the special section, the teachers do not try to 'complete the portion' with the special children but instead the focus is on allowing the children to learn at their own pace. Children are allowed to move freely in the class, sit with their friends, study the subject they choose and the manner in which they want to learn. For instance, a child may enjoy writing on the blackboard instead of the notebook and the teacher would allow her to do so. At times, the children may look neglected by the teacher as they are seen to be only sitting and looking around. But the special section teacher actually knows when to leave the children on their own to explore with friends and look at their books and when to ask them to follow a particular structure. It is this structure and simultaneously a lack of structure or specific schedule that allows the special children and the teacher to cope with the requirements. The teacher from the special section and the class teachers regularly update each other on the progress and challenges of working with every child. Although they do not have any special training or set of tools or methodologies derived from theoretical or pedagogical literature, they tend to function almost intuitively and with a deep commitment to work within the child's abilities. The Head Mistress supervises what is happening in the class very closely. Although the teacher in the special section also tries to maintain a strict sense of discipline, she is friendlier with the students.

After the school gets over, parents of special children are allowed to come inside and pick up their children. This is the time parents also discuss the child's progress and behaviour with the class teacher and teacher from the separate section. The parents are happy because the children are studying with other children of the same age and very few schools would have accepted the children. However, teachers indicate that the parents have very high expectations from their children because they study in a regular school and at times it borders on their denial of children's special needs. The teachers have to do a lot of

talking with the parents to enable them to see what the child is good at.

The school provides a valuable space to special children to showcase their talents. Children actively participate with other children in sports and cultural programmes and take equal responsibility in organising and performing in these programmes. During play time also, children are found to mingle very easily with other children. Children eat together in lunch breaks and communicate without much difficulty. After school, the school bus takes children to their homes and in this environment outside the school premises also, children with special needs are included by all the other children in the activities and all discussions.

Special children passing out of Kindle Care have done well and are leading responsible lives within the 'normal' society. This has been made possible because of the opportunity this school provides to special children to grow and express freely. As the commitment to inclusion flows from the top management, the teacher have no option but to accept and include children with different abilities and disabilities. In some sense, the school's existence is directly a result of a young girl's rejection from a 'normal' school but over the years the school has actually helped children like her to confidently face the 'normal' society.

Fostering Inclusion in Corporation Schools:

A Case Study of Muktangnan

Maya

Muktangan: An Introduction

Muktangan is an initiative of the Paragon Charitable Trust

M which aims at providing low cost, inclusive, child-centered education to children from economically disadvantaged groups of society. It began in 2003 as a Balwadi in one of the MCGM school buildings and has today grown into seven English medium schools. Currently, the oldest school has children enrolled till Standard VII and every year a new Standard is added with the first batch of students appearing for the Senior Secondary Examinations in 2014. The other six schools have students enrolled till Standard III and they will move up to Standard X by 2018.

The class size on an average is 35-40 children. The student-teacher ratio is an average of 12:1. There are 3 teachers in a class of 40 children. These teachers of Muktangan are trained in-house undergoing a 10 months pre-service training program. Once employed in the 7 schools, the in-service training for teachers is continuous and ongoing.

Inclusion at Muktangan: Origins & Philosophy

The founder of Muktangan, Ms. Elizabeth Mehta has always believed in inclusive practices in education and from her vast experience in the field of education has herself worked with special children. Her vision of inclusive education aims to provide the appropriate learning environment for all children in an integrated educational system so that all children may achieve their full potential.

Muktangan as a school was started on the fundamental belief that “every child has a right to education irrespective of the disabilities and difficulties of the child”. Children with special needs have been admitted in school since its inception.

Currently there are 183 children with special needs in the seven schools of Muktangan. These range from autistic children to those with some mental retardation to others with learning difficulties such as dyslexia. The table below gives a distribution of the number of children with the different types of special needs for the academic year 2010-2011.

Number of Children with Special Needs in 7 Schools (2010-2011)

No.	Type of Special Needs	Number of Children with Special Needs
1.	Autistic	8
2.	Mental Retardation (with varying severity)	9
3.	Microcephaly	3
4.	Hearing Impaired	2
5.	Attention Deficit Disorder	12
6.	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder	3
7.	Slow learner	13
8.	Developmental Delay	34
9.	Learning Difficulties	98
10.	Cerebral Palsy	1

The Learning Resource Team at Muktangan

The Learning Resource Team (LRT from now on) at Muktangan has evolved in its composition and role over the last seven years. Currently, there are 6 members of the learning resource team. Two of them are located in the oldest school which has students enrolled till Standard VII. Three of them support children with special needs in the remaining six schools.

Two of them are Faculty- one who has completed her M.Sc. in Counselling and Psychotherapy; the other has a M.Sc. in Human Development. One is an associate faculty member who is a B.Ed. trained teacher. There are two teachers who have recently completed a 6 months Child Development Aide programme (CDA) conducted by Ummeed, an NGO working in the field of special education. One teacher has completed a 10 day workshop organised by Ummeed on learning difficulties and supporting children with impairments. This year 3 other teachers are completing their CDA program from Ummeed and will become a part of the LRT after 6 months.

The broad role of the LRT involves meeting the following objectives:-

- a. To identify the children who are differently-abled through observation and assessments. They have to liaison with agencies such as Ummeed, Nair Hospital, and Maharashtra Dyslexia Association.
- b. To cater to the individual learning needs of the differently-abled children by developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for each child, working with teachers to develop strategies for the

supporting children and taking separate sessions with these children to support their learning.

- c. To give the classroom teachers the skills to identify & support differently-abled in the classroom. This involves preparing learning materials, professional development workshops, sensitising teachers and regular meetings to review progress of the children.

From admission to examination: A child's journey at Muktangan

Admission procedures: Children join Muktangan every year in the month of June. The maximum number of admission takes place for the Preschool especially in Junior Kindergarten. However, almost all classes admit new children. The total number of children in each class is usually not more than 35-40. The admission process does not include any assessment or examination and children are enrolled on a first-come-first-served basis. Muktangan has a special memorandum with the MCGM which allows us to keep our intake per class limited to 40 students. There is often pressure from different people to admit more children in the seven schools, however, in order to provide a studentteacher ratio of 12:1, Muktangan insists on the cap of 40 children in a class. There are no special provisions or priority given to encourage admissions of children with special needs. However, sometimes Muktangan is unable to take children with severe impairments such as blindness, severe autism or hearing impaired since the appropriate facilities are not available.

Identifying learning difficulties or special needs

Once a child is admitted in Muktangan, she/he is assigned to any one teacher in the class. Often the parents are unaware of any history of learning difficulties or special need. In this case, the child is observed by the teacher for a minimum of one month and by the LRT member. Developmental lags or delays among the children are observed and recorded by the teacher and LRT member. The main criteria which the LRT look for are the developmental red flags for each age group. These include areas of cognitive development, physical development and socio-emotional development. Given below is a sample of the type of symptoms/warning signs that the LRT would be looking for when observing the children. This is a list taken from the Ummeed website (www.ummeed.org).

Symptoms/warning signs

Learning Difficulties	ADHD	Autism
<p><u>Preschool</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late talking most of the time • Pronunciation problems • Slow vocabulary growth, often unable to find the right word • Frequently substitutes related words e.g. 'table' for 'bench' • Difficulty rhyming words • Likes listening to stories but shows no interest in letters and numbers <p><u>Grades 1-4</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puzzling discrepancy between intelligence and written language • Slow to learn the connection between letters and sounds • Confuses basic words (eg. Run, eat, want) • Makes consistent read-ing and spelling errors including letter reversals(b/d), inversions (m/w), transpositions(felt/left) and substitutions (house/ home) 	<p><u>ADHD predominantly inattentive type:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes • Has difficulty sustaining attention • Does not appear to listen • Struggles to follow through on instructions <p><u>ADHD predominantly hyperactive type:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair • Has difficulty remaining seated • Runs about or climbs excessively • Talks excessively 	<p>Children with autism usually begin to show clear, identifiable symptoms by the age of 18 months. Many parents and experts can usually detect symptoms before this time, however formal diagnosis is typically made when the child exhibits a noticeable delay in developing language skills-normally between the ages of 2 and 3.</p> <p>Some combination of the following areas may be affected in varying degrees:</p> <p><u>Communication</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is unable to start or sustain a conversation • Develops language slowly or not at all • Repeats words • Reverses pronouns • Uses nonsense rhyming • Communicates with gestures instead of words

Based on the observations of the LRT and the class teacher, a child may be identified as having a learning difficulty or disability. The LRT meets every Saturday to discuss their observations. Within a month or so the LRT usually is in a position to prepare a detailed case study on the children they have observed.

These detailed observations lead to a preliminary diagnosis and the child is then referred to Ummeed for standard assessment tests. Based on the results of the assessments conducted by Ummeed the child is then placed in an appropriate group within the class.

In the event that the parents are aware of their child's learning difficulties or impairments, the LRT studies the medical reports in detail. The child is then sent to Ummeed for an assessment. Once the assessment is completed the child is assigned to an appropriate class and is placed in any one teacher's group.

The parents' role in the process of identifying their child's special needs is crucial. The LRT discusses with the parents from the very beginning their observations and diagnosis. It is the parents' responsibility to take their children for the referral meetings with Ummeed for assessment and be actively involved in this process. It is not always easy to get full support from all the parents involved and the LRT has to continuously interact with the parent community to generate awareness and willingness to become active participants in supporting their children's development.

