



## *Campaigning for the rights of deafblind people*



*Hon. Chief Minister Shree Ashok Ghelot interacting with Zamir*

Sense International (India) participated in a two day national workshop on -“Livelihood for Persons with Disability: Issues and Options,” organised by the Rajasthan Mission for Livelihood (RMOl) and the UNDP at Jaipur in December 2009. During the workshop Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Ghelot said, “There are about 14 lakh disabled people in the State. Our Government is committed towards their welfare. We will formulate a policy so that they are better incorporated in the social team and are able to take out a living for themselves.”

Zamir Dhale, our deafblind Advocacy Officer presented success stories of deafblind adults who in spite of all odds are earning their own livelihood. During his presentation, he explained that there is an urgent need to impart livelihood training to deafblind adults in order to help them live an independent and active life.

## *STARS Impact Award for Sense International (India)*



*Mr. Jazeel - CEO of Dabbah Group, the Founders of Start Foundation, with Mr. Akhil S Paul - Director and Mr. Biju Mathew - Deputy Director Sense International (India)*

It is a great honour for us to be one among the six organisations in the world to receive the STARS Impact Education Award for helping the local- partner organizations to set up new services for deafblind people in India.

Muna Wehbe, Chief Executive of the STARS Foundation said: “Sense International (India) delivers truly unique services to children who without support would be isolated from mainstream society.

Through its work with partners, the organisation responds to real needs, with tangible and effective programmes being provided to some of the most vulnerable children in the country.”

## *Successful Situation Analysis of Northern India*

Sense International (India) in collaboration with the Viataal International (now known as Kentalis), Netherlands, carried out a research on “Situation Analysis of people with Sensory and/or Communication disabilities in Northern India”.

The main focus of the study was to evaluate the existing level of support available to persons with Sensory and/or Communication disabilities in seven States of North India from Government and Non-Government organizations. The survey and the subsequent involvement of the organisations in brainstorming process sensitised more than 50 organisations about the needs of people with deafblindness, communication disabilities and multi sensory impairment.

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## *“I enabled, We empowered”*

“I enabled, We empowered”, was the spirit with which, deafblind children and adults, their parents and special educators from all over the country participated in the National Conclave of Networks, organized by Sense International (India), in December to observe the World Disability Day in Delhi.



*Network Officer bearers sharing the dias at National Conclave in Delhi*

The National Conclave of Networks was organized with the aim to bring members of all the three networks - UDAAN (Network of Persons with Deafblindness/Multisensory Impairment), PRAYAAS (National Network of Families of deafblind people) and ABHI-PRERNA (Network of Teachers of Persons with Deafblindness/Multisensory Impairment) on a common platform and facilitate them in building a conducive environment for exchange of best practice.

The main focus was on capacity building of each member by updating their skills through needs based training programmes. Experts from relevant fields conducted session on *latest Yoga technique, Drawing, Art & craft, Behavior management, Crisis management, Child Protection and Intervention (CPPI) policy, Rebound therapy and importance of Vocational training.*

All the members and participants enthusiastically joined the *World Disability Day* celebrations at India Gate. With full zest and vigour they participated in the 13<sup>th</sup> “*Walk to Freedom*” advocating the theme- “*Say No to Amendments. Say Yes to New Law*”. The Conclave was supported by European Commission and Co-hosted by the National Trust for the Welfare of People with Cerebral Palsy, Autism, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities (Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India).



*Udaan member - Lalith giving yoga lessons*

## *Advocating for a Barrier Free and Right Based Society for Deafblind People*

To ensure that deafblind people and their families live a life of dignity and respect, advocacy meetings were held in the States of Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Tamilnadu, with the aim to sensitize the policymakers in the society and facilitate an environment for social change leading to recognition and inclusion of deafblindness in Acts and policies. The District Disability Officers, Media People, Principal of Government Special Schools, Officers from Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) and other important Government officials along with Deafblind people and their family members were part of the meetings.

In the State level advocacy meeting at Lucknow (U.P) Shri A.K.Dwedi, Director of Disability, showed concern towards the needs of deafblind people and committed to take necessary actions for inclusion of deafblindness in

the State Disability Policy. Dr. Rani Nayar, State Commissioner for Disabilities Kerala, said, "There is an immediate need to identify deafblind people in the state and to build various resource centers to reach out to them and also include them separately in the census survey."

**Hon. Minister for State in the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Shri. D. Napoleon**, appreciated the work being done by Sense International (India) and its partners by providing appropriate services and creating awareness on deafblindness in the state. He assured that a new action plan will be formulated for persons with deafblindness by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to ensure their full participation and inclusion in the society.

## *Zamir bags the 8<sup>th</sup> CavinKare Ability Mastery Award*

It was a very proud moment for all of us at Sense International (India), when Zamir Dhale, our advocacy officer, was awarded the CavinKare Ability Mastery Award for his extraordinary achievements in the field of deafblindness on the February 13, 2010.



