



## **EDUCATION FOUNDATION**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2007-08**

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**PRABHAT EDUCATION FOUNDATION** is a Public Charitable Trust registered in 2006 under the Bombay Public Trust Act 1950. Donations to Prabhat are exempted from income-tax under Section 80(G) of the Income-Tax Act 1961. (As per amendment of Section 80(G), existing approval of Prabhat is in perpetuity). Prabhat is authorized to receive donations from overseas under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA Registration No.041910406). Prabhat is registered by the National Trust (Government of India) and by the Government of Gujarat as a recognized institution for persons with disabilities under The Persons with Disabilities Act (1955).

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## **ANNUAL REPORT: PRABHAT EDUCATION FOUNDATION 2007-08**

In a report on its preparatory years 2003-2006, Prabhat described the journey which led to the establishment of the Foundation. It has embraced the needs of special children (through the Prabhat *Jeevan Taleem* programme), an activity centre for small children (*Prabhat for Kids*), working with mainstream schools on environment education (*Prabhat for Environment*) and with service institutions to help school teachers lift their skills and capacities (*Prabhat for Teachers*). In 2007 Prabhat opened its Jeevan Taleem Centres in the Maninagar and Satellite areas of Ahmedabad. These have been the prime focus of Prabhat activities since March 2007, reaching out to special children from deprived sections as well as those in mainstream schools.

### **Jeevan Taleem**

Maninagar is in the southeast corner of Ahmedabad. It is a community with mixed income levels and access to many deprived sections. Prabhat had been advised of a major need concerning children with special needs in this area. Home surveys, visits to local schools and contacts with the medical community confirmed the presence of many challenged children of several ages, and of their despairing parents. Finding space for a service centre was not easy. Issues of stigma and shame within the neighborhood became apparent. Finally, a family which had earlier run a pre-school, offered that space for rent. Prabhat began its Maninagar centre with one child and two teachers and volunteers in March 2007. In June/July, Prabhat entered into an agreement with Anand Niketan School in the Satellite area of western Ahmedabad. Space in this reputed mainstream school provided additional opportunities for outreach to special children as well as an important opportunity for advocacy toward inclusive policies in the 'mainstream'. Curriculum development, educator recruitment and training, infrastructure and counseling efforts were consolidated at both locations.

By July, enrolment at Maninagar had grown to 23 and the Prabhat team to 50. Careful attention had to be paid to screening children's needs, their histories (particularly reasons for dropping out for any who had attempted schooling), physical and mental abilities, and the capacities of their families. Grouping children by age and ability and designing education programmes tailor-made to individual needs also required considerable attention to counseling parents toward a supportive home environment. Contacts in the medical profession helped organize a range of health camps. With the cooperation of other experts and specialist institutions, therapies were introduced for speech, physical needs, occupation and play. Basic equipment was acquired to serve multiple handicaps. Collections of learning and play materials were assisted through donations and limited purchases, and an extended team (mostly of volunteers) recruited to help respond to individual needs. Autorickshaw services became a key requirement to ensure regular attendance, as transport was soon found to be outside the capacity of many parents.

In August 2007 Prabhat received a surprise visit from the head of the Social Defense Department (Government of Gujarat), an encouraging indicator of growing recognition for a fledgling effort that had also attracted the local Rotary Club. This encouragement was reinforced in September 2008 when some children participated in the Social Welfare for Mental Retardation (SWMR) drawing competition --- a confidence-building achievement that helped Prabhat's efforts to look and feel like a 'real' school. A simple dress requirement, outdoor opportunities and periodic excursions (assisted by the Riverside Education Foundation) helped reinforce this identity and self-confidence for children and their families. Simultaneously, counseling for parents was extended to issues of Government services to which special children are entitled, including civil certificates. Throughout the year efforts have been made to improve Prabhat's small spaces and to make these more welcoming and efficient. Particular care has been addressed to issues of hygiene, safety, and separate areas that can encourage play and creativity.

By January 2008, some Prabhat children participated in a Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan camp, another milestone achievement that encouraged children and educators toward a summer Jeevan Taleem workshop. It culminated in May with a public celebration in which families, leaders of the local community, educators and officials participated. The transformation of children and their families was joyfully apparent, and so also signs of growing a community acceptance and involvement. “*Taare Zameen Par*” had found a local expression! (see website for more information: [www.prabhatedu.org](http://www.prabhatedu.org))

### **Building Prabhat educators**

A major effort in 2007-08 has been to build the abilities of Prabhat educators, including its volunteers. The foundation of this is a planning system that extends from day plans to weekly and monthly timetables. This identifies the progress of learners as well as the educators’ needs of support, including training, contact with external expertise, reference resources and equipment. Within its tight financial constraints, Prabhat has been able to take forward capacity development efforts that have been included speech training and family counseling & documentation.