Once the assessment of a child is complete, the LRT categorises her/him into one of three groups A, B and C. These groups have been defined within the Mukhtangan system with regards to the kind of support academic or otherwise that the children with different special needs require.

Group A: Children with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia. Children who have a language barrier which means that they have not been able to learn the level of English required to function in the school are also included in this group. These are children who need remedial teaching because of specific disability related to academics and therefore the intervention by LRT is largely academic in nature.

Group B: Children who have specific developmental issues such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), delays in Language development and delays in fine or gross motor development are included in this group. These children require special education as they usually have socio-emotional problems in adjusting as well as other developmental delays. They require intervention with overall developmental issues, disciplining and some academic support.

Group C: Children who are significantly or severely disabled with autism, general developmental delay, Mental retardation, ADHD, Cerebral palsy etc. These children require special education which is

very unique to their disability and need far more intensive specialised attention.

Given below is a table showing the number of children in the three different groups for the academic year (2009-2010):-

Distribution of Children in 3 Groups A, B and C (2009-10)

No	Type of Group	Number of Children
1	Group A	85
2	Group B	50
3	Group C	22

Orientation for children, parents & teachers

There is no formal orientation program designed for children on their first day of school, however, the learning resource team conducts informal dialogues and sessions with parents and teachers of the children with special needs. In some schools (not always followed in all schools since it is not a formalised system), the children are usually called into school half an hour early on the first day so that they get accustomed to the classroom and the surroundings, especially if the children are in preschool or attending school for the first time. Muktangan classrooms are full of visually appealing materials which the children need to get used to, especially children with autism and ADHD. The extra time spent before the first day starts helps to make the children more comfortable and settled. Also parents are allowed and sometimes encouraged to sit in the class with their wards for the first fifteen days so that the children do not feel threatened or lost.

For the teachers as well there is no formal orientation. Those teachers who will be working with the children with special needs are briefed by the LRT on the nature and needs of these children. The teachers along with the LRT then brief the children who would be in their classroom. Children are made aware that children with special needs are different and must be treated with care and respect. This orientation is not meant to be very didactic but instead it is found that children have a natural sensitivity which they display when working with children who have special needs.

In the classroom

A child with special needs is in the classroom dealing with the daily routine, peers, and teachers. Almost all children with special needs are

usually regular. Most of the children live in the communities neighbouring the school and therefore almost all children come to school walking or with their parents and guardians. If a child doesn't come to school for two or three days, the parents are contacted to find out more details. Parents are encouraged to understand the importance of sending their children regularly to school. For autistic children especially at a younger age the break in their daily routine means that it takes them a longer time to readjust to the school schedule once they come back. Children with special needs are allowed to stay in school for reduced hours as per the need of each case.

The child is an integral part of the class and all its activities. All the children are involved and included in sports, cultural programmes, excursions, study visits and other school activities. At the end of the last term, all schools conducted their annual day and it was a wonderful sight to see children with special needs participate completely. There were children who are cognitively challenged dancing along with his classmates and children with ADHD participate in a role-play.

The seating arrangement is a U-shape around the blackboard and the teacher is in the center. The children with impairments usually sit close to the blackboard to minimise distractions and improve concentration. However, this seating arrangement depends on each particular case of the child and its needs.

Dealing with academics and written work is probably the most challenging part of the daily routine for children with impairments. The special concession is in the content of the subject which is made appropriate to their level. There are no other special concessions from the teacher except that to ensure they learn appropriate to their level. On all other issues they are treated the same way as other children without impairments.

The children are not always able to understand what is taught in the classroom for many different reasons. Often their level is not matching with the content of the syllabus and at other times some of them have a problem of concentrating for a longer time span. Sometimes the content may need to be handled with a multi-sensory approach in order to improve understanding for children with special needs.

All children get very little homework especially till class 3 and it is usually limited to a few sentences or one-two question answers. Children with special needs are also given homework- sometimes the load of work is reduced. They are usually helped with their homework by parents or at times tuition teacher.

Children usually attend all the classes and are not exempt from any subject. Possibly when the schools move up to the higher grades 9 and 10 some exemptions will be considered. In the lower classes till class 2, teachers are able to make more changes in their lesson plan and teaching methodology by include more concrete material and multi-sensory activities. However, as the syllabus gets more content heavy in the higher grades the load within the classroom is more and it becomes difficult to make significant changes to the methodology. The children seem to find science and Art & Craft most interesting because there is more practical work done in these subjects. Science is taught with small experiments and concrete activities which children find fun and easier to cope with. They have the most trouble with History and Geography because of the large volume of information they have to not only understand but also remember and regurgitate in assessments. Further, the syllabus of subjects like geography is often filled with content far removed from the children's lives and therefore to make practical and concrete connections becomes more difficult.

The responsibility for the child lies with the class teacher and the LRT is seen as the supporting agency. The LRT makes the teacher aware of the nature of learning difficulties the children face and guides her on how to work with the children in the classroom. For all children with special needs and impairments the LRT draws up Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) on a weekly basis (this was done on a monthly basis last year) to track the progress of each child and adjust the pace of learning according to the unique needs of the child. Since 2005 the LRT has been working with the class teachers to plan goals and strategies for each child with special needs in the areas of Cognitive, Socio-emotional & Physical development.

A sample IEP is given below (the name of the child is changed).

Individualised Education Plan

Name: Jayanti (name changed)

Date of Implementation: 15th March 2008

IEP Period: One month

1. Exceptionality of the student (health issues or any other):

> Jayanti is delayed in speech and fine motor development.

2. Present level of performance (academic functioning):

- > She is unable to recognize letter meaningfully. She cannot identify letters and sounds.
- > Counts numbers up to 5 with objects. She has poor sequencing skills and has no understanding of number value.
- > She is delay in writing skills.

3. Curricular modifications or accommodations (specify subject areas and specify level- higher/lower/maintained):

- > We will modify her academic level and go back to a lower level by teaching her individual letters and numbers.

4. Amount of extra support to receive per day (half an hour/ morning/30% of the day):

- > She will get 30 minutes from the special teacher towards her planned goal / objective.
- > The teachers decide per day according to her time.

5. Personalized equipment required: None**6. Personnel involved (therapists):**

- > In her case therapists are involved.
- > The therapist and teachers will work on her fine motor skills and speech skill.

7. Strategies to be used (based on the child's strengths and weak-nesses/specify reinforcements):

She will be given stars on hand as reinforcement towards better performance.

Worksheets to be planned by the teacher (well in advance) to colour the picture and joining dots and make picture.

8. Goals (expectations and performance standards with specific details):**A. Academic**

Jayanti will recognize letters of the alphabet. She will learn the value of numbers 1 to 3

B. Attention - None**C. Behaviour - None****D. Writing - None****Objectives (for each goal) Goal A- Academic**

- > Jayanti will learn to meaningfully identify letter 'A a' over a period of a week or ten days. Then next letter will be introduced. She may be taught one vowel and one consonant.
- > Jayanti will match 'A a' pictures with the letter 'A a'.
- > Jayanti will point or write letter 'A a' when asked to her.
- > Jayanti will do cutting and folding paper, molding clay.

Objective Goal B- Attention-None**Objective C- Behaviour- None****Objective D- Writing- None****9) Review and monitoring (monthly/quarterly):**

She has started to identify letter "A a" and 2 objects related to it. She is still finding it difficult to hold the scissors and cut, she needs more practice in cutting and folding. Her elder sister also has similar problem. Evaluation at Ummeed suggests Familial Microcephaly.

The section on Review and Monitoring forms the basis for the new strategies which is discussed by the LRT and the class teacher for the next week or month. The new weekly plan is added into the file of each child.

The IEP provides the framework within which adaptations are made with regard to goals and expectations, teaching methodology and content which the teachers make while working with such children. Based on the IEPs the children in Group A (Specific learning disabilities) & Group B (Developmental delays) are supported by the class teacher in weekly sessions. Each teacher spends at least one class period (45 minutes) with the special children in remedial instruction. Special worksheets or activities are designed for the children who struggle with phonics, visual discrimination, letter recognition, fine motor development and others. These worksheets are made by the learning resource team and administered by them or by the teacher in the classroom depending on the needs of the children. Most of the remedial instruction is target driven and the overall theoretical

framework for working with the children with special needs is the Cognitive Behavioural therapy.

For children in Group C (significantly disabled) the individual sessions are conducted by the LRT usually during library time and sometimes when the children are in their History or Geography class (as the cognitive demands of these subjects tend to be much beyond what the child is capable of). The IEPs for these children in Group C are also shared with their class teacher and she is made aware of their progress. The LRT also encourages classroom teachers to observe these individual sessions with the children so that they can learn how to give instructions, get the attention of the children and help them concentrate better.

The IEPs for all children with special needs are reviewed in weekly or monthly meetings with the teachers. The LRT reviews the worksheets completed by the children & identifies new objectives to be achieved.

Concessions & Assessments

Assessments of all children in Mukangan include both formative and summative components. Formative assessment reports are prepared by the teachers after close observations of all children. Reports include comments on academics, social skills, life skills and other areas as well focusing not on what the child cannot do but what the child can do or has begun to do.

