

Contribution of NGO in Inclusive Approach to Education for Children with Visual Disability

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ABSTRACT

The common goal of Sustainable Development (SDG4), National Education Policy 2020, and the Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2016 is to provide equitable opportunities and inclusive education to all children. Ensuring the education of all students, including students with disabilities is led by and governed by the Ministry of Education. Non-Governmental organizations play a pivotal role in providing a support system to empower persons with disabilities into the social mainstream. This paper focuses on the remarkable contribution of an NGO, Sightsavers India in this field which needs to be understood and highlighted. The school system is adjusted to meet the needs of the visually disabled. Sightsavers play a vital role in making visually disabled students' school-ready for an inclusive classroom, generating awareness among people in remote areas and underprivileged towards their education.

Keywords: *Inclusive classroom, non-Governmental organizations, underprivileged, social mainstream.*

Background of the study

Inclusion is based on the belief that every child has learning opportunities and develops their potential to the fullest if they are provided with a conducive environment and resources as per their needs (CBSE,2020). Every child and young person in the world has the right to an education, with their particular strengths and weaknesses, as well as their ambitions and expectations. A specific type of child does not have a claim to our educational systems. As a result, a nation's educational system must be modified to accommodate the demands of all its pupils (Adamuthe and Mishra, 2017). The United Nations adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015, and the fourth of those is to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." The achievement of the global goals of inclusion calls for universal literacy and numeracy proficiency, the abolition of all forms of educational discrimination, free primary, and secondary schooling, universal access to high-quality elementary schools, and reasonably priced technical, vocational, and higher education. The National Policy of Education recognizes the objective of The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 which defines inclusive education as a "System of education wherein students with or without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching is simply adapted to meet the needs of different types of disabilities" (NEP, 2020). Not only are comprehensive laws urgently needed to guarantee the civil, economic, social, political, and cultural rights of people with disabilities, but laws and policies must also be enforced. Universities and colleges, for instance, must adhere to legal responsibility, offer facilities and resources, and make reasonable adaptations to their services in order to accommodate students with disabilities (Sharaf, 2015). School attendance among school-age visually challenged children vastly trails that of non-disabled children, and illiteracy rates for both all PWD and school-age visually challenged children continue to be substantially higher than the general population (Chakraborty, 2015).

Concept of Inclusion

The concept of inclusion first gained recognition in Canada followed by the USA and the United Kingdom. It has traveled a road map from exclusion to inclusive education via special education and integrated education. Exclusion means the persons with special needs were kept away from the education system, Integrated education means persons with disabilities of all ages or learners identified as with SEN are being placed in regular education

settings with some adaptations and resources, special education refers to teaching children with special needs in an exclusive setting wherein their differences and necessities are addressed by teaching. Whereas inclusive education is concerned with placing students with special education services in regular classrooms (CBSE, 2020).

Right-based perspective on Education of disabled

At the international and national levels, numerous policies, programs, acts, and regulations have been introduced to support education, a barrier-free environment, and the full inclusion of students with special needs in classrooms. CBSE (2020) explains the Right-based perspective on the Education of the disabled. The following list includes some significant Acts, Laws, policies, and programs:

The Kothari Commission (1964-65) No matter their caste, creed, community, religion, economic status, or social standing, all children should have access to a common educational system, according to Kothari Commission.

The National Education Policy (1968) Policy urged the creation of an integrated program that would allow children with disabilities to attend ordinary schools, as well as increase the number of educational facilities for physically and mentally handicapped children.

Integrated Education of Disabled Children (1974): It provides educational opportunities to disabled children in common schools.

The National Education Policy (1986): Its objective is the integration of disabled people into the general population on all levels as equal partners.

World Declaration on 'Education for ALL' in 1990: It provided the impetus to Integrated Education in India. The Rehabilitation Council of India Act of 1992 established a training program to educate professionals to meet the requirements of students with disabilities. The National Policy of Education underwent modification in 1992 promoting inclusive education through District Primary Education Program in 1994.

