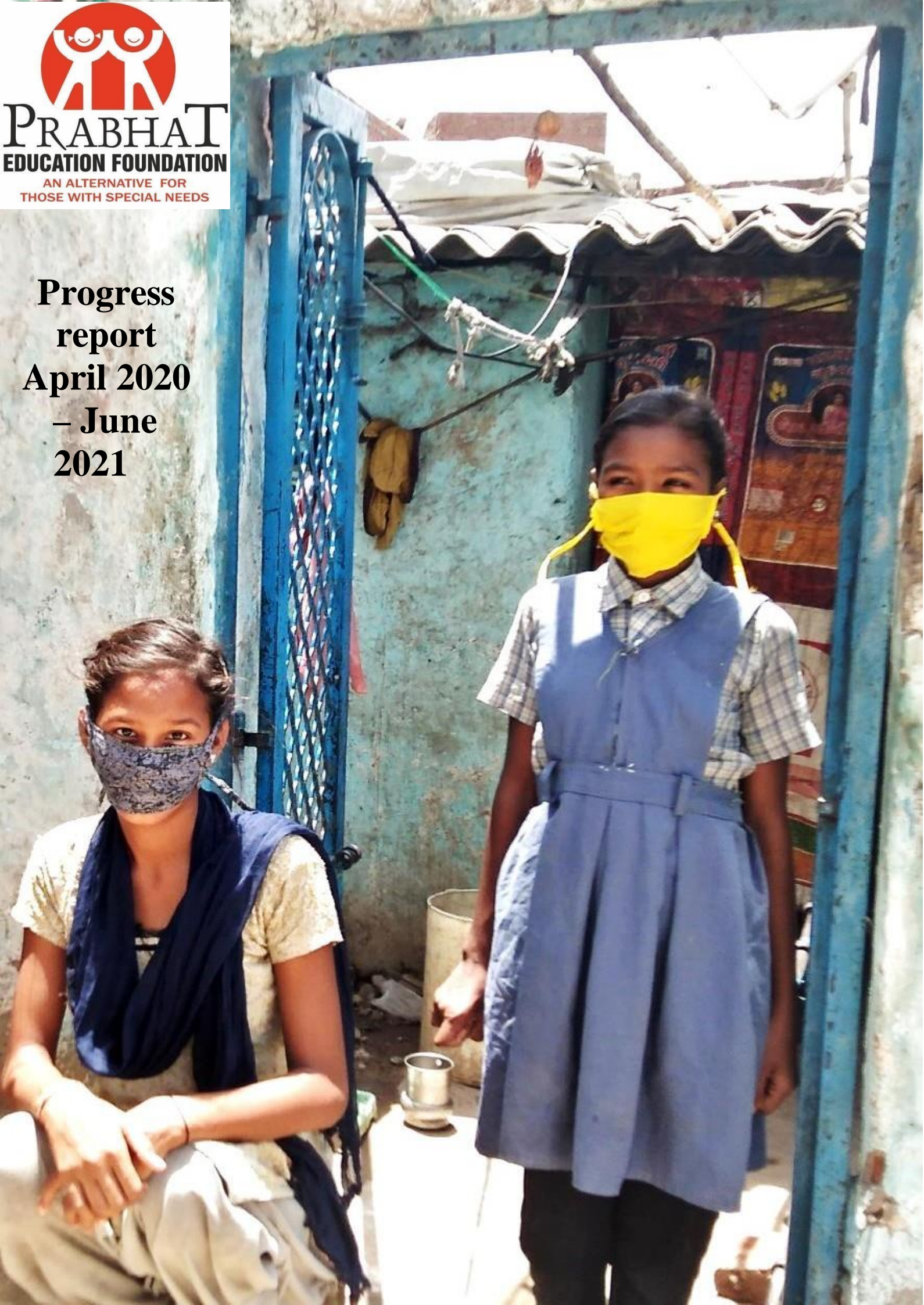


**Progress
report
April 2020
– June
2021**



Prabhat looks back on a year like no other

This period has been one of immense challenge for Prabhat, as it has been for so many others struggling to deal with a pandemic which none of us could ever have imagined or been prepared for. As the world has come to know, Covid 19 has exposed the crisis in India's public health system. The pressures on medical services and front-line workers have been unimaginable. Those who have special needs were in any case at the margins of what existing systems, however weak. Prabhat has over the years has been working hard to bring the needs of special persons, and particularly special children, to the attention of the health community, both government and private. This advocacy and intervention has had to be intensified during the past year and more, in the effort to sustain Prabhat's existing services during lockdown and other constraints as well as strengthening these in the face of the reality that our community is now more vulnerable than ever.

