

Roshni

A monthly newsletter by Prabhat Education Foundation

About Prabhat

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, 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.

An experience

Hi readers, I hope you are enjoying reading Roshni and getting a slice into our wonderful children's life. Today I want to share my experience with a very dear student of mine Suman. She is 14 years old and has 3 siblings. She has down syndrome and moderate mental retardation, you would think this may slow her down...but no she is one of the most active, observant and lovable child you can meet, with off course a dash of all the teenage tantrums! Despite all the struggles, especially financial, her parents are bringing up all four children with a lot of love and care. Before coming to Prabhat, Suman was known for her destructive and harmful behaviour, but everyone in the family use to accommodate her tantrums because of her special needs. Her parents were getting very anxious as she was growing up and it was getting difficult to manage her. They got to know about Prabhat through someone in the community who saw how they were struggling with managing Suman, so they brought her to the Centre, where a complete assessment was conducted by a psychologist and a special educator. We then started calling her to the Centre twice a week to observe her, which would then help us to prepare her Individual Education Plan (IEP). She was not too excited to come to the Centre as she realized she will have to behave and set aside her tantrums here. But over the course of those two months her energy was channelized into more productive and fun activities, which she started enjoying. That is when she wanted to come regularly, so after two months she was a regular at the Centre. Her parents were counselled and guided at each step, we made them understand in detail Suman's education plan, and they seemed to be very happy and content! I and Suman developed a special bond, as soon as she would enter the Centre, she would come and greet me and then go about doing other activities and I also started looking forward to those early morning hugs and smile (the biggest perks of working with children)! One day I was busy with some other work, so my colleague Bhavinsha was doing a hands-on activity with students from my class. Suman got to know this and became defiant, she put her feet on the table and looked away from the teacher. Bhavinsha came and told me this, I immediately told Suman I will come back soon but you need to respect and obey your other teachers as well. She understood and smiled and said sorry teacher but come soon, I miss you. I smiled and made sure I finished my work quickly and be there for my students. This may not seem like a big incident but that day there was a lot of learning for her, which helped her during the lockdown as well. During the lockdown, she very happily attends the online sessions and diligently completes the task given to her. She obeys her parents and her siblings and insists on teaching them the activity for the day, trying to take on a leadership role and somewhere wanting to be a teacher!



By: Kashmira Upadhaya
Special Educator

"Part of being a person is about helping others"

Stories of inspiration

It is all about how to you transform your inabilities (as the society would see them) into abilities, which define you as a person. Today we will meet Urvashi a mother of three and a loving wife. Urvashi was limited to her home as mobility was an issue for her as they did have enough finances or the know how to access a wheel chair or tricycle. But for her it was not just 'staying in the house', she would manage all the housework with just a little help from others, she loves stitching and use to stitch clothes with a needle and thread for her family members. While Prabhat's campaigning in Lambha we got to know about Urvashi and went to visit her. She invited us home, she was very happy to hear about Prabhat's work but also surprised to know that there is an organization dedicated to doing work for children and adults with special needs in this part of town, which is populated with migrant workers. We asked her, if she requires any assistance, she was very shy and did not say anything about it. During a medical camp organized at Lambha we called her in for a assessment and she qualified for a tricycle, which was soon given to her. Her joy knew no bounds! Her immediate reaction was "I don't know what to do with so much mobility", we all laughed and knew, there was so much that she was capable of. She soon took over the charge of creating awareness about Prabhat's work and gathering people for medical camps organized by Prabhat. We got to know how financially strained her household was and despite that she was adamant on getting a good education for all three of her children, so Prabhat with the help from donors got her a sewing machine. She now takes orders for stitching and is quite a designer as well! Her family is very proud and supportive of her. When others around mocked her husband for marrying a woman with a disability, she has shown all of them that how one can manage to transform an inability into a lasting ability.

We thank Urvashi for her service towards bettering the lives of those with special needs and for standing strong with the organization and its endeavour.