### **Networks**

Prabhat’s history since 2003 has been one of learning from others and sharing experience with a small yet growing circle of institutions and individuals working for children with special needs. The centres at both Maninagar (East Ahmedabad) and the Satellite area (West Ahmedabad) have drawn on local communities, including medical institutions (the B M Institute of Mental Health and the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital among them), private practitioners, a range of medical and social science experts, Government departments and local service institutions including the Blind Peoples’ Association, the Rotary Club, SWMR, and Ahmedabad’s APROCH campaign directed at underprivileged children. The Director’s participation as visiting educator at two leading Ahmedabad schools --- the Riverside School and Anand Niketan School --- were reinforced by contacts with the Spastics Society (Mumbai), the Social Defense Department (Government of Gujarat) and the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Gujarat). In August 2007 Director Keshav Chatterjee attended a seminar and workshop on “Focus the Child: The wonder years” at Kolkata. There he interacted with several local institutions including the Spastics Society, Loretto Schools, Teacher’s Training Centre and other educators working with special children in the eastern region. Activities outside Jeevan Taleem (see below) have also contributed to these networks, supplemented by visitors to Prabhat from other parts of India and from overseas, including visits by the Winterline Foundation (USA), Disability Commissioner (Gujarat) Shri Bhaskar Y Mehta and Prof M K Prasad (Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad).

In cooperation with the Spandan health organization, Prabhat organized a day-long camp at the Maninagar Centre with health screening and counseling services. These included psychological, psychiatric, physical therapy and other health inputs to each Prabhat child and two parents. The health camp was followed-up after analyzing the data received to ensure sustained attention to the children’s health and its connection to their progress as learners.

### **Forward planning: 2008-2011**

A major concentration in 2007-08 has been the development of a 3-year (2008-11) perspective plan in consultation with Prabhat trustees and external advisors including Shri Prafull Anubhai. Prabhat has survived since 2003 on dwindling family resources and the generosity of a small circle of friends and well-wishers who have contributed funds as well as donations in kind. Prabhat’s future aspirations now depend on a business plan that can encourage donor support to consolidate current programmes and enable growth. The 3-year plan addresses the key element of staff retention (through improving current shoe-string remunerations), and strengthening

current facilities so as to provide a more uniform quality of service. In addition, the plan seeks a modest expansion in the number of children served from 50 in 2008 to 80 by 2011 (there are now 20 children waiting to be accommodated at Maninagar alone) and active networking with other institutions and schools to provide linkages essential for children to move out of Prabhat into fulfilling futures.

The first year of the plan (2008-2009) includes improvement to equipment and furniture, under expert advice. These will cover basic therapy equipment to replace current 'make do' items (comprising second-hand purchases and re-cycled discards). Urgent needs of therapy and education aids (audio-visual, speech assistance and sensory development) have been budgeted. A Maruti van has become a priority. None of the Prabhat team own a car. Each child needs to be escorted to and from Prabhat, making transport service essential for children whose parents cannot afford auto-rickshaws. Supervised outdoor opportunities are also dependent on vehicle adapted to the needs of special children.

The budget for 2009-2010 allows for inflation, rent increase, an additional teacher, and support staff. 2010-2011 will consolidate this level of activity, with small provisions for strengthened human resources and infrastructure. A bus will be acquired to meet the needs of more children. 2010-11 should also see Prabhat sharing its experience and building stronger partnerships. The plan includes outreach to other special educators through visits and a seminar, a modest publication to bring together the 2003-2010 experience, and some provision for travel.

### **Finances & fund-raising**

Prabhat trustees had set a 'break-even' goal for 2007-08. During this period, Prabhat was able to raise Rs 93,700 through fees, Rs 3,93,701 through donations, and the equivalent of Rs 30,000 through contributions in kind (including equipment and furniture). Expenses have totaled Rs 5,84,986, leaving a deficit of Rs 97,586 covered out of family savings. Income-tax permissions under Section 12(A) and exemption under Section 80(G) were pursued and received during the year. These clearances will now allow more active fund-raising within India while procedures for FCRA clearance have been initiated to enable efforts overseas. Work on the 3-year forward plan was shared with contacts in donor institutions including the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, GiveIndia Foundation, the Azim Premji Foundation and the Paul Foundation.

