

Appeal for support

January 2014-December 2014

A Brief Introduction to AARTH-ASTHA

AARTH-ASTHA (Formerly ASTHA) is one of the few cross-disability NGOs working with children and persons with disabilities irrespective of the type and severity of disability, and our vision is: **to work towards a society where children and people with disabilities are respected and valued.**

We are also one of the few organizations in Delhi that works in urban slums and resettlement colonies following Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) approach.

Our Thematic Areas:

- Right to Education
- Right to Food
- Access to Justice

Our Programmes:

- Community Based rehabilitation programmes
- Disability Information Resource Centre
- Resource & Intervention Centre
- ABILINE: National Disability Helpline

Our work includes

- Providing rehabilitation & educational services to children with disabilities in partnership with parents
- Sensitizing, training & mobilizing parents of children with disabilities & other community volunteers so that they are able to access right to education, food and health for their children from their community systems.

- Sensitizing the school teachers to the needs of children with disabilities who are in the school system & supporting teachers with strategies & teaching –learning materials for children with disabilities.
- Training & mobilizing young adults with disabilities to develop leadership qualities so as to become a contributive member of their communities
- Collecting, collating information on schemes, laws, policies that affect the lives of persons with disabilities through various actions based research projects, and disseminating information through training and sensitization workshops in and around Delhi including remote villages in neighboring states.
- Involving in advocacy and policymaking.
- Running a national level disability helpline, **ABILINE** to provide information, referral and counseling services.
- Publishing training manuals on Technical training of children with disabilities, Information training on various rights & schemes, Tool kits on understanding laws concerning persons with disabilities, Reports on status on Right to Education for children with disabilities.

Our geographical reach through various programmes:

Community Based Rehabilitation Programmes: Children with disabilities & other marginalized children, parents, young adults with disabilities, community members of Lalkuan Urban Village and Govindpuri slums, both in south Delhi.

Disability Information Resource Centre: Training of organizations, young adults with disabilities in and around Delhi, remote villages in Northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan.

Resource Centre: Focused intervention on education for children with disabilities of Govindpuri and Lalkuan for accessing Inclusive Education in schools

ABILINE: Nation wide

Requirement of funds to support Programme for working with children with disabilities for Inclusive Education- Resource Centre

Education of children with disabilities in India

The Right of children with disabilities to **Free and Compulsory Education** has been strengthened at the policy level over the years. In 1995, the Persons with Disabilities Act mandated free education in appropriate environments for all children with disabilities till the age of eighteen.

The Sarva Siksha Abhiyan has had a separate Inclusive Education component that focuses on children with disabilities.

In 2008, India ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. **Article 24** of this Convention focuses on Education. The Convention mandates that States “**ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning**” for children and persons with disabilities. The Act gives to children between the age group of 6-14, the right of free and compulsory education with special mention of children with disabilities, in whose case the age is extended to 18 years as per the Persons with disabilities Act.

The first amendment of the Act further categorized children with disabilities among the children of **disadvantageous sections** entitling them to certain other rights. Children with severe and multiple disabilities were further entitled to ‘**Home-based Education**’ through the same amendment.

Status of children with disabilities under RTE

AARTH-ASTHA, being an organization active in the education sector and as a member of the National RTE Forum had resolved to keep a watch on the implementation of the right to education of children with disabilities and publish an annual stock-taking report annually.

According to **Third Annual Report on Stocktaking of Status of Education of Children with Disabilities under the RTE Act 2009**, done by AARTH-ASTHA **in 2013**, Children with disabilities constitute one of the biggest groups of drop-out and out of school children.

The RTE Act has, no doubt given many families the strength to approach the neighbourhood school for the admission of their children. While the school are not able to deny admission now, they often point out at the lack of infrastructure and facilities to accommodate children with disabilities. Some parents struggle, some get disheartened and loose hope, while some other parents still never gather the courage to get their child outside the house due to various environmental barriers, accessibility issues or at times due to pure pessimism. On the contrary, there are examples of many good practices where parents are proactive or the school takes the initiative of making necessary changes to accommodate the child. The report looks at all these dimensions and points out where the problems locate and gives recommendations on how to overcome these problems. School authorities often try to stall the admission of a child with disabilities by giving different reasons why the child will not be able to participate.

Despite the entitlement, basic necessities for children with disabilities to access schools like transport is not provided to children in Delhi.

Children with disabilities were seen facing challenges posed by inaccessibility of facilities within schools such as toilets, drinking water facilities and mid-day meals. Most parents pointed out the lack of systems within schools of ensuring assistance and reasonable accommodation, resulting in ad-hoc strategies. The practice of parents coming to school to feed their children or take them to use the toilet needs to be replaced by provisioning for personal assistance. Many parents expressed their worries about the safety and security of their children within school in the absence of helper staff and security at school gates. Due to lack of attention, children with disabilities were seen roaming around while their classmates attended the classes, showing us that going to school do not mean learning well. The underlying assumption of the 'inability' of the child with disability is very strong among school authorities

About the Resource Centre run by AARTH-ASTHA

The purpose of starting this Resource Centre in 2011 was an extension of AARTH-ASTHA'S commitment to strive for equal opportunities for children with disabilities as the rest of the children in the mainstream schools.

Inclusion of children in the community systems (in this case the mainstream schools) involve preparation at child's level, parents level and at the school level.