When the pandemic hit India with lockdowns, curfews and other restrictions Prabhat's first priority was to reach out to the families and children it serves despite restrictions on movements and direct contact. Prabhat has honed its communication capacities, and put to intensive use many of the innovations developed in the past for reaching homes 'virtually'. Building mobile phone capacities in homes has been key. While past efforts focused on sustaining learning and therapy that starts at Prabhat Centres and through home visits, now the challenge was to ensure that these continue without direct contact as well as address new concerns. The first of these was relief, as access to food and other essentials became the most immediate crisis that had to be tackled. Toward this, Prabhat had to work beyond those with special needs, and to attend to the needs of whole neighbourhoods within which Prabhat children are located. Difficult though this has been, the communities have also realized that the special child has the 'clout' to bring in support that everyone needs. That effort has had to continue through the ups and downs of curfews, lockdown, school closures and other barriers. Once again, Prabhat has been able to use the contacts it has made through past advocacy efforts and use its partnerships with local schools, religious institutions and community leaders to take on-the-spot tasks on behalf of Prabhat. The crisis has thus revealed a major strength developed over years of work to build local partnerships and ownership of Prabhat interventions.

Prabhat has also taken advantage of WHO and UNICEF regimes suggested for implementation on behalf of those with disability. These detailed guidelines are being followed now in all Prabhat interventions. Also, the Rockefeller Foundation has invited Prabhat to keep in touch with its efforts of response to the pandemic through participation in webinars and information exchange.

Another critical dimension has been the impact of the pandemic on the incomes of the families Prabhat serves, most of whom depend on daily wages. The lockdowns have devastated the so-called informal sector, and many of those Prabhat serves have lost their only sources of livelihood and have descended into debt and intense poverty, with the special child made even more vulnerable. This has meant immediate response to emergency needs and building partnerships with others to attend a need that is far beyond Prabhat's capacities. However, vocational supports developed over the years

have now taken new importance, as in the mask-making activity that was commenced as one immediate response.

As described below (ref. pg. 9), learning and therapy activities have had to be sustained through remote contact. Here again the communication strengths (developed through earlier parent training and use of mobile phone for learning and therapy) have been put to use. The results have been very encouraging. Throughout this difficult period, every Prabhat child and home has been able to keep in touch with educators and therapists, records maintained, and needs addressed by mobile phone contact. Prabhat has evidence that children have been able to maintain progress, although clearly not at the same pace as one would like. Access to aids and appliances has also continued.

At the moment, there is no end in sight so far as these challenges are concerned. The Prabhat team is prepared for the long haul ahead, with all the hopes and dreams that direct contact with children and communities can once again be at the heart of services and interventions.

Program summary

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the UNICEF in their Policy Briefs unveiled on April 19, 2021 in respect of covid-19 pandemic stated: “Persons with disabilities are disproportionately impacted” by the corona virus.

“Persons with disabilities are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19” infection for the following reasons:

A. People with disabilities may find it difficult to wash their hands as wash basin may be physically inaccessible.

B. They may have physical difficulty rubbing their hands together and they may also face difficulty in observing physical distancing.

C. Visually handicapped persons rely on touch to obtain necessary information.

D. People with Down syndrome are at increased risk of contracting infectious diseases, because of differences in their immune systems.

E. Making use of masks is not an option for people with cerebral palsy, autism or any developmental disability as it is not an object they are used to.

F. Drooling makes masks unusable.

Hence persons with disabilities have greater exposure to corona virus as compared to non-disabled people.