### **The learning**

In the three years since its informal beginning in 2005, Prabhat has acquired a strong understanding of special education needs and opportunities, particularly in Ahmedabad and Gujarat. The community survey which preceded the Maninagar centre and interactions with mainstream schools have helped Prabhat to understand the challenges faced by special children and their families at several levels of society. While issues of stigma and discrimination have often seemed overwhelming, 2007-08 also demonstrated that a modest effort such as Prabhat can indeed transform lives and opportunities. The celebration in May to conclude the Jeevan Taleem summer workshop was a joint achievement with the local community that would have been difficult to imagine a year earlier, when the Maninagar centre opened its doors. Perceptible changes have taken place, both at Maninagar and Satellite, in community responses and stigma issues. Many of those who had earlier kept Prabhat children at arm's length have now come forward with expressions of interest and even offers to help. With a single year making this difference to special children and their families, the motivation to persist is strong.

Another important learning has been the need to tailor services to individual needs and therefore to build the stamina to cope with unpredictable requirements of special children. Their families

have so often been disappointed in the past that Prabhat has also learnt the importance of giving regular signals of its will, endurance and sustainability. The key element here must come from Prabhat's ability to attract and retain dedicated educators and volunteers, as well as to consistently help them build their own capacities. This also means the inevitability of turnover, as mainstream education acknowledges special children and looks for those capable of serving them. Therefore Prabhat as a seedbed and training resource is already emerging as both a reality and a responsibility. A further lesson has been of the importance of networking. Special children and their families have a range of health, counseling and integration challenges that are well beyond the scope of any single institution, particularly one that works within Prabhat's resource constraints. Therefore building these through fund-raising and recruitment is a strategy essential to Prabhat's future. That future received a very special boost in 2008 through Amir Khan's "*Taare Zameen Par*". The film's message that every child is special resonates with everything that Prabhat has learnt and does.

### **Other Prabhat Activities**

While Jeevan Taleem has been the focus of Prabhat's efforts in 2007-08, the other building blocks toward the dream of a *Prabhat School* for special children have continued to receive attention. In addition to the networking specific to *Jeevan Taleem*, Prabhat has continued to strengthen its other linkages. The most important of these has been through *Prabhat for Teachers*. Director Keshav Chatterjee continued to work during 2007-08 on lifting the capacities of rural educators (through the Janvikas/ Udaan programmes in Kutch and the Panchmahals) as well as with teachers at mainstream schools including Riverside School, Anand Niketan, Umang, Calorex-DPS and Galaxy (TGES), and the Dalit Shakti Kendra. Special dimensions of this effort have included working with the Centre for Social Justice on human rights dimensions, video skill-building through the Meghdhanush/ ECU initiative at Navsarjan, support to the APROCH campaign in Ahmedabad for disadvantaged children, the Spark initiative on creative drama for city children, the Manav Sadhana padyatra that encourages environmental awareness, and a plantation effort at Dabla village. In all of these programmes the *Prabhat for Environment* approach is emphasized of using nature and everyday surroundings as prime sources for learning, an approach that is also basic to *Jeevan Taleem* efforts with special children. As an Indian delegate to the Unesco/CEE 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Environmental Education in November 2007, Keshav Chatterjee shared the Prabhat experience with over 1500 participants from 97 countries, forging valuable contacts. He was also invited to help lead courses in creativity offered at the Ahmedabad Management Association (AMA), an important opportunity for networking and advocacy with decision makers in other sectors.

### **Acknowledgments**

Prabhat's short history has been made possible by so many who have given it their encouragement, guidance and support. Prabhat would particularly like to acknowledge the assistance during 2007-08 of Shri Prafull Anubhai in guiding its planning efforts, the Riverside Foundation for transport facilities that have made outdoor education possible for Prabhat's children, Shri Yogesh Dave and Shri Gajendrabhai for helping to manage Prabhat accounts, Shri Shastri for his support through this period, Dr Bhairaviben Dave and Shri Deepak Gohil for their assessment and counseling inputs, our donors (see annex attached) and all in the Prabhat team that have worked so hard to make this period rich with service and experience.