

Sarthak Educational Trust report on healthcare initiatives taken in India for empowerment of Children with disability

Background

In India, the population of persons with disability is around 26.8 million, constituting 2.21% of India's total population (Census 2011). However, World Bank data proposes the number between 40 to 80 million. But despite the discrepancy between the numbers it is very clear that PwDs constitute a significant part of Indian Population.

Further, the statistics state that approximately 2.042 million children between the age groups of 0 to 6 years have some or other forms of disability owing to complications at birth, environmental issues or medical conditions. And, as a matter of fact spreading awareness, early identification, and early intervention support carries the potential to avoid and or limit the extent of disability in these children.

About Sarthak Early Intervention Center

Sarthak Educational Trust is working in this direction since 2014 and successfully rehabilitated 1100+ children with disability. But the process was not as simple as is stated.

A decade back owing to the personal struggle of Dr. Jitender Aggarwal (CEO, Sarthak), Sarthak stepped into ensuring sustainable employment and equal work opportunity for persons with disability. But sooner it was realized that majority of the beneficiary group lacks the requisite skill set as well as education. And, vocational skill building program was started. Although the outcomes were really good owing to the process of training, placement and independence of PwDs, having access to limited job opportunities was a major limiting factor.

Poor educational backgrounds due to non-inclusive education system, was found to be the contributing variable. Researching further came with the understanding that in most of the cases formative early 5 years are missed, and it results in lesser scope of intervention, further leading to partial or no inclusion in education system.

This realization got stimulated with the visit at LV Prasad Institute in Hyderabad and witnessing Early Intervention centre and its various activities. But, provision of availability of similar services in proximal areas to beneficiaries was still a dream.

With the intent to meet this need of beneficiaries Sarthak started its Early Intervention centre in 2014 in Delhi and started with awareness drives for communities, Parents, Aanganbadi

Workers, and Medical Practitioners. Sooner visits to neo natal intensive care units was also initiated to proceed with early identification of children vulnerable to developmental delays.

And, finally with the aid of multi-disciplinary team of Psychologists, Therapist, Counselors and external supports, Early Intervention Centre was started, where all the services were provided under a single roof and free of charge. Sarthak provides its services to children with Autism, Intellectual disability, Learning Disability, Hearing Impairment, Vision impairment Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and others.

Sarthak Early Intervention involves step by step process to ensure individualized, structured, organized, regular, and predictable support towards overall development of children facing developmental delays or expected to face the same. Early prevention, identification and intervention are the three facets of Sarthak Antakshep Kendra.

- Early prevention and identification involve identification of problem areas in its earliest and sensitization of gynecologists, pediatrician and health workers to control disability proneness for risk babies.
- Early intervention works for providing therapeutic aid to child facing developmental delays. During the first three formative years of an individual’s life most of the cognitive, physical, communication, social/emotional, and adaptive developments take place. Thus, in the case of any developmental delays, this period is the best for introducing interventions so that the child can be facilitated and supported to achieve faster.

Measurable Outcomes

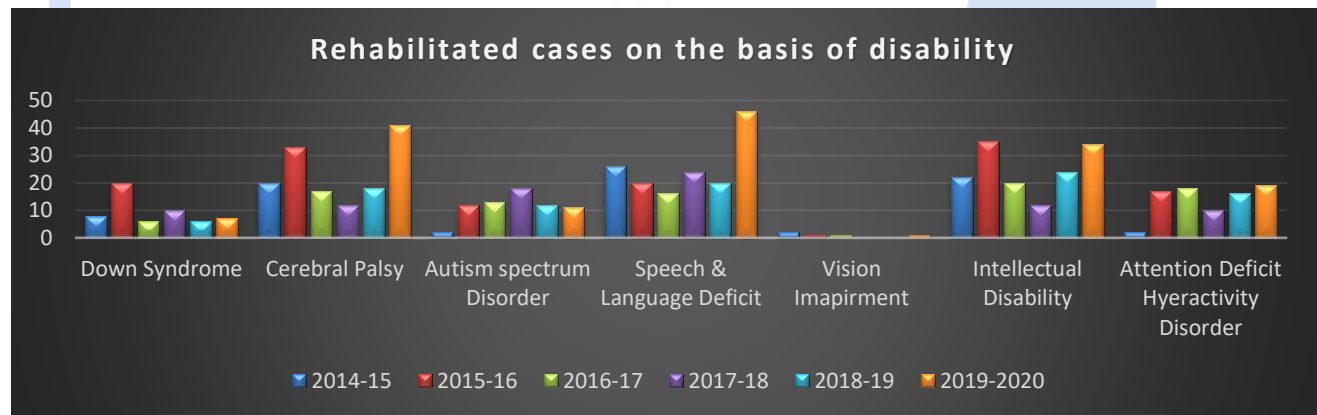


Table 3.1- No. of Rehabilitated cases on the basis of disability

Additional Milestones

- 2 Early Intervention centers in Delhi NCR (West Delhi and Ghaziabad)

- 1100+ cases medically rehabilitated through Early Intervention program since 2014
- 20+ Aanganwari workshops organized to raise awareness among community
- 15+ CMC organised for paramedical doctors.
- 100+ sensitization workshops organised for school teachers.

Case studies

A Big Yes for Red.....Story of Rajat

Identifying colours and developing association between objects is not a very big deal for children, in general. But, for a child having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder it is a rare sight and worth celebration for therapist and family. And, we literally felt over amused and enthusiast when Rajat started showing reluctance to travel by green or orange colour buses (Non Air Conditioned and Over Crowded ones) and forced his grand-father to hop on a red colour bus being an air conditioned one.

When he came to us, almost a year before, Hyperactivity, Inattention, and Impulsivity all the three symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, were prominently visible in his actions and behaviour.

As a start he underwent some medication under psychiatric guidance to control his hyperactivity which led to lethargy and dullness in his behaviour. Then through regular behavioural and occupational therapies his stubbornness and inattention were worked upon.



Blend of parental involvement, therapeutic intervention and supporting environment was helpful in bringing significant changes in him. And, we feel really great to observe his progressive understanding of alphabets, counting, colours, shapes, and lot many other things.

These are the beginner's steps and Rajat has a very long way to go with this great persona and charm.

Small Steady Steps.... Story of Parul

We were happy in our sweet little world with our two lovely daughters. And, we never felt anything uneven until our younger daughter started moving and made us ponder.

Why Parul is not moving?

Why she is not able to balance her body like her sister?

Then, we started observing that she always keep herself abnormally stiff. We immediately consulted doctors and to the matter of shock got to know about her having cerebral palsy. As she was growing we tried to enrol her in a school. But, again as someone was always needed to assist her, school authorities denied her admission.

Doctors further advised for regular exercise routine to assist her in optimum development. We looked out for various medical practitioners but were not satisfied with the level of efforts they were making. Then, through one of the contacts we got to know about Sarthak Antakshep Kendra wherein, after procedural formalities Parul was enrolled for occupational therapy on regular mode. And, what came really as surprise that all this support was free of cost. We were really amazed at the gesture and dedication of team.



She was provided threefold interventions, on the one side her muscle strength and motor skills were being worked upon, and parallel to it here cognitive development and speech areas were also looked into.

As an outcome of this effort now Parul can manage to stand on her own and it is really very exciting to witness her small yet steady steps towards her growth.

Future Plan

- Early Intervention centers in 722 district hospitals of India.
- Mobile Application for Parents of Children with disabilities for the purpose information dissemination of entire lifecycle of a disabled individual.