Since the beginning of the year, more than 200 nations across the globe have been affected by Covid-19. Many are still reeling under the devastating effects of the pandemic, with both public health and the global economy having taken a major blow. Emerging markets seem to be especially vulnerable, given that their healthcare facilities tend to be ill-equipped to tackle a pandemic of this nature and scale. Worse, and even more worrying, is the fact that the end to this global crisis is still nowhere in sight, and we have not been able to assess the damage to lives and livelihoods.

Despite governments having taken drastic steps, including offering varying degrees of support to their citizens, there remain certain sections of society that have been inadvertently excluded. Persons with Disabilities/special needs—more than one billion in number globally—are one such group. This is because much of the advocacy on how to stay safe during the pandemic has not factored in the inability of people who are immobile or living with mental illnesses to follow these instructions. “Containment measures, such as physical distancing and self-isolation, maybe impossible for those who rely on the support of others to eat, dress, and bathe.”

The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a document highlighting this issue and explaining how PwDs may be at a greater risk of contracting Covid-19. Some of these include:

- Accessibility issues may limit how often PwDs are able to wash their hands
- PwDs who require additional support may find it difficult to practice physical distancing
- People with intellectual impairments cannot be expected to cope with self-isolation
- People with visual disabilities rely on “touch functions for mobility and work”, thereby increasing their risk of infection

- Public health information remains inaccessible, which acts as a barrier, particularly for people with hearing impairments
- PwDs may be at greater risk, as people with underlying health conditions, particularly those related to respiratory function, immune system function, heart disease, or diabetes, are more likely to be infected with Covid-19.

Apart from these issues there is also the mental and emotional toll it takes on children, a lot of children especially those with special needs thrive on a fixed schedule, having that taken away from them causes them a lot of mental distress. Prabhat's first response to the pandemic was to assure the parents that the organization is with them and there after assessing their immediate need which was food for most of them. Food packet distribution along with food kits started rampantly, Prabhat with its limited resources could not reach everyone, so it started tying up with other organizations to supply food in the communities where Prabhat works. 700+ food kits were distributed, after which governments and other organizations were roped in to carry on the process.

The second step was to provide reusable masks to everyone. Teachers from Prabhat started making them at home and distributing them in the community. During which the organization also realized that there was a lot of wrong or misinformation being circulated regarding covid – 19. This was inadvertently causing a sense of panic and anxiety in an already stressful environment. Prabhat prepared material in consultation with experts and provided information on what the covid-19 is, the effect it has and precautions that need to be taken, this was circulated among the parent community at regular intervals.

Once things settled with regards to food availability and safety material (though uncertainty persisted) it was essential to assess and address the learning gap which was looming over the children, especially those with special needs. Thus, started the process of collaborations with other expert organization and institutes to devise ways to keep the learning going. Prabhat was circulating audio video material for all the Children in Prabhat's community (siblings, neighbours) and customizing the content to meet the needs of the Prabhat child as well. Once the lockdown eased up in June 2020, the team at Prabhat realized the need to provide learning material to enhance the understanding of the child in the online classes. Simple but useful training and learning material (TLM) was prepared and distributed to the children. These materials have made a huge difference in the learning of children with special needs and others.

Prabhat still continues to provide additional assistive support to the families of the child with special needs to access social security schemes provided by the government. Aids and appliance distribution continue regularly. One of the most important that Prabhat has been able to provide to the communities is that of guidance and counselling, which has helped keep a check on the emotional and mental health of other family members during these difficult times!

These are trying times for the organization, but the support and strength it has received from the community, parents, well-wishers, and friends has made it possible to continue. The silver lining during this time has been the impact the parent trainings

Held all these years, which has prepared the parents especially the mother to be able and equipped enough to take care of the child independently and effortlessly, some of the children have really benefitted from this quality time spent with the primary caregiver and others in the house.



This year's report will capture activities together, as services were not segregated based on the three Prabhat programs Centre, CBR and advocacy.

The first announcement of the lockdown in India on 25th March 2020 was a time of solidarity, the subsequent announcement of a longer lockdown was the time of worry. Initially it was anxiousness for our own families, which then turned into concern for our communities, being aware that majority of them are migrant and daily wage workers

Who get-by one day at a time, buying and storing ration and other necessities in bulk could never be an option for them!