In the case of summative assessments such as the Unit Tests & Term Examinations, children with special needs are given some concessions. Spelling and grammar errors and poor handwriting are disregarded and extra time is given. Teachers help the children in reading and understanding the question. Last year, Mukangan was given the freedom and flexibility to assess the children on only selected topics. The children were taking the regular MCGM exam at the end of the term but very recently the school has been given the permission as per a Government Order in 2009 to set modified papers which are appropriate and relevant to the children's special needs. Children are not yet exempt from any subjects but the assessment is level appropriate to their learning abilities.

This year, with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) the MCGM has introduced fresh guidelines for Continuous and comprehensive evaluation in a recent Government Regulation. The students from Standard I to VIII are not required to take

any examination. The weightage of the formative assessment tools has been increased to 70% in Standards I & II; 60% in Standards III & IV; 50% in Standards V & VI and 40% in Standards VII & VIII.

This change in assessment guidelines has reduced the undue pressure of examinations that children undergo. The implications of this new assessment for the children with special needs has yet to be discussed and implemented since these guidelines have been announced in September 2010.

Facilities & Resources

There is a resource centre in the oldest school of the Muktangan network and one more is planned in another MCGM school. Currently, it is mainly the learning resource team primarily uses the materials available in the resource center, however, it is foreseen that the centre should be used by all teachers. It consists of different teaching aids for visual discrimination, auditory discrimination, for developing speech and language, fine motor development and reading & writing, number concepts, shapes and colours. The material is selected and designed by the learning resource team with support from UMEED, an NGO specialising in special education. Other materials are headphones (for music therapy), smiley balls and play therapy kit.

The school purchases and organises for special facilities for the children. The school is funded by donors and a lot of support is provided by other NGOs and agencies like UMEED, SAIFI, and Nair Hospital.

There are volunteers from the Maharashtra Dyslexia Association who visit the school twice a week and work with the children they have identified as having learning problems in Standard I and II. In addition, two individual volunteer special educators offer not only assistance twice a week to Standard III, IV, V and VI children, but also guidance to the LRT. In the last academic year a Play Therapist conducted weekly sessions in one of the MCGM schools. Also, a music therapist from the UK worked for ten days from April 1 with autistic children and she donated headphones!

The children with special needs use assistive devices such as hearing aids. These are usually purchased by the parents and support is provided if required by the school.

The school supports parents in organising medical check-ups in Nair Hospital or Ummeed. The learning resource team is continuously

interacting and supporting parents with taking appointments, meeting doctors and giving feedback on their children.

Since the school does not admit children who are visually impaired or hearing impaired the special facilities such as Braille or voice software are not available in the school. The facilities that our school provides to children with impairments are in the area of the concessions that they get.

Teachers' Development & Support

All our teachers have a minimum qualification of Secondary School Education (Standard X) and over the years spent in Muktangan, they study further and many go on to complete their graduation as well.

All teachers who work at Muktangan are introduced to the philosophy and principles of inclusive education. This is included in the pre-service training itself and focuses on raising awareness, developing sensitivity and empathy to children with special needs. There is also a one day module included on specific learning difficulties (Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia) and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD). During vacations professional development workshops are conducted by the Learning Resource Team for all teachers to address in more details specific learning difficulties or impairments which the children in Muktangan have. Last year, all the faculty and associate faculty had a week long orientation (3 hours each day) creating awareness about children with autism, Mental Retardation (MR), Global Developmental Delay (GDD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) & Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

Teachers have been working in the school from anywhere between 1 year to 6 years. The issues related to children with impairments are shared regularly in teachers meetings. Teachers participate in daily planning meetings to discuss teaching ideas. This is also the forum where concerns about children are shared. All teachers are made aware through training and professional development of the developmental red flags for children. So teachers are able to identify or at least spot learning difficulties or areas of concern. Along with this the learning resource team also sits in different classes and observes children's work to identify any impairments or difficulties. The teachers are also encouraged to observe the individual sessions that LRT member has with a child with special needs to learn how to work more effectively.

Parents & Government Interactions

The parents are from lower socio-economic background with average incomes of the household often being Rs. 5000/- per month. The education of the families is varied with lots of mothers having studied only till 7th or 8th and also some fathers. Some fathers have completed their Senior Secondary Examination and a few their Higher Secondary Examination.

There is a positive and open interaction with parents in Mukangan. There are meetings held once a month for all parents to learn more about the methodology and also to respond to their expectations and dissatisfactions. Parents are also made aware of the learning resource team and how they support children with learning difficulties. There is no Monitoring Committee. Parents are encouraged to help in the classroom and volunteer for activities especially to aid the social adjustment of children with special needs. A special home plan is also made for each child with special needs which includes specific strategies and tasks that the parents can use to support their child's development at home.

Sometimes, the parents expect their child to perform at par with all children and from the school they expect them to solve all their problems related to children and take full responsibilities. Such expectations are discussed at parent meetings. Teachers are free to meet parents and vice versa as and when required. Through teacher interactions, report meetings which are held twice a year for half hour each and through home visits. Through parent meetings or meeting concerned teachers or the learning resource team there is feedback provided all the time through the different channels of communication.

The MCGM has been indifferent to children with special needs until the RTE Act came into force. Since the Act has specifically stated that children with special needs must be included in all schools, it has made the MCGM more conscious of its stance towards inclusive practices. There was a Government order which allows special children to take a modified paper which is more appropriate to their learning levels.

Impact of Inclusion

Inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream classroom had a positive effect on all children social emotional development, building empathy and sensitivity. Peer tutoring has also been a natural consequence of the integration of children with special needs. One

example, in a group with an Autistic child others have learnt to give instructions to the child when he gets distracted or is not paying attention to the group activity:- Now sit down! Look at the board etc.

Children have begun to accept differences and learn to share and care for all children. Discussions are held during circle time and on other occasions about respecting everyone and they have slowly helped the children to be aware of the need to include other children.

There have been no major problems with inclusion. In fact as discussed earlier it has had an overall positive effect on everyone. Sometimes children or teachers may get frustrated because of their inability to support the children appropriately; however, it has never created a problem for anyone.

All the children with impairments are usually comfortable in the regular school. They are at different stages of being socially integrated. They have friends who are within their class and they are involved by the other children in games and outdoor activities. There are times the children with slow gross motor development may not be easily included in Physical Education activities. This is usually because one teacher has to manage the entire class and is unable to give the physical support required for these children. However, with the intervention of the learning resource team the teachers have been encouraged to either have a stronger child or another teacher to help this child.

Children are usually involved with the friends during their lunch and snack breaks. These are spontaneous activities that they are engaged in. There are the normal problems of teasing and troubling that all children face. In one of the schools, some children have commented on the fact that the special children go to the learning resource center because they are dull. However, whenever these issues are brought to the notice of the teacher class discussions are conducted during circle time and it has been found that such instances of teasing have reduced. Social adjustments are viewed as an ongoing process and therefore topics of bullying, sensitivity to others and acceptance of differences is discussed from time to time by the classroom teachers and/or learning resource teachers.

Since the group size of children is usually small (12 children to 1 teacher), all children tend to develop a good rapport with their teacher. Children with special needs are also quite comfortable to share their concerns with their class teacher. They are encouraged to voice their worries and seek help by their class teacher. In addition, they also feel

very comfortable as they get older to talk to their learning resource members as well.

There are no formal punishments within the system and teachers have usually set up classroom rules which all children follow. The teacher uses similar strategies for disciplining when required and is expected in general to be empathetic to all children's needs. The learning resource team also helps teachers with strategies on how to deal with children who have special needs.

The level of understanding and empathy among teachers differs from teacher to teacher but in general there is an empathetic understanding of the learning difficulties that a child with special needs face. The teachers also at times get frustrated because they feel incapable of supporting such children effectively. Handling multiple levels in the class may be challenging and it is something that is continuously discussed in various teacher forums.

Key Learning & Reflections

Our main learning is that integration of the children with special needs to the extent possible is the best education that all children. It is crucial to realise the positive outcomes for the children with impairments in academic and socio-emotional areas when they go to a regular school. It is not only good for these children but has a great impact on the learning environment for other children as well.

One of the main hurdles for integration the learning resource team feels is the nature of assessments needs to be changed and made more child-friendly taking into account the learning difficulties of children. Also a more multi-sensory approach in not just the primary classrooms but also secondary classrooms is required to help not only children with impairments but also those with different learning styles to improve understanding and retention of concepts.

The LRT is also in the process of formalising many of the systems from admission to examination for the children with special needs. However, finding sufficient time and resources is the biggest challenge. It is important to have sufficient and good resources in terms of trained staff who can support and guide the children with impairments and also teachers who work with them in the classroom. Without such a continuous support it could create pockets of isolation for the children with special needs. It is important that there is an empathetic handling of both teachers and children. Also the inclusive philosophy should

permeate the school in all its processes so that it provides a naturally sensitive and supportive learning environment.

Muktangan is making a serious effort to be an inclusive school and faces many challenges to develop its systems and process. Fortunately, the intentions and plans are in place.

Enabling Transition in Mainstream Schools:

A Case of Government Main Higher Primary School (GMHPS),
Ramanagara, Karnataka

Manjula Nanjundaiah

Introduction

In the initial years, integrating children with disabilities was not easy as schools were not ready to accept and admit these children. They would say that they didn't know how to teach these children and that they were not trained for it. They would also suggest to the resource teacher and parents that they should admit these children in special schools in Bangalore. Even after they had admitted children with disability to their school on the parents and resource teacher's pursuance, regular teachers were not ready to take the responsibility of educating children with disability and they left it completely to the resource teachers.

