

Narrative report
School Readiness Programme

November, 2013 - February, 2014



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Preface

Prabhat in collaboration with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation conducted the School Readiness Programme under Sarva Shikha Abhiyan. 150 children (through a survey) with borderline disability were identified for this programme, from the South Zone of Ahmedabad city. The task was to prepare these 150 children for mainstream municipal/private schools over a period of 3 months. The children who were a part of the Programme came with different abilities and needs, thus the need and importance of individual attention and care was very high. With the help of Prabhat team members trained for and dedicated to this activity, a daily schedule was prepared meticulously and it was carried out in such a manner that each child was given personal attention. Attention was given to provide facilities which would help the overall development of the child.

Prabhat imparted basic academic skills, communication skills, therapy sessions, life skill techniques, etc to prepare these children for mainstream schools. Transportation was provided to every child and utmost care was taken to pick and drop them safely and follow a systematic process. After three months of intensive activities, all the 150 children are attending mainstream schools all over the city.

The narrative report encapsulates Prabhat's three months journey, in preparing these 150 children identified for mainstream schools.

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November – December, 2013

After identifying children from South Zone of Ahmedabad City Prabhat Education Foundation prepared a proposal and submitted the proposal to the District Primary Education Officer.



Approval of Prabhat's proposal was received from the DPEO following the approval learning materials were purchased. 11th November, 2013 Prabhat was able to welcome 150 children with special needs in different categories such as Visual impairment, Hearing impairment, Mental Retardation, Cerebral Palsy, Multiple disability and LAP in the age groups of 4-14 years.

As the children come to the Programme with different abilities and needs, the importance of individual attention and

very high. With of Prabhat team trained for and to this activity, following daily

As children come with different abilities and needs, the importance of individual attention and care is very high.

care is the help members dedicated the schedule was being observed in such a manner that each child got personal attention. Children were welcomed by the their teachers starting at 10:30 a.m. and after which they go straight to their classes where they put their bags and belongings in designated places so as to learn the importance of good order and be able to do simple tasks themselves. After that children do *Kar Seva* and exercises including basic yoga and meditation. Then they have a short break to refresh themselves before going back to classes. Each class begins their session with a *Sarva Dharma* prayer and then a 'home period'. In home period, children share about their experiences at home the previous day.



Other classes follow which are planned according to each child's ability. These included- exposure to basic shapes and colours, name of fruits and vegetables, general knowledge, reading and writing.

During class time, those children who need attention of therapists go to therapy treatment, and for these children



academic inputs start after lunch break. Prabhat gives an hour break for lunch, but as some children are not used to sit for such a long period of time, toilet needs are also looked after during this hour as some need to use the washroom facilities very frequently. Lunch is a community lunch, which brings everyone together. A few children prefer to sit quietly and some like to play or talk each other, so a half-hour after lunch is called 'My Time' and spent under supervision according to each child's own preference. After this period, time is divided. Some children go to academic activity, some for therapy, and some for Daily Living activities which teach life skills. Starting at 5:00 p.m, Prabhat's designated autos come to take them home. These lifts are scheduled according to different timings depending on those who arrived first and finishing with those who arrived last. This scheduling is to ensure that there is no traffic jam at the Centres and to ensure safety and proper attention to each child at the time of sending children home.



During this month Prabhat has arranged transportation of children from their door step to Prabhat Centre and back to home. This is absolutely essential to ensure that parents are encouraged to send their children without fear of safety or lack of financial resources. Each day a delicious and nutritious lunch has been provided. Prabhat is happy to produce bills of all these expenses.



During November, Programme children were taken on outings. These have included a special visit to the Riverside Education Foundation and Riverside School (Shahibaug) where Prabhat children were hosted by the entire Riverside School community and had a chance to interact with children from Riverside School on a one-to-one basis, making new friends. They were invited into classes, a children's cartoon movie on animals called "Madagascar" was shown to them.