Prioritizing needs, resources, and efforts!

- 1) Checking up: one of the most important task at hand was to check the well-being of the community and the child. The team worked relentlessly calling each household to ascertain their immediate need. The foremost requirement was for food and ration (daily supplies).
- 2) Organizing food and ration: in the initial few days Prabhat team was cooking in bulk and serving food in the community, but as realized, this would not have been a long-term solution to an uncertain future. The team started canvassing and looking at institutions focusing on specifically food distribution. Networks were built, and a more sustainable solution was worked out. Prabhat teamed up with various organizations and individual to smoothen the process of food distribution and requested them to serve the areas Prabhat works in. For ration (food grain and other cooking ingredients) Prabhat started a rampant fund-raising campaign. Several people came forward to help the organization. Prabhat was and is still able to comfortably distribute ration which comprises of assorted pulses, rice, atta, sugar, tea/coffee, biscuits, oil and masalas. Distribution quantities were based on the family size. Along with this Prabhat was also distributing safety and hygiene kits which had sanitary pads,



Sanitizer, bathing soap, hand was liquid, towels, comb, tooth brushes, tooth paste and mask along with information material which comprised of protocols to be followed during the pandemic, phone numbers of clinics and hospitals close by also of Prabhat team members.

- 3) Having settled the most immediate requirement it was time to see the glaring reality of the learning gap that was occurring among the children. Prabhat's team over various video calls meticulously devised plans to reach out the children during this time. Each team member was given a few children to follow-up and check-on daily, to not miss any child. These calls then turned into learning sessions via video calls. Teachers requested family members to provide the child with household items to enhance the learning of the child. Few children eagerly wait for the video calls, the teachers also decided to have group calls, so that children could see and talk to their friends.
- 4) Bridging the learning gap for children beyond Prabhat's child: Prabhat's way of working has always included the family, neighbourhood and the larger society. The need to help siblings and other children in the neighbourhood was required. Prabhat by now was building up its own audio-video learning material, which was in circulation for children with special needs. But the needs of the other children required specific guidance based on the curriculum. For this Prabhat partnered with Pratham, a leading organization in India working towards providing qualitative improvements in curriculum-based learning. They had developed very extensive learning material for different



Grades and age groups. The material access was provided to Prabhat which then started circulating it to the other children in the household and neighbourhood. A parent Shared “I thought Prabhat was only going to help my child with special needs during this pandemic, but the way they have to the rescue for all of us is very heartwarming”. Prabhat’s efforts have also been appreciated by the local schools.



- 5) Building sustainable solutions for enhanced learning of a child with special needs: the alternative methods of teaching has been the strong point of Prabhat ever since it started. Emphasis has always been on learning by doing. Majority of the children Prabhat works with have multiple disabilities the learning approach for them is very different. Providing video assistance was also proving to be challenging. Once the lockdown in Gujarat was eased up the team got together and started preparing learning materials to be circulated among the children. Several learning material over a course of 20 days were prepared, these were then distributed to the parents who were invited to the Centre on a rotational basis. Along with the material stationary was also provided for the children. These materials Helped to better the learning over the video calls.



- 6) Capacity building: The pandemic gave Prabhat the opportunity to reach out, network, and build capacities from experts across the globe via webinars. There has been increased technological advancement in the team. The pandemic has also helped the organization to understand the importance of prioritizing with limited resources at hand to be able to serve the communities.
- 7) Interns and volunteers: Prabhat was lucky enough to have an influx of volunteers and interns helping out during this time. A strong partnership that was forged is with Ahmedabad University. Till date roughly over 500 students from the university in a span of 7 months have volunteered with Prabhat. They have developed video learning material,



Information and communication materials, campaign posters, etc. These have really helped the organization in at a time of crisis. Having these volunteers has also meant that Prabhat has been able to advocate and create awareness for the cause of disability and the work the organization is doing, building towards a more empathic generation.