However, mainstreaming started gradually with the help of resource teachers who were working under the centrally sponsored Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) Scheme mainly in government schools in Karnataka. These resource teachers were trained in a one year Multi-Category Teachers Training Course in Integrated Education (recognised by Govt. of Karnataka) conducted by NGOs in Karnataka. The resource teacher and students with disability ratio was 1:8 and resource teachers were giving one to one resource teaching support to children with disability.

Profile of the Govt. Main Higher Primary School (GMHPS), Ramanagara

The GMHPS is one of the old schools in Ramanagara as it was established in 1920 and has been integrating disabled children in the school for more than 15 years. This school has around 300 children studying from 1st Std. to 7th Std. and has a staff of 9 comprising 7 female teachers, 1 male Head Master and 1 male Physical Education teacher. The Head Master has undergone 42 days training on inclusive education and other teachers have undergone 3 days orientation on inclusive education. The children come from poor and lower middle class families. This school has 20 children with impairments in their enrolment register, 7 are in the regular classrooms (4 children with hearing impairment, 2 children with Intellectual Disabilities and 1 child with Learning Disabilities) and another 13 (8 children with Intellectual Disabilities, 4 children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) + Intellectual Disabilities,

1 child with Intellectual Disability + Physical Disability (PD) under the service of Home Based Education (HBE) of Sarva Shikshana Abhiyana (SSA). This school has an Anganwadi centre in its premises.

This school has no accessibility for wheelchair users, but this year they got disabled friendly toilets from SSA as they have more number of children with impairment and also have a history of integrating children with impairment for many years in the school.

In the year 1994-95, the strength of the GMHPS was reduced to just 90 children due to a few private schools coming up in the vicinity. The Head Master in-charge at that time was worried and was desirous of increasing the strength of the school at any cost as it was one of the oldest schools in Ramanagara. He was also a chairman of the School Development & Monitoring Committee (SDMC). Meanwhile, he visited neighbouring Seva-in-Action's (SIA) Samvardhana Resource Centre (SRC) and requested its resource teacher to admit all children with disability in their school and promised to provide one room to set up a resource centre in the school premises. This was one of the measures he had taken to increase the strength of the school by enrolling children with disability in their school. However it was a blessing in disguise for the resource teacher, children with disability and their parents. The school enrolled 23 disabled children of various types and categories into their school with the help of a resource teacher of SIA. They started partial integration in the beginning; i.e. children with disability spend half a day in SIA's SRC with resource teacher and the other half of the day in the GMHPS. Gradually the school strength increased from 90 to 350 children. After setting up a resource room, they implemented total integration. Currently the resource room is not there in GMHPS as the IEDC scheme has been discontinued. However the resource teacher is using the SRC for resource teaching support to the mainstreamed children.

Admission

There is no special procedure for admitting children with disability in the school. They enroll the child with disability like any other non-disabled child. Children with disability enroll directly and also through SRC. These children also get school uniform, books and midday meals like all other children.

Seating arrangement

The school has spacious classrooms with 35 - 45 children in each class and has benches/desks in a few classrooms. Every classroom has one black board, a chair and a table and a few charts on different subjects hung on the wall. All children come to school in school uniform but in some classes, children have to sit on the floor (not even mats in some classrooms). Boys and girls sit in separate rows and children with disability usually sit in the front row or else sit next to their friends. They mingle with other children very well (during class, prayer, lunch time, play time, etc.).



Teaching Methodology

Teachers are not using any special teaching method for children with disability, but they give attention to these children while showing teaching aids and doing any experiment. They seek support from the resource teacher in remedial teaching, evaluation, examination, etc. The language teacher takes non-disabled pupil's help who sits next to the child with hearing impairment, to show the lines in the lesson with index finger while she reads (model reading) and also uses more pictures.

Resource Teaching Support

Children who are studying in this school go to the neighbourhood SRC everyday in the morning before school hours for resource teaching on a

one-to-one basis. The resource teacher along with the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) facilitator help them in understanding the concepts which they did not understand in the regular class with special teaching learning materials and help them in doing homework given in the class. They also help them in revising class lessons at the centre and give practice in writing tests- to understand the questions and to write correct answers. Children with hearing impairment/speech problem also get speech therapy sessions. Sometimes volunteers (students/teachers/parents) help in providing resource teaching support to the children at the SRC.

Evaluation

They conduct class tests both in oral and written formats and the examination is common for all, but they seek help from the resource teacher to adapt methods as per the needs of children with disability. The resource teacher helps in making worksheets, simple objective questions with clues, etc. She helps children with intellectual disabilities in writing the exam for e.g. she has to explain the question to them and get the answer - in case they answer orally, she writes it in the answer paper for them.

The resource teacher helps the school in getting concessions for children with disabilities in examinations like exemption from 2nd and 3rd languages for children with hearing impairment, intellectual disabilities and learning disabilities; additional time in writing the examination for needy children (Cerebral Palsy, Physical Disabilities, etc), scribe facility for children with Visual Impairment, Cerebral Palsy, etc.

The Role of SIA's SRC in Facilitating Transition in Mainstream Schools

Seva-in-action (SIA) is a voluntary organisation working since 1985, at grass root levels with the objective of developing an inclusive society by providing comprehensive and holistic community based rehabilitation (CBR) services to different types and categories of people with disabilities (children and adults) and developing inclusive education (IE) to ensure education for children with disabilities in collaboration with the State and Central Government.

In 25 years of our service to the rural disabled population, SIA has been

able to form CBR Committees with local people and parents groups to sustain the rehabilitation programmes in rural areas. Ramanagara is one of the centres which has an active local CBR Committee and parents group in the name of 'Srushti Parents Association' under the National Trust. Now they are helping to run the self help centre in Ramanagara which was started by SIA in 1985. Now the centre is running in the name of 'Samvardhana Resource Centre' as it was upgraded over a period of time.

Samvardhana Resource Centre (SRC)

It is a multipurpose centre which caters to different types and categories of children and adults with disabilities under various services, placed in an old choultry of Ramadevara Devasthanam (Ram temple) located in Ramanagara. The place was offered free of cost by the local community in 1985 to SIA to initiate the CBR programme at Ramanagara. The Centre is known to serve all types and categories of children with disability from all socio-economic backgrounds and works with the families of children with disabilities from Ramanagara town and surrounding villages. This centre is offering various services viz., early intervention, home-based education, preparatory/school readiness, resource support to mainstream schools for Inclusive Education, supportive service for children with severe disabilities, pre-vocational and vocational training, counseling support, training of teachers/Village Rehabilitation Workers/volunteers/parents, career guidance, etc.). At present, 30 children with varied disabilities are receiving different services from the Centre.



A group of children with hearing impairment are receiving resource teaching support at SRC

It is important to understand the role of SRC in preparing, supporting and integrating children with disabilities into the mainstream schools which enable children to move from school readiness/Pre-school to lower & higher primary to high schools and colleges. The SRC has been equipped with adequate resources and it is well managed by a resource teacher who has undergone a One year Multi-Category Teachers Training Course in Integrated Education conducted by SIA, a CBR facilitator who underwent a 6 weeks Certificate Course training in CBR which was also conducted by SIA and an Assistant who is the mother of a child with Intellectual Disability (ID). It is run with the technical support of SIA, Bangalore and the help of the local CBR Committee and Parents group. Moreover, it offers supportive services like basic education, daily living activities (ADL) skills, pre-vocational and vocational training for children who cannot be integrated into the mainstream schools and counseling support to parents and children. It provides continuous support to children who are mainstreamed. Currently 10 mainstreamed children with disabilities [hearing impairment (HI), intellectual disability (ID), and learning disability (LD)] are receiving resource teaching support at the Centre. The service given at SRC is well appreciated by the parents, schools and community.



Children with Special needs are learning geography lessons in computer at SRC

Functioning of SRC

SRC aims to provide the appropriate learning environment for all children in the Centre so that they may achieve their full potential as SIA believes that “every child has a right to education irrespective of the disabilities and difficulties of the child”.

Admission

Children are enrolled to SRC on the parent's consent irrespective of age, type and category of disability. About 2-3 children take admission to the centre every year under different services. These children are referred by schools or the community or have heard about the centre themselves. Some children are coming from far off places as they have no facility in their community and some feel their children get proper education in this centre. Children are placed in appropriate groups like early intervention/ home-based education/ school readiness/resource teaching support/ pre-vocational or vocational training, based on their needs. Here most of the children who live in Ramanagara and surrounding villages come to the Centre walking / by auto or with their parents and guardians.

Assessment & Planning

After admission, the resource teacher of the Centre assesses the child based on the portage checklist in 5 areas viz., cognition, motor, language, self-help and socialisation/school readiness checklist/ pre-vocational checklist with the help of the mother. Besides educational assessment, the resource teacher also helps the parents and the child to get a medical assessment done and supports them to get assistive devices from the government. An Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is developed to teach the activities to the child based on the above assessment. Mothers are involved in planning, making teaching learning aids and facilitating learning to the child both at the centre and at home. However all mothers are not involved due to many reasons even though the resource teacher would like them to be at the centre at least twice or thrice a week. Wherever the mother is involved that child is progressing well. The centre has linkages with the Govt. Departments and other NGOs working in Ramanagara like Association for the Physically Disabled, Spastics Society of Karnataka, Disabled Peoples' Organisation, etc. for resource support like therapy, assistive devices, government facilities, etc.