In the absence of any special learning facilities in the schools for children with disabilities, this programme aims to focus more at preparing the child for mainstream school for inclusive education. This involves creating resources, technical intervention by professionals, workshops for children, several fun based activities and parents training so as to develop cognitive, social, communication skills amongst identified children with disabilities. This is a time targeted programme which would mean that the intervention for each child will be provided for a required period that varies from child to child.

This will be complimented by AARTH-ASTHA's other programmes that involves in community mobilization, strengthening of community groups, advocacy, research, critiquing of policies, information & knowledge exchange and working in partnership with the community to achieve to ensure inclusiveness and better quality of education.

The beneficiaries of this programme are:

- Children with disabilities who are not yet enrolled in school due to several barriers
- Children with disabilities who were dropped out
- Children with disabilities who are going to school but are facing a lot of barriers

Geographical Area where the children belong to

The children are mainly from Govindpuri sluma and Lal kuan urban village. A small percentage of children belong to other communities as well.

Impact of two years work with children with disabilities in Resource Centre

- Through the intense intervention in the Resource Centre, in the last two years, more than 60% children with disabilities have gone in to school system
- The children who are attending schools have become regular
- Parents have been able to see the positive changes in children. Hence they have become motivated and have been sending children regularly.
- The number of children attending the programme regularly have increased. In the first year it was 24 and in the second year the number has increased to 27.
- The parents are making efforts on their own for admission in school.
- The families have started taking this programme seriously, and hence making the effort to motivate the children complete the given work.

- A few teachers in the school have become open to suggestions given to them for the children with disabilities in their class
- The parents of children below 6y are also wanting to send their children for this programme
- The parents of children who do not belong to the current target community, are also keen to bring their child for this programme for school readiness skills

The Objectives of the programme:

- To prepare the children to go to school
- To support the children who are already in the school

The number of children targeted: 30 children

The strategies:

- **Assessments and Intervention Plan for individual child:** A detailed on going assessment of each child in all the aspects of the child's life to find out the enablers and barriers at child, family, community and school levels, for inclusion in the system. A file will be maintained for both children going to school and children who are getting prepared to go. A need based time targeted holistic intervention plan for each child, and implementation of the same in a group/ individual sessions
- Supporting parents to get required medical intervention, aids & appliances, disability certificates through key worker
- **Time targeted specific support** such as financial support for respite care, transportation to school etc. if needed
- **Identifying teaching strategies, learning styles and adaptations** required for individual children

- **Training the child** in partnership with parents for effective communication, social, cognitive, pre academic, safety and other need based learning skills independence and self advocacy for a targeted period. The parents will be present for at least 25% of the sessions with their children so that exchange of knowledge takes place. Intervention of children as per the plan at individual level and in groups
- **Regular exposure visits, celebration of festivals, organizing events** as ways of enriching children's learning experiences and facilitating interaction with the non-disabled peers.
- **Regular supplementary nutrition** at the centre in the form of juice/milk, seasonal fruits/egg, biscuits to improve physical health there by improving cognitive abilities.
- **Transportation facilities** to bring children to Resource Centre
- **Report, review & impact of individual child's progress in different places:** A system, of monthly recording of the progress in the children's respective files, will be followed. Child's work will be stored in the respective files. Periodic review of each child in terms of progress, impact in other programmes of AARTH-ASTHA such as home, Child Rights Centre(Run by AARTH-ASTHA in the communities where these children attend), in schools (Report from teacher on change in the behaviour)by the team with respective key workers and plan further accordingly once in three months. The individual child's file bearing all reports will be available both at Resource and Intervention Centre and with the respective key worker.
- **Follow up plan for every child:** Based on review of each child a follow up plan for each child will be made. Depending upon the need the child may either continue in Resource Centre for further time targeted duration or will be weaned off gradually from the programme.
- **Curriculum development** Activities include reviewing the existing curriculum, researching, consulting & collecting expertise of other organization practicing inclusion. The document on curriculum so developed will be based on child rights and foster life skills for school. The focus will be developing curriculum in the areas of Hygiene, Safety

- **Working with schools & education systems:** School visits to assess the challenges faced by the children and the teacher, and support by:
 1. Sensitizing the teachers to the needs of children with disability
 2. Providing graded work sheets, learning kits to address specific needs.
 3. Suggesting better seating, teaching strategies. class room environment, school environment to ensure reasonable accommodation in all aspects of child's life in school eg academic learning, participation in sports, outings, .cultural activities and accessing other facilities.
 4. Designing & procuring special tables, chairs, other aids

- **Working with parents : Work with parents will be strengthened through**
 1. Workshops for technical inputs once in three months. Atleast three workshops
 2. Regular meetings once a month to increase their participation in their children's work

- **Building capacity of staff and support staff** on Child Rights, Inclusion, technical training through workshops that address the needs of staff. We propose to organize one large workshop for our staff who are involved with children with disabilities for inclusive education. Apart from this our staff will be provided opportunities to attend atleast two workshops to upgrade technical knowledge

- **Collaboration with advocacy team of AARTH-ASTHA,** to work towards minimizing the barrier in accessing school. This will involve advocating with education department for providing transport facilities for children to attend school and for availability appropriate teaching learning materials for children with disabilities in school.