The programme included brain exercises, kinetic exercises, life-size snakes-and-ladders, ball throwing skills, music and dancing, and a wonderful lunch enjoyed with the host children. Parents and siblings participated fully. All these activities are designed to encourage children go to school. Teachers of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) also participated, so as to witness and partake in a fine example of inclusion. The programme included a special session for parents and teachers where they interacted with Trustees of Prabhat Education Foundation Mr. Geet Sethi and Mr. Ashoke Chatterjee, and with Riverside Director Kiran Sethi on issues of education and special needs. Prabhat Director Mr. Keshav Chatterjee welcomed the team of SSA, introduced participants, and invited teachers of SSA to share their views on special education and inclusion. All felt that such kind of programme should happen more often to demonstrate inclusion, and provide confidence to parents, children and teachers.



During November, SSA team visited Prabhat regularly. Their feedback has been very helpful in improving programmes, activities and plans so as to deliver better each time.

Prabhat Education Foundation has many supportive hands who have worked together through November in achieving Programme goals. These experts have included physiotherapist, speech therapist,



Ophthalmologist, Sycrystic psychologist, audio logistic, and ENT surgeon. Each week there were experts who visited and worked with children.

Prabhat provided transportation to each child coming for the programme. This is absolutely essential to ensure that parents are encouraged to send their children without fear of safety or lack of financial resources.

December, 2013 - January, 2014

Child safety through partnership:

As narrated in our earlier report for November - December, 2013, four autorikshaws are arranged to transport 150 children from their homes to Prabhat Centres and for their safe return. All the autorikshaw drivers have had a one-day training workshop to help them understand issues concerning special need children and their bigger responsibility in ferrying these vulnerable children safely. Training included basic emergency measures in case of any problem they may experience during transportation. This training has given the drivers a sense of participation and ownership which has made them important partners in this inclusion effort.

Christmas & inclusion: Prabhat utilizes festivals as an important opportunity for inclusion. Recognising Christmas as a favourite occasion for children, Prabhat arranged youth from local churches to help celebrate Christmas with the Prabhat community. This included a

Auto rickshaw drivers from the city trained to help them understand issues concerning children with special needs and their bigger responsibility to transport these vulnerable children safely

week of music practice, story-telling skits that provided basic information about

Christmas and an opportunity to foster understanding between different communities through such participation. Children celebrated Christmas at different Prabhat locations. The intention of involving youth was that youth should feel that they have to contribute to the important need for inclusion in our society and for social harmony.







Therapy: Therapists and other experts come to Prabhat as per the need of each child. An important part of this input is the participation of parents who learn from observation so that the therapies can be continued within the home environment. Volunteers including parents often assist these therapists.



Prabhat utilizes festivals as an important opportunity for inclusion

Learning support: Prabhat has provided all kind of learning materials for these children so they can prepare for school. These Teaching and Learning Material (TLM) were purchased with the help of our experts in this field so they don't become just toys but serve as good learning materials. TLM is related to each group or class or individual need. Teachers often rotate between groups of children so that their skills are shared between groups and individual with different needs. This requires careful management of classrooms and teachers inputs. For some activities like dance and music, all children are brought together to learn collectively and from peers. Prabhat has maintained good ratio of children and teachers. Volunteers at Prabhat assist the main teachers in such tasks as feeding children, arranging materials, assisting toileting needs etc. Student volunteers include those from mainstream



schools such as the well-known Riverside School. These volunteers are also given orientation and training to help them interact and work with children with special needs.



New partners: Prabhat always looks for any opportunity where inclusion can be demonstrated. One such opportunity was when a team from the Indigo airline contacted Prabhat to say they wanted to help our children. Prabhat welcomed the Indigo team by first making sure that the volunteers got a quick understanding of Prabhat children and their special needs through visiting the Centre and gaining a proper understanding before actually working. 13 Indigo volunteers then assisted in organizing games, art and craft, music and dance and other indoor and outdoor activities. Similarly, Shanti Asiatic School class 6-8 students and teachers volunteered to spend almost two weeks with Prabhat children to assist in organizing a cultural event. They were also given an orientation to help understand special needs and the importance of removing stigma.



Therapy is one of the primary facilities extended by Prabhat. Different therapy schedules are prepared according to the needs of each child.