School Readiness Programme

The Centre is giving importance to the school readiness programme for mainstreaming the children with disability in the neighbourhood schools as SIA's belief is that preparation of children is very crucial for effective mainstreaming. Prepared children are well adjusted in the mainstream school and they are also well received by teachers and peer groups.

A specific school readiness programme with specific curriculum is followed. It covers the areas of gross and fine motor development, speech and language development, reading and writing, number concepts, shapes and colours, communication and socialisation. The Centre has a resource room equipped with adequate teaching-learning aids for teaching the activities of the above areas. Children sit on wooden chairs with arm support and do the activities on a rectangular wooden table (4 children per table). Here children get one-to-one teaching support based on the IEP, besides group teaching and they also get auditory training, speech therapy, Activities of Daily Living (ADL) skills and physiotherapy on the basis of their needs. The evaluation is an ongoing process through participation, observations, tests, etc. Usually children are ready to go to mainstream school after one or two years depending on the type and degree of disability, aptitude of the child and involvement of parents. Some children even take 3-4 years. The resource teacher has to help parents who have children with epilepsy in their medication, besides providing education. Once the child is ready for mainstreaming, the resource teacher with the parent's support admits the child in a nearby regular school and provides continuous resource teaching support to the child and resource support to the school.

Outcome of Mainstreaming in GMHPS

More than 25 children have so far completed Higher Primary education from this school with the uninterrupted support of SRC and have been promoted to Secondary education level. One boy with intellectual disability is working with a mechanic, and one boy with intellectual disability is working in a provision store.

Mainstreaming in High Schools

Once children have completed higher primary education, they usually get admitted to the following High Schools in Ramanagara:

1. Govt. Boys Junior College, BM Road, Ramanagara
2. Govt. Girls High School, Behind BEO Office, Ramanagara
3. Govt. High School, Ijoor, Ramanagara

The above High Schools are affiliated to the State Board. Most of the children with disability who have passed from GMHPS got admitted in the Government Boys Junior College. It was established in 1947 and has both Kannada and English medium. The school building has no accessibility for children with physical disability. The total strength of the school is around 750 children and it has 22 teachers. The basic qualification of the teachers is B.Sc /B.A with B.Ed. Teachers are not trained in Inclusive Education. The SDMC is not aware of Inclusive Education.

As per the Head Master, this school has always admitted children with impairments as parents are not able to admit their children in any of the private schools. This year no child with disability has been admitted but there is only one boy with HI who is studying in 9th standard. This boy was promoted from GMHPS and got admission with the help of SIA's resource teacher. He would sit at the back in the classroom as he is older than the other children. He attended all the subject classes in the school but could not understand completely as no attention was given to him. He is not doing well in academics. He takes notes from his friends and has to struggle to study on his own without any resource support. His parents are not happy with the school as teachers are not taking any interest.

No special methods / approach are followed in teaching, teaching and learning materials and evaluation for children with impairment in the school. Now the school knows about how to get the concession from the Govt. for giving relaxation from 2nd & 3rd language for children with hearing impairment and they do it on their own now. High Schools are not giving admission to intellectually challenged children and even if they do, children are not getting promotion to higher classes as they are not able to cope with the existing curriculum. In the end they leave the school.

Majority of the High School teachers want children with disability to study in regular school provided that an appropriate environment and required support is provided. An exclusive resource teacher has to be there to help these children, utilise the services of NGOs and SDMCs for these children's progress and help them to get the Government. facilities. These children are capable if provided with the resource support and they should not be separated.

Twenty children have so far completed Grade 10 through the High School after being mainstreamed from Higher Primary School. One boy with Cerebral Palsy is currently studying 3rd year B.Com in Govt. First Grade College, Ramanagara, one boy with hearing impairment is doing a diploma course in gold ornament making (designing) and one boy with hearing impairment is running a photocopy shop at Ramanagara.

Here is an individual child's case study to understand clearly how SRC is supporting transition in mainstream schools.

CASE STUDY OF NAVEEN KUMAR

Naveen Kumar is a 16 year old boy with hearing impairment (HI). He has two sisters, one older and one younger to him. His parents realised that even after a year 6 months, he was neither able to speak nor hear the sounds around him. They took their child to the local doctor for a checkup. The doctor referred the child to the All India Institute of Speech & Hearing (AIISH) in Mysore. The child's hearing assessment confirmed that child had HI. They even prescribed a hearing aid for the child and suggested that the child be left with his mother in their residential set up for early training. But the parents disagreed as it was not possible for her to leave her two daughters and family in Ramanagara.

After some time, they heard about Samvardhana Self Help Centre [Samvardhana Resource Centre (SRC)] run by Seva-in-Action (SIA) in Ramanagara under its CBR programme. Naveen's father had visited the centre and met the Resource Teacher regarding the admission of his son to the centre. But he did not turn up for another 6 months after seeing the other disabled children, especially those with severe ID. He felt his son was intelligent and did not deserve to be put with the severely intellectually disabled children at the centre.

The resource teacher went to Naveen Kumar's house to convince his parents that their son would be in the preparatory/ school readiness group and get training as per his needs as the centre's focus was on child - based learning. The parents were then convinced and the mother started bringing her 3 year old son to the centre. In the beginning, Naveen Kumar used to cry while coming to the centre and so the resource teacher convinced his parents to send their 3rd child (non-disabled) also to the pre-school run by SRC in the same premises. All together, nine children including Naveen Kumar were at the pre-school.

Naveen Kumar started coming to the centre happily with his younger sister and participating in the pre-school activities. His mother used to make sure that he wore the hearing aid which they received from All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, Mysore. The Resource teacher started giving him auditory training and stimulated his residual hearing. Simultaneously she gave him speech development training, both individually as well as in a group. She prepared him for primary school in 3 years (reading, writing, number concept, etc). The parents sent both of their children in an Auto for all the 3 years with much confidence.

He got admission for the 1st standard in the Govt. Main Higher Primary School in the year 1999 with the help of Resource teacher and started learning in the integrated class in the mainstream school like other non-disabled children. However, he attended Resource teaching class every morning given by the Resource teacher in the SRC from 9.30 am to 10.30 am (before school hours). The Resource teacher helped him during the regular class as well as whenever he had difficulty in learning. She worked with the regular teachers to meet the needs of the children with disabilities in regular classrooms. For example, procurement and maintenance of aids and appliances, special Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs), modifications in evaluation procedures etc. The regular teachers were also very co-operative and encouraged him in his studies. He was good at math. At home, his parents and especially his older sister helped him complete his home work. He participated in various competitions (drawing, chess, etc.) and also won some prizes. He passed the 7th Standard with the support of his parents, siblings, resource teacher, regular school teachers, class mates and friends.

He got admission to the 8th Standard in Govt. Boys Junior College in Ramanagara. He continued to attend morning resource teaching class from 10 am 11 am at SRC. In the beginning, he was not comfortable in some classes as the students teased him. The Resource teacher then met the Head Master & teachers of that High School along with the parents of Naveen Kumar and sensitised High School children about children with special needs. After this, they started helping Naveen Kumar take down notes in class. The parents also visited the school and met teachers regularly regarding their son's studies. The Resource teacher helped him get the language exemption (exemption from studying 2nd & 3rd languages) in the

10th State Board Examination and passed SSLC. He also received basic knowledge about computers.

Naveen Kumar's parents approached SIA's staff at SRC and discussed their son's higher education. SIA helped them get admission for their son in a one year diploma course in Gold making (designing) at JSS, Mysore. When parents discussed the expenditure involved in sending him to Mysore, he wrote a letter to his grandfather requesting him to help him finance his studies and said that the money would be returned to him after he completed his course. He is currently pursuing his diploma course at Mysore, and travels independently when he comes home for the holidays. This makes his parents proud.

Conclusion

The regular schools have to be equipped to provide meaningful inclusion for all children in terms of appropriate continuous resource support like accessibility in both physical and academic, curriculum adaptation, use of ICT, resource teaching support, etc. Children with intellectual disability were attending regular classes before the home based education of SSA and mainly they used to get socialisation. Now they are denied of socialisation and deteriorating in their behavior as sitting at home/roaming around. We need to bring them to the school as they have every right to attend regular school like all other children provided with the supportive system. The SRC has been playing a very significant role in transition in mainstream schools by practicing school readiness before mainstreaming, providing continuous resource teaching support to children with disability and resource support to the school. This kind of support has been enabling children with disability move from preparatory to lower and higher primary education to secondary education and higher education. However there is an urgent need to work at secondary education level in terms of providing resource support system to the schools at Government level. We need to work out an alternative curriculum may be pre-vocational and vocational aspects that can be introduced at Higher Secondary level for children who are not able to cope with existing curriculum, particularly for intellectually challenged children.

Inclusive Practice in Model Primary Govt School Teachers' Training Institute (TTI)

Mancaud, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Ruma Banerjee

Kerala's achievement in the field of literacy has been notable.

Kerala has a history of education being accessible to all, irrespective of caste or religion. Another notable feature of the state is that from the ancient times, education was open to women which was in contrast to other parts of India. Kerala being the state for learning and for social justice, it has made an impact on the inclusive development of the society. The reforms and policies of the state have taken into consideration the marginalised backward classes and provided them with justice and empowerment. With major reforms in the education sector, the state has ensured that in practice education is accessible to all and is inclusive, irrespective of socio economic status and also for children with disabilities.