Persons with Disability Act 1995: Blindness, low vision, leprosy cure, impairment of hearing, locomotor disabilities, mental retardation, and mental disorders were among the seven types of disabilities recognized by the Act. Children with disabilities must receive free education in a suitable environment up until the age of eight, according to the PWD Act of 1995.

United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006 in force 2008): In addition to advocating for, protecting, and ensuring that all persons with disabilities are able to fully and equally enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms, it seeks to instill respect for the inherent dignity of people with disabilities.

Right to Persons with Disability Act 2016: The list of disabilities increased from seven in the PWD Act of 1995 to twenty-one in the RPWD Act of 2016.

National Education Policy 2020: The National Education Policy 2020 designates “four Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) based on the following criteria: Gender Identities (female and transgender individuals), Socio-Cultural Identities (such as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe), Geographical Identities (Students from villages, small towns, and aspirational districts), Disabilities, including learning disabilities, and Socio-Economic Conditions (such as Socio-economic factors (such as migrant populations, low-income families, children in risky situations or those whose parents were trafficking victims, orphans, including street begging, and the urban poor)”.

Establishment of Special Education Zones: NEP 2020 recommends setting up “**Special Education Zones** in regions that have a significant population of people belonging to SEDGs. It’s a novel idea to enhance educational access to inaccessible groups and areas of the country. The key purpose of these zones is to spread education in the remotest areas of the country”.

The Rationale of the Study: India is a large country both in its geographical and demographic placement. A large population of disabled are still away from education. Although the government had tried to solve this problem through various programs and policies. Several NGOs have been working at the sheer grass-root level to extend education to persons with disabilities. NGOs like Sightsavers is trying at their utmost level to spearhead the movement to provide education to children with visual disability from marginalized and remote areas of society and prepare them for an inclusive approach to education. Sightsavers are presently working in 5 districts of Jharkhand Dumka, Jamtara, Deoghar Ranchi and Hazaribagh

Objectives of the study:

1. To explore the role of Sightsavers in the school readiness of visually disabled children.

2. To explore the school support and teachers' training provided by the Sightsavers for an inclusive approach to education.
3. To investigate the challenges faced by Sightsavers in the promotion of education for visually disabled children.

Research Methodology: Research methodology is the method/process of systematically identifying problems, acquiring facts or data, interpreting these data, and coming to a conclusion—either in the form of solutions to the current problem or specific generalizations for some theoretical formulation.

Research Design: The design of the present study is exploratory and descriptive. The goal of exploratory research is to gain fresh insights into a phenomenon and produce new ideas. The descriptive study investigates the status quo and is used to collect descriptive information.

Tools: The tools used for the present study are the questionnaire and interview schedules.

Sampling: The current investigation used a non-probability sampling technique. In this case, a simple nonprobability sampling approach known as 'convenience sampling' was employed. This approach refers to the subset of the population that is under inquiry that is defined not by probability or judgment, but by convenience.

Sample: The sample of the study is the stakeholders of the Sightsavers NGO, 5 visually disabled students who were placed in different government schools of Hazaribagh district and their class teachers.

Major findings of the study: The findings of the study are described as per the objectives stated in the study.

Contribution of Sightsavers in School readiness of children with visual disability for inclusive schooling
Sightsavers had taken all necessary steps to make visually disabled schools ready for their inclusion into the regular classroom. The school readiness initiatives taken by Sightsavers are as follows:

- A. **Clinical Assessment:** The clinical assessment identifies the specific needs of the students for their further treatment and interventions as required. Clinical assessment begins with the child's clinical history and family history of a child with a disability. The test of visual impairment is applied including Snellen's test and visual field test. Snellen's test score of 6/6 indicates good vision. If the result is 6/60, it means that the patient can only read from a distance of 6 meters, whereas a person with normal vision can do such. 3/60 to 6/60 or having a mix of intermediate visual acuity less than 6/24 is considered partial sight. A poor visual acuity of less than 3/60 is considered blindness.