*Zamir and his wife Nasrin receiving award from Hon. Minister Sh. Mukul Wasnik as Sachin (Zamir's interpreter) applauds*

## *Commemorating success of our Partners*

We would like to congratulate our partners, Shikshit Yuva Sewa Samiti and Jeevan Jyoti School for the Blind on receiving the National Award. We also congratulate Shri Gopal Krishna Agarwal, Hon. Director of Shikshit Yuva Sewa Samiti (SYSS), Basti, on receiving the *Alpawalla Memorial Award 2010* by the National Association for the Blind (NAB) India. We salute their commitment to the cause.

## *Evaluating progress and planning ahead*

A 2-day review meeting was organised in Delhi on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2010 to review the activities undertaken by the four Regional Learning Centers (RLCs) on deafblindness- North, South, East and West.. During this meeting the annual strategies were agreed and discussions were held to evaluate the role of RLCs in strengthening local networks in the advocacy efforts and towards inclusion of deafblind people in the mainstream.

As part of the meeting, a Skill Building session was also conducted to enhance management and interpersonal communication skills of the RLC staff. The meeting ended with a focus group discussion on the issues that need to be addressed and the steps to be taken in order to develop sustainable infrastructure for the integration of deafblind people in India.

## *Celebrating 10 successful years of partnership*

The Deafblind-Multi Disability programme supported by Sense International (India) at National Association for the Blind (NAB), Kerala, is first of its kind in the State and till now has supported more than 100 children with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.

We are extremely pleased to share with you that the deafblind programme has now successfully completed 10 years and to mark this event a huge celebration took place in NAB on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2010. It was heartening to see deafblind children, their parents and educators enthusiastically participating in the cultural events and sharing their stories of positive change.

The Chief Guest Mr. Jayakumar IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Kerala, in his inaugural address said, "Involvement of the family as well as community members is very important in making deafblind children an integral part of the mainstream society."

## *Celebrating Joy of Giving Week with 10 Acres - Ahmedabad City Mall*

With the Support of "10 Acres Mall- Ahmedabad", Sense International (India) celebrated the *Joy of Giving* week in October by organizing a day-long cultural event to generate funds and also to create awareness regarding deafblindness.

Dance performance put up by deafblind and multi sensory impaired children from the deafblind unit of Blind People's Association was highly applauded by the audience.



*Deafblind children performing at 10 Acres Mall*

## *A Journey from Isolation to Inclusion*

As a child Mahesh would simply loiter in his village the entire day without having a single clue as to where his life was heading. Hearing impairment since birth and partial vision loss due to an eye infection had hampered his growth developmental milestones. Oblivious to his emotional, physical and educational needs, his parents believed that their child was mentally retarded as he could not even recognize his own family members and so they left him in the hands of fate.

Mahesh lived a life of isolation without any care or support from his family members. He would roam around in his village bare feet, wearing shabby and torn clothes. The children of his village always ridiculed him by calling him Koka (slang word used to for person who cannot speak). Having no social skills he did not know how to interact with others and out of frustration would throw stones on people around him.

Shobaji, a special educator for deafblind children, came as a ray of hope in his life. Identifying the nature of his disability she enrolled him in the deafblind unit supported by Sense International (India) at Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra (NBJK), Jharkhand. After a detailed clinical assessment of vision, hearing and other health issues, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), focusing on life skill education was developed for him.



*Mahesh at his family shop*

Though initially difficult Shobha managed to convince his parents that Mahesh was not mentally retarded but deafblind and given proper education and needs based training it was possible for him to live an independent and active life. With regular intervention from NBJK, Mahesh began to participate in daily activities.

21 years old Mahesh is now a much more confident boy. In order to make better use of his residual vision and hearing, he has been provided with hearing aid and spectacles. At present he is receiving training to assist his mother in their family shop. It is heartening to see that he has also become more social now and even the people in his community are more acceptable to his needs. In the recently held National Conclave of Networks organized in Delhi, he was a very active participant.

The attitude of his family members has changed completely. They now cooperate with the special educators and follow their instructions. "Initially we thought that he was good for nothing, but now we are confident that given proper training, he can also live a successful life", says his mother.

***Support us in making a difference to the lives of deafblind people like Mahesh***

All Donations to Sense International (India) enjoy 100% exemption from Income Tax u/s 35 AC of Income tax Act, 1961

### **We Will Miss You**

**We are saddened by the untimely deaths of two of our deafblind friends- Fredrick Aloysius and Kanmani. We extend our utmost condolences to their families. May their souls rest in peace!**



*Fredrick Aloysius  
Holy Cross Service Society, Trichy  
(1977-2010)*

Those we love don't go away,  
They walk beside us every day,  
Unseen, unheard, but always near,  
Still loved, missed and very dear.



*Kanmani  
Holy Cross Service Society, Trichy  
(1986-2010)*



Working with deafblind and multi-sensory impaired people throughout India

**Sparsh** is also available on tape, Braille and on large print on request.

Please write to:

Sense International (India)

2nd Floor, Admin Block, Opp. Indian Institute of Management (IIM),

Vastrapur, Ahmedabad - 380 015

**Phone:** 91-79- 2630 1282 **Fax:** 91-79-2630 1590

**Email:** [info@senseintindia.org](mailto:info@senseintindia.org)

**Do visit us at** [www.senseintindia.org](http://www.senseintindia.org)