About the school

The Model Primary school at Teacher Training Institute (TTI), Mancaud is an institution started fifty years ago in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. It is a teacher training institute for preparing teachers for primary level of education in the state. The model primary school is located in the same premises of the teacher training institute. The school has developed a colourful ambience with garden, ponds, models of birds near the pond

thus bringing nature nearer to the children, which is a reflection of the state's profile of abundant nature and greenery. This has helped the school premises by making it environment and learner friendly. The total strength of the school is 650 children from classes 1st to 4th. The school has children from different strata of the society. Kerala is one of the states which has promoted social inclusion through various reforms in the policy that can be observed at grassroots level also. It was heartening to know that the Education Secretary's child studies in a government school which reflected the practice in true sense. Such examples share the state's commitment towards inclusive development.

The school follows the state syllabus with both English and Malayalam as medium of instruction. Kerala is one of the states which has had English as a medium of instruction in government schools in contrast to other states of India. This is mainly due to the reforms in the education sector that the state had taken up. The Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) is 45:1, which is higher than the national average expected in primary schools. As this is a teacher training institute, the trainees also work with regular classrooms which helps to maintain the expected PTR. The classes are divided with the following number of sections.

Class/Number of sections	Number of sections as per medium of instruction
1 (5 sections)	2 Malayalam and 3 English
2 (3 sections)	1 Malayalam and 2 English
3 (4 section)	2 Malayalam and 2 English
4 (4 sections)	2 Malayalam and 2 English

Early Childhood Education - the Preschool

The model school also has a preschool in the same premises but in a different building with 175 children in the age group of 3 to 6 years. There are five sections in the preschool and these sections are divided by aquarium which makes the environment very colourful and lively. I could observe one child with cerebral palsy in one of the sections. The school emphasises early education for all children including those with special needs. The child is included into an age appropriate section. The preschool teacher is aware of children with disabilities through her training in pre-school education. The child is encouraged to do more simple activities compared to his/her peers, like more of identification activities and participation in socialisation activities. There is enough

flexibility that allows the child to adjust as per his own pace and to get adjusted to the new environment of the school.

Enrolment and Special Provisions

All children with disabilities are accepted: there are no criteria for admission. The school implements the state's policy of enrolling children with physical, sensorial and intellectual disabilities according to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan norms. At present, 29 children with disabilities are enrolled in the school (see table).

Total number of children with disabilities

Type of Disability	Number of children
Intellectual Disability	15
Hearing Impaired	4
Multiple Disabilities	2
Low Vision	1
Blind	1
Autism	3
Speech Impaired	1
Cerebral Palsy	2
Total	29

The children need to have their medical assessment done by recognised professionals thus making them eligible for the government provisions meant for children with disabilities. These provisions include transport allowance, aids and appliances, uniform, scribe for blind children and concessions in examination system. It was observed that 50% of children with disabilities are children with intellectual disabilities ranging from mild to severe categories, besides autism.. Children with disabilities can be enrolled at any time of the academic year. The age relaxation for enrolment to primary school is five years. A child with special needs at the age of 10 can be enrolled into class 1 as per the government's policy for inclusion. But for most of the children the age difference with the peers was not more than two years. Majority of children are dropped by their parents to the school. The school provides afternoon lunch and snacks to all children.

State's commitment towards Inclusive Education - IEDC scheme and SSA

The school started inclusion from the early days with the Integrated Education for Disabled Children Scheme (IEDC) being implemented since 1985 in the state of Kerala. Kerala was one of the states which promoted inclusion in all its schools by introducing this Government of India sponsored scheme which has now got revised into the Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) Scheme. It has made best use of resources and opportunities for children with disabilities. During my interaction with the Deputy Director (DD) of Education Department for IEDC, Mr Rajanna (a person with visual impairment), he shared that it is not just the scheme but the Kerala government's inclusive approach to education since a very long time which is reflected in the implementation of the scheme with an efficient administrative system and ownership by the state government. The state has an exclusive Deputy Director for Inclusive Education which is the nodal department to implement all the schemes concerning inclusion, both of the central and state governments. Now, with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) being implemented state wide for elementary education, this school is also covered under its programmes. As there is a separate directorate for children with disabilities under the Education Department, all the programmes are converged under this department promoting a single window for inclusive education. With SSA at the elementary level and IEDSS scheme at high school level, the Government of Kerala has developed a resource support system from primary to high school for children with disabilities. One of the significant aspects observed was even children with intellectual disabilities are able to pursue their education till high school level which is not generally observed in other states where children with disabilities either dropout or are otherwise not given admission in high schools due to various reasons.

Inclusion at school level

Children with special needs are spread out from class 1st to 4th. Children with special needs are in regular classrooms with necessary classroom management skills adopted by the regular teacher. Seating arrangements are done in such a way that children with disabilities are in the front row or in the middle rows where the teacher can monitor them. Conventional class room teaching is followed through explanation and writing on the board. Although the teacher uses her

usual method of writing and explaining, the children participate by way of writing or answering simple questions. The major problem is that the teacher finds it difficult to manage children with behavioural problems because of the class size. The regular teachers have been provided with the basic orientation in understanding the needs of these children. They are assisted by the resource teachers who are special educationists trained in intellectual disability. In classes where there are a high number of intellectually disabled children, resource teacher spends more time in the regular classes assisting the regular teacher in managing and also teaching children with special needs. For example, a child with intellectual disability and behavioural problem would be assisted with the resource teacher in the regular class. The resource teacher sits with such children and explains to them individually using existing books and materials. The teaching of specific subjects like language and environment is done with teaching materials and activities whereas for subjects like math and science, the children attend the resource centre and individual or group teaching is provided by the resource teacher in a simple way. In general, the child has to follow the general school curriculum with support of a resource teacher. Evaluation of these children is developed in co-ordination with resource teacher where she provides to the regular teacher simple questions or methods to conduct the examination with the peer group. Given the state government's policy of no-detention till class fourth, the teachers do not have much pressure to conduct assessments.

When I visited Class 4, a child with hearing impairment was totally a part of the whole class, participating in her own way through writing or sign language which her peers could understand. Though the child had no hearing aid, she was good at lip reading and would understand with help of the text books whatever the teacher tried to explain and write on the board. The regular teacher was very happy with her performance and did not identify her as a child with special needs. The regular teacher felt there is no need for a hearing aid as she has no problems coping with her lessons. It is assumed in inclusive education that supportive aids are essential for the child to cope with education or the environment, Some of these myths were broken when we come in contact with ground realities where children with disabilities are able to manage with their life and are effectively participating in the learning process through their efforts and the available opportunities. This child is reluctant to wear a hearing aid as she would be labelled as deaf. She is very happy with her school.

All the children with disabilities attend the resource centre regularly to receive extra support services. The class-wise time table is made by the resource teacher in such a way that the children do not miss the regular classes when they attend the resource centre. Classes on subjects like science and math, which children with disabilities find it difficult to cope with the regular curriculum, are dealt with in the resource centre. When one observes the classes, it is a reality that children with special needs are enrolled in the classes and the management and teachers are aware about their presence. The resource support system is an essential component especially when it comes to catering to the learning needs of children with intellectual disabilities. One of the major issues of regular classroom teacher is the hyperactive behaviour of some of these children where she is unable to manage these children within a group of 45 other children. As there is enough flexibility in the evaluation system it makes the teacher help them to achieve the minimum learning levels. Diversity of children is a challenge for inclusive classrooms.



Resource Centre Support systems for Inclusion

The resource centre is a separate unit situated at the entrance of the Institute. It is a newly constructed unit based on the specifications of the government under IEDC scheme for children with disabilities. It has a ramp, accessible toilets besides large windows for enough light and air. It has one spacious room with attached toilets. It has all the necessary facilities for offering resource support to children with special needs.

The resource centre is equipped with learning and stimulation aids as sensory aids like peg board, colour tablets, puzzles, musical toys, few musical equipment, black boards, aids for fine motor coordination, alphabets, story books and charts to help children with specific difficulties. The centre also has basic physiotherapy aids such as balls, walkers and parallel bars and developmental aid as chairs for cerebral palsy. To assist children with hearing impairments they have amplifiers besides tape recorders for visually impaired children. The centre provides stimulation and therapy activities especially for children with intellectual disabilities, autism and cerebral palsy. This centre is managed by the resource teacher who is a special educationist with one year certificate course in intellectual disabilities. The resource teacher has a schedule for providing resource support to children with special needs, class wise and for subjects which are difficult. It starts with Class 1 & 2 coming in the morning for one hour followed by Class 3 & 4. Besides children would also attend the centre based on their needs for specific subjects. The children with special needs are a heterogeneous group, both in terms of age and their intelligence level. Therefore, the resource teacher has to plan her teaching to meet the learning needs of this diverse group in her resource teaching. The medical assessment of these children is done by professionals such as psychiatrist /audiologist etc. recognised by the government as this is a requirement. After the diagnosis of the disabilities, the teacher plans out the programme for children with disabilities. The children are provided with resource support based on the class they are studying which enables the resource teacher to organise her activities based on the child's needs and the curriculum objectives. Generally, the teacher would explain to the child based on simple activities and teaching materials available, and work books that are provided in the schools. As the state syllabus allows flexibility in learning objectives, the resource teacher develops her learning strategy accordingly based on the requirements of the class. For a Class 1 activity in number concept the teacher was organising games and songs in the resource centre to make the group understand the basic concept.