- 8) Buddy interaction: One of the most celebrated and unique efforts of Prabhat has also been thriving during this pandemic. Prabhat has been in close contact with all the schools and institutions with whom the initiative was going on. They have all been forthwith to help the children.
- 9) Research and documentation: Prabhat has also taken this opportunity to dwell deep into some issues and strengthen and improve the documentation process. It was very important for the organization to understand the mental health of parents during this difficult time, especially as most of them were out of jobs. It was also essential to understand this situation because the child with special needs requires a congenial environment to grow in. An extensive survey was conducted over the phone and the results were analysed by an expert. Barring a few cases, the results have been encouraging of the covid impact survey and have been a showcase of the resilience of the community that Prabhat works with. Specific guided support is being provided for those families who require it. Another important research and study that Prabhat assisted with was to better health of women in the community. Prabhat partnered with oowomaniya and organization working towards creating awareness on women issues especially health. When the covid-19 numbers had



reduced and the government had given the permission to hold small gatherings, Prabhat with the help of its community leaders and ambassadors got over 500 women to attend menstrual hygiene workshops conducted over a span of one month on a rotational basis, so as to avoid big crowds. The response was very good and most of the young women said how needed this was. Prabhat will continue to partner with women health organizations to take this further.



- 10) Trainings: Once the situation has eased up in Ahmedabad, the team following all the covid-19 protocols conducted regular training workshops for anganwadi workers (government appointed pre- school workers). The trainings were held over 2 months reaching over 200 anganwadi workers.



- 11) Assistive services and aids and appliance distribution: Barring a gap of few months in the initial period of the pandemic, the team has resumed the assistive services and distribution of aids. The assistive services have especially been of utmost importance now as most of the families Prabhat works with are Below the Poverty Line and require subsidies and additional support from the government to get by, especially access to subsidized ration through the public distribution systems which require a ration card, which Prabhat helps access.



Though challenges have been aplenty, but the learnings have been far greater for Prabhat. It has been very encouraging to see support coming from all directions especially parents and the community. The way parents have held strong and not faltered in providing and taking care of the child with special needs has been heartening. This period has also been a strong reminder of how future planning and preparedness for all eventualities is so essential. What has

Worked in Prabhat's favour during these uncertain times are the sustainable and decentralised processes that have been put in place in its 15 years of community work.

Prabhat will continue striving towards providing for the needs of the child and her family, with support the below planned activities are going to be implemented.

- Setting up learning centres consisting of 10 children and one teacher (who would with be a sibling/mother or someone from the community) at one centre. The centres are not going to be limited to a building it could even run under a tree, in some one's house. Prabhat is working towards setting up 10- 15 such places. These will have a 4:6 ration of children (4 being those with special needs). This will facilitate better learning and understanding, peer learning and inclusion. The teacher/mentor will be selected and trained by the Prabhat staff. A supervisor from Prabhat will always be present at these spaces. They would also be provided with teaching material including laptop/tablets and stationery.
- Setting up smaller physiotherapy units: to avoid crowding at one Centre, smaller physiotherapy spaces will be set-up in the community. These will be mobile set-ups. Few places have already been identified for this purpose.
- Parent support groups: Prabhat has had these groups at a very informal level, but now these groups will be formalized and one parent from each group will be given the charge of overseeing field activities in their areas. That will entail identifying any new children with special needs, following-up with the current with Prabhat's current children, keeping a mental emotional check on the families and identifying any specific needs.



- Building partnerships: Prabhat will strive towards building stronger partnerships with organizations and institutions working for various developmental issues especially health, employment and skill development.
- Advocacy: As mentioned in the program summary, children and people with disabilities have been the most vulnerable during this time, it is therefore imperative to advocate more for the cause.

All these achievements during this difficult time have been possible due to Prabhat's well-wishers, supporters and friends, who have always stood by the organization and its work and have encouraged, motivated the team to move on.



Birgit Martin a supporter and dear friend of Prabhat, is an expert speech therapist from Germany. She would be conducting speech therapy training for the team. We are all really excited to welcome her back, even though it's virtually!

Training starts from 5th December 2020

The hand that gives, receives!