By: Kishore Vaghela
Field coordinator



Helen Keller was an American author, disability rights advocate, political activist and lecturer. She lost her sight and hearing after a bout of illness at the age of nineteen months. She then communicated primarily using home signs until the age of seven when she met her first teacher and life-long companion Anne Sullivan, who taught her language, including reading and writing; Sullivan's first lessons involved spelling words on Keller's hand to show her the names of objects around her. She also learned how to speak and to understand other people's speech using the Tadoma method. She attended Radcliffe College of Harvard University and became the first deafblind person to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. She worked for the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) from 1924 until 1968, during which time she toured the United States and travelled to 35 countries around the globe advocating for those with vision loss. Keller was a prolific author, writing 14 books and hundreds of speeches and essays. The story of Keller and Sullivan was made famous by Keller's 1903 autobiography, *The Story of My Life*. Her life is still such an inspiration for all!

Covid-19 protocols: As the situation is easing up with covid-19 cases reducing, it is now more than ever essential to adhere the protocols and take the required precautions. Towards this the Prabhat team is regularly circulating material on the protocols that need to be followed during this time. Simple instructions are difficult for a child with special needs to follow, thus the team prepares material which are suitable and easily understandable by the children combined with online video sessions to reiterate it. Despite that it might still be difficult for the child to follow it, thus parents and siblings are also provided the material regularly. The vulnerability of children and people with special needs has been severely felt through this pandemic and continues to be a concern for all of us.

Vaccination and its importance: There are several varied opinions about the vaccination for covid-19, thus it is very important for Prabhat to circulate fact checked material about it in the community it serves. The team is also providing hands-on training on registering for the vaccination. Efforts are still being worked out to organize a vaccination drive in the community.

Home-visits for children under the school program: As the learning yet again has mostly shifted to online mode, regular home-visits are being conducted by the school program team (which includes homes of children with moderate disabilities, who have been admitted into mainstream schools by Prabhat). The home-visit follow-up help in understanding the gaps and challenges. These home-visits also help in understanding the home environment of the child and helps the organization to provide counselling if required.

Networking: Prabhat has been presented with various opportunities to network during this pandemic. The association with Ahmedabad University continues, this month 70 children were oriented towards Prabhat interventions and for the larger cause of disability and inclusion. These 70 students will now provide their services by way of developing audio-video material, developing training and learning material, etc. as per the need of the organization. Prabhat was also closely working with a student from NID who has prepared learning tools for dyslexic children. These tools will be tested out with Prabhat's children and the feedback will be provided to her, if successful, it will be replicated and used at the Centre. An interesting association that Prabhat had this month was with Deepa Sonpal, a Disability Right Activist and Prita Jha, a legal Activist, researcher, and trainer, who approached Prabhat to guide and train them and their team in community engagement. Prita has also extended her support to Prabhat for legal matters especially those under POSCO.

Buddy Interaction: Under the Buddy Interaction banner Prabhat has developed strong bonds with Red Bricks School. 10 children from grade 11 and 12 had evinced interest to work for Prabhat's children. They have developed a succinct booklet for the students of Prabhat – on what schedule to follow through the day. They dedicated months to develop this book, despite their exams and academic demands. A regular feedback mechanism was put in place between Red Bricks School and Prabhat's team. The material will be shared on Prabhat's website.

National level webinar: The team on the occasion for Helen Keller's birthday attended a national level webinar organized by Sense International. These platforms give Prabhat's team an opportunity to understand a national level perspective of disability and an in-depth understanding of the work other organizations across the country are doing.

Assistive services: Providing access to assistive services is an integral part of Prabhat's working. The social security schemes help a person with disability especially those marginalized lead a better life. This month Prabhat has been able to assist with State Transport pass to 27 people, UDID cards for 13 people, pension scheme for 71 people and food kits to over 30 people. The food kits are distributed as per the need.



Snap-shot of the month



Siblings enjoying a feast for Eid



Getting the size right! A clothes distribution drive, in one of the newly formed migrant slums



One final check of the documents before submission for a medical certificate



A planning meeting of the team

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