Depending on the severity of the disability, the child spends more time in the resource centre as they need greater support soon after enrolment. These newly admitted children with severe disabilities such as cerebral palsy and intellectual disabilities spend most of their time in acquiring basic functional skills as sitting, eating and getting adjusted to the new environment besides school readiness skills in the resource centre before attending regular classes.

The Principal shared that the resource centre was of great help to parents of children with high support needs. Even though the number of children enrolling has started increasing, the parents are quite happy with the resource centre and the support provided to their child. It was interesting to note that parents had the inhibition to send their child to the regular school earlier because they were not sure about the type of education the child might receive in a mainstream school. Having a resource centre in a mainstream school has brought the child one step closer to inclusion.

Teacher Training for Regular Teachers and Resource Teachers

Teacher training is vital for the effective implementation of inclusive education. The most urgent need is teacher development in mainstream schools, both through pre-service training and in-service training programmes. As this school is attached to a teacher training institute, it has abundant opportunities to develop and equip future teachers for inclusive education. The training faculty shared that the curriculum for teacher training programme is inclusive; specifically when it comes to the technology part of subject wise teaching methodologies it is inclusive in nature keeping in mind the diverse needs of children including children with disabilities. The curriculum has the ingredients of developing future teachers for meeting the diverse needs children in the mainstream education set up. The Education Department also conducts 15 days teacher empowerment training under which all the teachers of the school are given an orientation to inclusive education. Besides this, the resource teacher is also provided with refresher courses to upgrade her skills for dealing with children with all types of disabilities. Short term training are organised to equip teachers in dealing with specific subjects or making teaching learning materials and also teaching methodologies for strengthening inclusive classrooms. The move to inclusion, however, demands that regular teachers develop a high level of skill in responding to a range of diverse needs. It also demands that specialist teachers be trained to refocus their expertise into more resource support roles in regular schools

Kerala is one of the states which has shown a strong commitment towards inclusive education in terms of their policy and obligation of providing education as the fundamental right to children with disabilities also. It has demonstrated an ownership and sustainability of

the programme by developing an administrative set up which can deliver and reach out to children with disabilities in the state and achieve inclusive growth and development for which the state has been in the fore front.

Concluding Observations, Learning and Recommendations

Ruma Banerjee, Archana Mehendale and Manjula Nanjundaiah

The main objective, when we took up this compilation, was to pool together experiences and examples of schools that have tried to practice inclusion of children with disabilities. We wanted to understand what schools actually do when they say they are inclusive. We also wanted to capture the range of possibilities and efforts undertaken silently at the micro level, directly with children in the school settings. This compilation of examples of different schools and institutions is a beginning towards our journey of understanding inclusion as it is practiced at various levels. As mentioned in the introduction, we wanted to adopt an open approach and select schools that were trying to serve the needs of children with disabilities in their own ways. We did not want this exercise to be evaluative but we wanted it to provide insights into what is happening in various inclusive schools in different parts of the country.

There are the expected dangers of generalising from a small sample such as this and therefore we would avoid making any broad generalisations. However, we think it would be useful for teachers, school managements, researchers, policy makers and the disabled children and families to understand the challenges schools face, the constraints within which they operate and opportunities they open to create inclusive societies. In this final section, we would like to share some of our key observations and learning during this process and present some recommendations for action.

We find that there is an increasing awareness about inclusive education at all levels- from school managers, teachers and parents. There are diverse forms in which inclusion is being translated into practice. While this can be seen as a positive quality whereby schools are free to experiment and innovate, it also means that schools without adequate resources are left without support and guidance to learn by themselves through trial and error. This is evident from the fact that although all schools/institutions we studied had a high degree of commitment, not all of them were able to plan the school structure and processes to support inclusion with the same amount of technical clarity and competence. While a strong commitment of the school management to inclusion is a prerequisite, building capacities of schools to provide for

the diverse pedagogical needs of children is equally critical. Thus, there is a need to create a national resource network/pool for schools that are practicing inclusion and those that intend to. Such a network/pool should support sharing of practices including preparation of class schedules, classroom processes, curricular adaptations, assessment approaches, teaching learning tools and methodologies, parental role, teacher training, management practices for fostering inclusion and so on. Such a network/pool should connect public, private, aided, alternative schools together on a common platform so as to facilitate exchange of diverse experiences on inclusion.

Given the complex needs of growing children, particularly those with disabilities, schools are often unable to serve the holistic needs of children. Schools may either focus on one or two aspects of the child's development, often due to resource constraints. Very often the goals of inclusion may also get pitched at the minimal level i.e. only targeting enrollment and physical inclusion. We think that this is an important starting point that cannot be negated. However, schools would need greater support from the government and institutions with expertise to cater to the disabled children in a holistic manner. Technical support in terms of pedagogy, curricular goals and evaluation is needed to implement school level adaptations that are made for purposes of inclusion.

In all the schools that we studied, a large amount of teaching learning material was prepared by teachers based on the requirements of children, the learning objectives, resources available and their own training and experience. While this resource base is seen by schools as internal or local, this can potentially be used more widely. Insights of teachers on effectiveness of certain material, how material should be introduced with children, what material is the most basic for what kind of learning needs and what are the various uses of such material require further research and dissemination. This needs to be specifically collated and researched so that it feeds into the pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes on inclusive education.

We also saw that all schools practicing inclusion rely on collaboration and partnerships with various other specialised agencies. This includes institutions that conduct medical and psychological assessments, hospital centres that assess disabilities, specialised groups working on specific disabilities, and groups involved with media. We also find that inclusion is essentially a multi-disciplinary exercise and the schools that have been able to tap such resources and expertise are able to bring

about qualitative improvement in what is offered. However, we find that availability of specialised agencies and of multi-disciplinary professional support may be restricted only to cities and large majority of schools would not have this critical support. For instance, availability of professionals who could test the child with regards to her disability is also limited. If the government requires a 'zero rejection' policy to be adopted in its schools, it should also invest in creating these multi-disciplinary teams at least at the block level attached with the Block Resource Centres.

Our examples also show that it is important for schools to prepare a systemic approach towards inclusion so that inclusion occurs at all levels within the school and it is made into a responsibility of all stakeholders, including all children. In the examples, we find that the duty of providing for the children with disabilities was not only that of the teachers but of every member of the school community, including the support staff, PTA and peers. Inclusion was the responsibility not only of the special resource teachers but also that of the regular teachers. The school needs to provide for this or else it could result in segregation within regular schools.

We also observed that the resource centres and resource teachers play an important role in the success of inclusion. Their contributions are critical and range from developing 'school readiness' among children like in the case of ADAPT, Mumbai and JSS, Bangalore to ensuring their transition through various levels of education like in the case of Samvardhana centre, Ramanagara. Such supportive measures have enabled children to study in different kinds of schools, both in urban and rural areas. However, one of the concerns is that the schools and regular teachers are likely to become over-dependent on the resource centres and resource teachers without seeing these as integral components of the school system and educational needs of all children. Therefore, the location, space, significance, role and functions of the resource centre within the school system needs to be designed carefully so that the resource centre is an integral and organic part of the school with strong interface and overlaps with the regular classroom processes.

Another observation from studying these examples is that some of the schools have been flexible in adapting to the changing needs and requirements within the changing policy sphere. This has been with the intention of creating more and better spaces for children with disabilities within the existing institutional set ups. We think that this quality of schools to change and adapt as per the larger developments is

very important because schools are finally positioned within the larger policy and social sphere and not in isolation. Thus, the changing from a special school to an inclusive school as in the case of ADAPT or using the space created within the municipal corporation schools as in the case of Mukhtangan reflects the dynamic responses to inclusive education.

We find that most of the schools, even the private schools which were inclusive from the beginning, started with children who were rejected by the regular school system. In some way, children with disabilities were included along with others who were considered not fit enough for regular schooling. This placed extra pressures on such schools to cater to not only the special needs of children with disabilities but also cater to needs of children with other kinds of disadvantages. These realities are commonly found in most of the government schools as well which by default take children with various kinds of disadvantages, including those with disabilities. However, we find that the challenge of evolving specialised pedagogies as per children's individual needs is an important task for schools to address. In case of children with disabilities, some schools use a systematic Individualised Education Plan which is implemented and periodically assessed. However, other schools tend to do this more intuitively and in a somewhat ad hoc manner. Individualised Education Plans are important tools, yet we think these have been insufficiently explored by even those schools which practice inclusion. Specialised training on evolving, implementing and monitoring these plans needs to be provided at pre-service and in-service levels.

We also think there is a need to critically look at the role of the special schools within the context of inclusive education. We found that special schools like the pioneer Spastic Society of India, Mumbai has already converted their own special school to an inclusive school besides offering resource support to regular schools that are taking in children with disabilities. This change of paradigm is crucial for bringing in the years of expertise built by special schools into the fold of regular school system and thereby up scaling the resources and technology for education of children with disabilities available more widely. The presence of special schools should be seen as an important resource support by regular schools within the neighbourhood and the government should support building of these special schools as special resource centres.

