

Visit Report to Deafblind Programme of Ankur Foundation, Nepal



Nepal is a Kingdom of high mountains, artistic monuments and diverse culture. It is a landlocked country sandwiched between the Tibetan autonomous region (China) in north and

India in south, east and west. With a population of about 23 million, approximately 42% of the population live below the poverty line and 86% living in rural areas. About 12% have one or the other disability and as per government statistics 7.3 % of the total disabled population is multiply disabled, though it is not clearly defined in the Protection and Welfare of Disabled Persons Act 2039 (1982). Deafblindness as a disability has not received the required attention or recognition. There are almost 100 active NGOs and INGOs operating in Nepal.



Ankur Foundation came into existence in 1977 and the first ever inclusive education programme for children with disabilities was conceptualised in 1995, when Mr. Madhav Prasad Aryal came to know about the programmes for multi-disabled / deafblind children in a Conference in India. This was the Helen Keller Institute for the Deaf & Deafblind in Bombay but due to lack of resources and trained human resource, Ankur could not initiate a programme for deafblind children. Now they have set up a

Resource Unit for deafblind/ multi-disabled children in the regular school.

History of the relationship

The beginning was made when a team from Nepal (including Ankur) was sponsored by Sense International to participate in the first ever Asian Conference on Deafblindness in 2000 at Ahmedabad, India. In the past 6 years there have been two persons (Bishal Dhunguna and Shailu) from Nepal who have been trained by Sense International (India) supported Teacher Training Courses. Though we have not had any active partnership but we have sent educational materials and handbooks for teachers. Two more educators received 3 month's advanced training one of the SI(I) supported partner in Clarke School, Chennai. Apart from these, we have been in constant touch with Mr. Madhav Prasad Aryal whom we have supported to participate in the Dbl Asian Conference in Bangladesh in 2006.



Impact on deafblind people supported by the programme

This 6 year old relationship with Ankur has helped them initiate preliminary work with deafblind children in many parts of the country. In Kathmandu region, Ankur is the only Resource centre for deafblind and multiply disabled children, which is also supported by Hilton Perkins International.



It is a matter of great satisfaction for Sense International (India) to report that the exposure, training and material received from us, is giving shape to a strong inclusive education programme for deafblind / multiply disabled children in Nepal. Mr. Madhav Prasad Aryal and his team has succeeded in the influencing the Government to depute primary school teachers to undergo basic training in multiple disabilities. So far they have trained 30 teachers from 10 districts, who have identified about 100 children with conditions

leading to deafblindness. Ankur is planning to undertake a detailed assessment of all these children.

Explanation of the Project in Kathmandu

Ecologically, Nepal has very difficult terrains and the lack of transportation in hill regions is a huge hindrance in identifying children with deafblindness. The existing Resource Unit has 12 children with multiple disabilities, which can be used as the training facility for other teachers, parents and field workers who can reach out to other deserving clients through home-based or community based approach.

So far Ankur has trained teachers in 10 districts in the planes (Tarai) adjoining Indian border but now the need is to conduct similar trainings for the remaining 15 districts of the region. Ankur plans to carry out nation wide programmes in coordination with Department of Education through government integrated schools for blind/ deaf/ mentally retarded as some of these schools have hostel facilities.

The trained teachers from these schools will be able to enrol deafblind children from the nearby villages. Once the 'orientation' training is over, Ankur has planned to conduct 'advanced' level trainings so that these teachers can train other teachers from the adjoining hill regions. It is this 'cascading' effect which will reach to the children living in the remote mountains too.



Future Support

Deafblindness is a complex disability and the needs of deafblind people are complicated and varied, making the sharing of information vital to any practitioner or family member – this helps to remove the sense of isolation and enables joint action and lobbying to take



place. A window of opportunity is available in India, where, from only one service in 1997, Sense International supported the development of 37 services. This has been possible through an integrated and collaborative strategy involving deafblind people, their families, NGOs, the government and local communities. The lessons learned from the successes of Sense International's work in India over the last 10 years and the available deafblind

expertise in the adjoining states of West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh will be most useful in supporting deafblind programmes in Nepal.

The Resource Unit is equipped with some basic equipments and toys. It will be very useful for the unit to have some play-materials like- Ball-pool, Trampoline, Physio-ball and corner chairs for giving support to severely physically disabled children with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.



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