While we stock up, there are people who cannot afford to do that. Most of the communities that Prabhat Education Foundation works with come from these challenging geographical and economic setting. We are striving towards providing for these families. Food kits consisting of rice, pulses, oil, masalas, atta, sugar and other edibles are being provided. Each pack is prepared for Rs. 1000. Distribution of the food kits are being done by community leaders, who have been a strong support in Prabhat's endeavors. On an average one kit lasts for 15 days for a family of four.

If you would like to donate, there are two ways:

- 1) Direct bank transfer
Prabhat Education Foundation
Bank Name: Bank of India
IFSC: BKID0002011
A/C No.: 201121110000001
- 2) Online transfer through credit/debit card
Details on Prabhat's website: www.prabhateducationfoundation.org

Connect with us at:
www.prabhateducationfoundation.org
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1aUw8Mh0yBk21719j8>
<https://www.facebook.com/prabhateducationfoundation/>
https://www.instagram.com/prabhat_education_foundation/

Donations to Prabhat are exempted from income-tax under Section 80 (G) Of the Income Tax Act 1961. Prabhat is authorized to receive donations from overseas under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA Registration No. 041918008)



The only source of knowledge is experience

- Albert Einstein

Please join us in a meet and greet with Denise and Robert Davis, who would share their working experience from India and also take you on a journey of their past experiences serving children with special needs.

Topic: American Adventures in Ahmedabad: Our therapy experience in USA and India
 Time: Feb 6, 2021 03:00 PM India
 Organised by: Prabhat Education Foundation, Ahmedabad

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/776197262917>
 pwd=5XcvYzBLTXivQVJKR09CSndPhEloZz0@

Meeting ID: 776 1972 6291
 Passcode: gx0NT2
www.prabhateducationfoundation.org



About Prabhat

Making learning a joyful experience for those who need an alternative

The Prabhat Education Foundation reflects a journey that began in 2003 through the identification and nurturing of children with learning difficulties struggling in mainstream schools. In time, the widespread reality of physically and mentally challenged children in and around Ahmedabad became apparent, and Prabhat moved into serving special children (*children with disabilities*), as well as their families affected by stigma, ignorance and denial. Realizing the need for education and learning of this group and particularly of children, Prabhat conceptualized an institutional facility to provide systematic learning and rehabilitation services that could be accessible for those challenged by poverty and mobility. Working with and through local communities is Prabhat's hallmark.

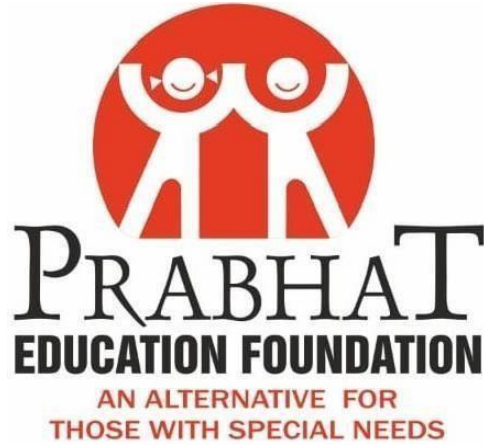
What started as a modest beginning, with one child in 2007, has now reached to 3000 persons with special needs in Ahmedabad as well as to their families, neighbours and communities.

Today, Prabhat's programmatic activities and services are carried out under 3 major areas:

Prabhat Centres - The Centres constitute the core Prabhat's Programs – creating an environment in which the needs, abilities and challenges of children with special needs are respected and opportunities created for them to learn and to grow as citizens. Centres are designed as 'Welcoming and cheerful' spaces for therapy, play and learning by doing.

Community-Based Rehabilitation Program (CBR) - The goal of Prabhat's CBR is to create enabling environments and capacities within the communities and homes to support and encourage those children with special needs and their families who cannot access Prabhat Centres due to barriers of mobility, distance or awareness. CBR is directed toward generating awareness, knowledge and capacity within homes and neighbourhoods that can mobilise them to support and nurture children with special needs.

Advocacy through networking – Advocacy strengthens each of these services and creates a more enabling environment for children with special needs in the society. One of the main aims of Prabhat's advocacy is removal of stigma and fear attached with disability, so that children with special needs are included as equals within the Indian society. In this endeavour Prabhat works with many partners and individuals.



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