

Sarthak Educational Trust report on pilot project of Sarthak Resource Center - Inclusive education for students with disabilities

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 **4.62 million** children between the age groups of **10 to 19 years** have some or other forms of disability and are deprived of their basic right to be educated. And, as a matter of fact ensuring inclusive education settings for all children irrespective of their physical and intellectual differences is the only way to create an inclusive and equal opportunity world. As, once the child spends the prime time of their lives in isolated settings with limited learning opportunities it becomes challenging to add them to the mainstream in later stages.

Overview of Educational background In India

There are more than 200 million school aged children in India and of these approximately 20 million require special education (NSSO 2002). While the national average of enrolment in school is over 90%, less than 5% of children with disability are enrolled in schools.

About 40% of the schools are not able to complete the first 5 years of their basic education, while another 20% leave school prior to the completion of three years of free and compulsory education mandated by our Constitution. The Constitution of India enshrines that elementary education is a fundamental right of every child. This in itself includes children with disabilities.

Mahatma Gandhi has emphasised on the importance of education, and said "A society that has no vision for the education of children and youth and is not prepared for the same, is doomed to die". Thus there is an urgent need to focus on the education of children with disability to supplement their different talents

Sarthak Journey towards Resource Center-Inclusive Education

Sarthak Educational Trust is working in this direction since 2016 and successfully rehabilitated 425 children through its direct and indirect intervention and services. But, the process was not as simple as is stated.

A decade back owing to the personal struggle of Dr. Jitender Aggarwal (CEO, Sarothak), Sarothak 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 prime contributing variable. As either the children with disability are deprived of education considering lesser scope of employment, or are enrolled in special schools. Even in the cases where the child is enrolled in regular schools, as the training curriculum and process is not attuned to their requirements most of the times, they lag behind and gradually drop out.

With the intent to create a positive shift in the direction of education of children with disability in inclusive settings, Sarothak started its Inclusive Education endeavor by conducting primary screening and identification study in **10 Government Schools**.

Vigorous assessments and sensitization workshops with the parents and teachers were conducted in the schools, and finding reports were sent to the government functionaries to bring this issue to their notice.

Below mentioned are the names of the schools where the assessments and workshops were conducted;

1. GBSSS, Amalwas
2. GBSSS, Mundka
3. GBSSS, Nangloi
4. Govt.(CO-ED)SSS, Baprola
5. GSKV, Amalvaas
6. SBV, Nilothis
7. Sarvodaya Bal Vidhayla, Ranhula
8. A3, Govt. (CO-ED) PASCHIM VIHAR
9. GSBV, NIHAL VIHAR
10. Govt.(CO-ED)SSS Punjabi Basti

Herein, the students were assessed of various parameters such as Health Status, Intelligence Quotient, Education level, with respect to their ages and 100+ students with disability were identified in the process.

Observations & Outcomes

With this study, we identified that there exists a measurable gap in the age and education level of the students and the reason is why such difference exists is because disability is often chosen to be ignored and unattended.

Lack of the required physical resources, and required personnel such as special education teachers, teacher aides, related service professionals (speech and language therapist, physical therapist and occupational therapist) and other school professionals leads to the high dropout ratio of the students with special needs from the mainstream school. In the absence of such key professionals, inclusion endeavors turn out to be chasing hollow dreams.

We also observed that there lies a need to create such a facility in the existing school's infrastructure where students with special needs can be educated with the abled bodies in order to build an inclusive society from the budding stage.

It paved the platform for Sarthak Resource Centre, in **Nangloi, West Delhi** with the support of Government School on **July 23, 2016**. Herein, identified children with special needs were provided required remedial classes, medical and psycho-social rehabilitation. Also, IT and pre-vocational training support was extended to the children.

Measurable Outcomes

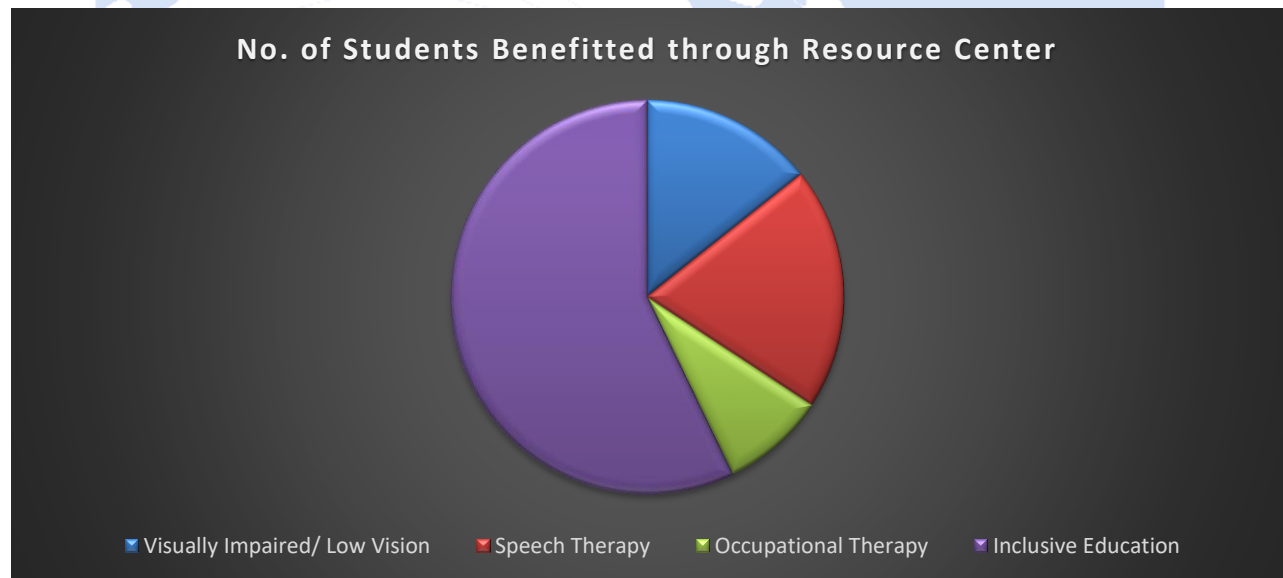


Table 1.1 - Students who were facilitated rehabilitation.

Additional Activities

- Eye Check Up Camps at Inclusive Education Center
- Assessment Sessions & Workshops
- Training of special educator in each school,
- Regular workshops for sensitization,

Case study

Rita, 12-year-old girl with mild mental retardation. She was in 6th class and her following chief complaints were poor concept understanding and speech difficulty. After assessment an IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) was prepared and she was enrolled for special education and speech therapy in Sarothak Inclusive Resource Center. Her intervention strategies were made followed by special education and speech therapy.



On initial basis she does not possess basic concept of class- I, so, we started with basic like alphabet and numbers identification followed by another with constant revision. At present she is not only limited to number or alphabets name rather she is thorough with fruits, animals, colors, vegetables, number names, backward counting 10 to 1, counting up to 100, single digit addition and subtraction. Not only academics but she gained clarity in speech also, including improved vocabulary.

There are hundred such stories. But, we at Sarothak aspire to build a mainstream environment for children with disability for many other.

Future Plan

- Replication of Inclusive Education project at government schools in different states of India.