The role of the teacher is very important if the vision of inclusion is to be translated into reality. The pressures on the teacher are huge and she is required to multi-task. A teacher is not only responsible for transacting

the syllabus in the classroom, she is involved in actually adapting, changing, abridging, modifying every aspect of the prescribed practice in the classroom setting. She decides what the learning goals of every child should be based on the child's capacity, she determines what subjects the child can engage in and at what level, what should be the role of textbook, what should be the role of written work, what part of the learning needs to be only oral or multi-sensorial, what should be done with the assessment of the child and how can the other children be engaged so that there is collective learning. This is not easy when teachers have to deal with children with different kinds of disabilities, as we saw in our examples and when class room sizes are large. At times, the regular children and children with disabilities compete for teacher's attention but at other times, they discover that learning just happens vicariously by simply observing the teacher responding to other children. The teachers are also seen to be constantly negotiating expectations from parents, from school management, and their own selves about inclusion. On this background, we find that the lack of formal training of some of the teachers on inclusion is somewhat surprising because they have plunged into the waters without being prepared for it. Furthermore, only in a few schools do we find opportunities for teachers to re-connect with their training periodically and receive additional inputs and guidance on the practice of inclusion. This is an important need and can make a huge difference in the quality of inclusive education that is being offered by schools. Such opportunities (both within schools and across schools) need to be created so that the teachers receive all support they require to fulfill their multi-tasking role in the classroom containing diversities.

The examples also remind us about the urgent need to look at the aims of education and the purpose of education at the larger level. Schools that are practicing inclusion have a more holistic view of what should be the purpose of education, especially for children with disabilities. We saw this in every school to varying degrees. They look at education as a process of developing children's unique potentialities and building their confidence, self-esteem and independence. In operational terms, education is not restricted to academics alone, but focuses on the physical, social, emotional and behavioural development of the child. Thus, education is beyond textbooks and examinations. This well-rounded view of education is welcome and should force us to deliberate on these questions at the policy level as well. However, we were unable to see the same holistic approach towards education adopted for other children in the examples that we studied. Thus, while a holistic view of education is laudable per se, dual standards of education (holistic for

children with disabilities and conventional academic for others) may require a closer and critical examination.

The availability of government schemes and programmes, with whatever limitations, has helped to bring many children at the elementary level into the education system. We found this in our examples from Kerala and Karnataka more prominently. It has also helped the schools to become more open towards children with disabilities. There is a need to develop collaborative planning and sustainability of any centrally sponsored programme at the state level keeping in view the needs of children. We recommend that there is a need to build systems for sustainability and consolidation before closure of any large programme, which is almost the life-line of inclusion in government schools.

We also found that parents have a critical role to play and schools have engaged with parents in diverse ways. They have been important participants in some of our examples of inclusion. However, schools also shared with us the difficulties in responding to parental expectations especially when parents are in the denial mode and expect the children to perform and achieve competencies like other children just because they are in an inclusive setting. If the school does not have a concrete plan for the child, there is always a risk of schools trying to pressurise children in order to satisfy the parents. This can threaten the development of children's abilities and can thwart the process of inclusion in the real sense of the term.

Dealing with certain types of disabilities and conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism, severe intellectual disabilities and non verbal cerebral palsy is a great challenge to schools, but yet we found that regular schools, both government and private, have tried to develop their own approach of meeting the learning needs with the help of resource teachers or parental participation. There is a need for schools to show a greater degree of openness and readiness to accept children with such disabilities and conditions and a stronger case for the government to invest resources, technology and personnel that can provide the required support.

A number of our case-studies also showcased the importance of using co-operative learning through peer support in the education of children with disabilities. Peer support plays an important role in inclusive education, not only beneficial to the child with disabilities but equally or more definitely to the child without disabilities. We found that the support and relationship provided through co-operative learning allow

children to adjust and cope not only within the schools, but relate and live together even outside the school set up.

From the schools we studied, we think that school leadership is one of the most important factors required for building inclusive schools. Unless the top school leaders are committed and driven by the goal of inclusion, there is very little that can be expected from other members of the school community. We found that it has never been easy for the school leadership to insist upon inclusion and every step has been a huge struggle that they have had to fight for. There have been all kinds of constraints- lack of co-operation from teachers, lack of financial resources, deep rooted reservations and apprehensions of parents of regular children, but the leadership has been deeply committed and has taken a strong position that everyone else has subsequently followed. Having said this, we think that very little is being done by way of developing school leadership for inclusion. There are almost no opportunities whereby school leaders that are committed to inclusion get to share their experiences with schools that are yet to become inclusive. As one of the school leaders had pointed out to us, the presence of children with disabilities is a huge learning experience for other children and such insights need to be shared with school leaders at a much broader level. A directive coming from the government may or may not push the schools towards adopting inclusive practices, but experiences from other school leaders may serve as a better motivation. Therefore, one of the main recommendations from this documentation is to focus on developing school leadership that can adopt a whole school approach and commitment to inclusion.

Finally, we think that there is a need for a great amount of investment from the government in terms of capacity building of the systems and ensuring that schools become inclusive. Without such broad and sustained support, inclusion would be difficult to accomplish at a national level. At the social level, there needs to be a concerted effort to bring about attitudinal changes that respect differences and accept diversities in society and foster these values from childhood. In our view, these are the two fundamental pillars on which examples such as those we have studied, will ultimately flourish and multiply.

About the Contributors

Archana Mehendale is an independent researcher based in Bangalore. She has been working in the area of child rights and education for over fifteen years. Her interest lies in understanding law and policy processes relating to children. She has carried out a few studies on inclusive education in Karnataka for the Janashala programme and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

Mallika Ganapathy is a consultant educator. She has done her post graduation with specialisation in Education for Neurologically Impaired and Education for Developmentally Young. She has conducted short-term courses on Normal Child Development Readiness Skills (3 R's), 2-3 week capsule on enhancing Readiness in 3 R's for pre-primary and early primary teachers. She has also worked as guest faculty for Diploma/Degree courses involving training of master trainers, creating curriculum for short term courses, evaluating and suggesting changes in the existing programmes.

Manjula Nanjundaiah has an M.Sc. in Botany from Bangalore University and M.Ed (Spl. Edn) from Victoria University of Manchester, U.K. She is a special educationist and Deputy Director of Seva-in-Action, Bangalore. She is the in-charge for Resource Centre, Training & Research at Seva-in-Action. She has undertaken action research under UNESCO's Research Project on "Meeting Special Needs in Regular Schools" with NCERT. She has been involved in developing and conducting training programmes in Inclusive Education for both Govt. (DPEP, Janashala & SSA) & NGOs. She has also developed training manuals on IE in regional language (Kannada) for teachers and parents. She is one of the National Resource Persons in Inclusive Education for SSA.

Maya has Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language and a Masters in Education (Elementary). Her teaching experience varies from teaching English at a Japanese University to working with High school students teaching Economics & English at a private school in

Gurgaon. Currently she is working as English language coordinator at Mukhtangan, which is an NGO that works with MCGM in running 7 English medium schools. Her work involves teacher training, language development of teachers and children in primary classes. Her work in inclusion has been mainly in the private high school which had a policy of integrating children with special needs and a similar set up in Mukhtangan as well.

Ruma Banerjee is the Director of Seva-in-Action. By profession, she is a psychologist and has a specialisation in CBR from University of London. She has experience in teacher training of DPEP, Janashala (projects of GOI & UN agencies). She is an Executive Council (EC) member of SSA Karnataka and is involved in planning and training of teachers for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. She has also undertaken action research for SSA Karnataka titled "Understanding Inclusive Practices in Karnataka" - the outcome of this study was the development of draft policy for IE with SSA for Govt of Karnataka. She is the member of the subgroup for IE for MHRD, Government of India.

Varsha Hooja graduated with Psychology Honours and trained as a Special Educator at The Spastics Society of India, now called ADAPT (Able Disabled All People Together). She has been working in the field of disability for over twenty years in the areas of teaching, teacher education and Community Services and is at present a Trustee and Director of the organisation. She has been a team member of the Four Nation Research Project, 'Developing Sustainable Inclusive Education Policy and Practice' under Founder Chairperson Dr. Mithu Alur. She is also General Secretary of the All India Regional Alliance for Inclusive Education (AIRA), convened by Dr. Alur.

Contact Details of Schools Studied

1. **Lady Andal School,**
7, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai - 600031, Tamil Nadu. Tel: +91-44-28363403, +91-44-28363404
Email: Ladycao@vsnl.com
2. **JSS 'Sahana' Integrated and Special School for Disabled**
38th Cross, 8th Block, Jayanagar, Bangalore- 560082, Karnataka Tel: +91-80-26549394, 26644540
3. **Government Lower Primary School**
Marpar, Masturi Block, Bilaspur District, Chhattisgarh
4. **ADAPT - National Resource Centre for Inclusion**
K.C. Marg, Bandra Reclamation, Bandra (W), Mumbai - 400050, Maharashtra
Tel. +91- 22- 2644 3666, 2644 3688, Fax: +91-22-2643 6848
5. **Kindle Care High School**
Alwal, Hyderabad - 500015, Andhra Pradesh
6. **Muktangan**
Globe Mills, 1st Floor Municipal School, P.B. Marg, Worli, Mumbai 400 013, Maharashtra
Tel: +91-22-2424 6299, Email: lizmehta@rediffmail.com
7. **Government Main Higher Primary School (GMHPS),**
Ramanagara, Karnataka
8. **Model Primary Government School Teachers' Training Institute (TTI),**
Mancaud, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

Some Web Resources

1. <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>
2. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education/#topPage>
3. <http://ssa.nic.in/intrassa/inclusive-education>
4. <http://education.nic.in/inclusive.asp>
5. http://www.education.nic.in/secedu/sec_iedc.asp
6. <http://www.eenet.org.uk>