A major inclusion event: On 29th December, some 250 participants, including 150 children and their siblings and parents, and enjoyed an experience at a city celebration called Nadaan Parinde. This was organized by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation in cooperation with city based NGOs including Pehchan, Prabhat and others. Buses were arranged to transport the Prabhat contingent. 25 Prabhat children performed in front of 3000 people gathered at the Vastrapur amphitheatre. The performance by Prabhat children got huge applause which continued for long time. This was one of the finest inclusion demonstrations that could be seen. We have observed that such kind of outreach programmes and events give great impact on society strategies which build capacity of special families. and support many and therapies Prabhat uses to confidence and children with needs and their The participation of Prabhat children was advertised throughout Ahmedabad by hoardings and other publicity materials as well as by media reports including in the Times of India. There was a delicious dinner arranged for children, siblings and parents and special buses to take them safely home after a very special evening. This event was preceded by an educational visit by bus to the different parts of the city as part of the experience.

25 of Prabhat's children performed in front of 3000 people, gathered at the Vastrapur amphitheatre



Disabled artistes to perform today

Ahmedabad: City-based organizations have joined hands to provide a platform to artistes with disabilities on Sunday evening when more than 50 performers will be a part of Nadaan Parindey show at the Vastrapur lake amphitheater.

Pehchaan, a city-based NGO along with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) has organized the show in which a number of well-known singers and performers who have been part of TV reality shows will participate. Udaan, a Mumbai-based all-blind band, will also render their melodies. Other participants include children from Blind People's Association and Prabhaat, an NGO working with children with learning difficulties.





January-February, 2014



This was the last month of the children's stay with Prabhat, so there was lots of preparation, counselling and dialogue with children and their parents. The children had shown their interest in field visits and also in food. So the older children came forward with the idea of a Cooking Club and a Food Festival that could also link food preparation and eating with learning about cooking, nutrition and health, and about hygiene. This was also used to learn about the bazaar and concepts of money and exchange.

A food festival could also link food preparation and eating with learning about cooking, nutrition, health, and hygiene.

During these 3 months, the children have had exposure through visits to several

organizations and interaction with visitors and other children visiting Prabhat. Their confidence levels have been built, along with some academic skills and other basic learning. This last month saw a focus on the neighbourhood and learning everyday skills from it. This included going to markets and shops, crossing roads in traffic, learning how and from where we get help by understanding those who make up the neighbourhood environment: the vegetable and food vendors, different services like bakeries and saloons, the importance of



sweeping and cleaning, road conditions and road safety, the role of police, those who provide repairing services etc. After such exposure visits, the children were able to relate their experiences to reference books and pictures.

150 children with border line disability, are not attending mainstream schools

We noticed that a few children were unsure and maybe scared about big

schools, so we took permission from AMC to take our children to a Municipal School for a visit. There the children had a fantastic time, spending almost half day in the school, observing and experiencing life in the classes and in the corridors. Of course, the play ground was their most favourite space! After returning from the school visit, Prabhat organized a brainstorming and it was good to hear most children expressing that they want to go to school, and had overcome some of their anxieties.



Therapy note:

We then had a few rounds of parents meetings, to inform that now their children can go to an AMC school. Most of them were very happy, while also concerned about how their children

Finally, they all agreed that the School Readiness Programme had really helped their children take this big step of moving to a big mainstream school.

will cope up. There were many valid questions that we had to deal with. Finally, they all agreed that the School Readiness Programme had really helped their children take this big step of moving to a big mainstream school.

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Note on medical camp and aids and appliance distribution:

Prabhat special educators, therapists and field facilitators have played an important role by visiting AMC schools and Trust-run schools to assist admission of children from the School Readiness Programme and prepare these schools to receive them. We have contacted school principals, trustees and educators to share about our School Readiness Programme and help them to be more confident about inclusion. All the schools Prabhat has worked with are now positive and supportive. They have told us that children with special needs will be welcome to their school in the academic year June 2014. Prabhat will continue to remain in contact to help ease this experience for the children as well as for the schools. We believe this is a most important experience, full of learning for all of us, and one that will help Prabhat's efforts to build a more inclusive society.



Meal time:





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