Certification of disability: The representatives of Sightsavers help with disability certification. A certificate of blindness or visual impairment is issued by Medical Officer to any individual who fits the definition of blindness or visual impairment. The certification might be temporary or permanent depending upon the disability.

B. Functional Assessment:

1. **Community Sensitization program:** There is a general lack of awareness regarding the schooling of visually impaired persons, with the exception of the urban and affluent community, and a child who has developmental milestones that are delayed may not even be labeled disabled. Sightsavers work hard to educate these people about the rights of students with impairments to an education.

Preparing Social Animators: The volunteers of the society who were sensitized towards children with visual disability are trained by Sightsavers to help the CVI in the nearby localities.

2. **Life skill: Activity of daily living (ADL):** Training on daily activities begins after the screening of children with disabilities that gives them information about their current level. After screening the goal setting is done for a year on a quarterly basis, if the child achieves the goal very fast the training strategy for one-year changes from time to time. This training involves basic needs training like toilet training, bathing, brushing, eating, drinking, mobility training, etc.

Mobility Training: Mobility is an important issue for visually disabled students. It involves training in indoor and outdoor movement.

Indoor movement:

- **Upper Lower Hand Protective Technique:** Protective training to visually disabled to move around safely and independently. The Upper hand technique helps to protect the head, face, and mid-sections of

the body. In upper body protection, a hand is placed in front of the face with the palm facing outward. In lower hand protection the arm is extended downward and diagonally across the body.

- **Sighted guard:** It is believed that the sighted guide technique is the most effective way for a blind or visually impaired individual to travel with a seeing person. The individual being guided will take hold of the guide's right hand with their left hand.

Outdoor movement

Mobility with cane: Mobility canes are a type of mobility device that allows blind or visually impaired people to go about their everyday lives while out and about, particularly in new settings.

- **Haptic mobility:** Training for outdoor mobility by drawing out a road map on their back.

3. **Educational Skills:** The development of educational skills begins with the preparation of an Individualized Education plan. An individualized education plan helps to assess students on their various educational abilities.

Individualized Education Plan: The IEP “is not the student’s entire educational program but rather a road map containing the most important stops along the way to the final destination of learning and inclusion.”- Cheryl M Jorgensen.

The IEP should:

- Address the child's disability-related academic, developmental, and functional requirements.
- Make it possible for the child to participate in and advance through the regular curriculum.
- Fulfill the educational requirements specific to each child's impairment.
- SMART goals are those that are time-bound, specific, measurable, attainable, and results-oriented.

IEP objectives must consider a child's academic performance as well as their functional performance; they cannot be general assertions about what a child will achieve in a year. The IEP must detail all of the child's needs as well as how the school will satisfy them and track the child's development. The Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, is tailored to each kid as its name implies. Additionally unique to a school or organization is a generic version. For simplicity of use, a version is attached.

Braille training:

Pre-Braille training: The child is asked to make dots in the braille slate.

Braille training: It begins with teaching of alphabet, Writing one alphabet in one line till the child understands the first few letters. A-C 1st 3-5 hour class depending on child’s speed of learning followed by other alphabets progressively each week. Training them on both English and Hindi Braille.

Taylor’s frame: In the 19th century William Taylor developed a device for mathematics for the blind/visually disabled. It consists of an aluminum frame, having openings in the shape of an eight-pointed star, and different types of pegs in different orientations.

Pre-Taylor-Frame Training: Put the pegs in each of the eight cornered stars without fixing the orientation of the pegs followed by putting it in the required orientation as per the number or symbols.

Abacus: It is a device for computation with beads on the frame. The visually disabled is trained to use both hands on the instrument. The touch of beads on fingertips sends sensors and activates the brain for computation.

School Enrolment: After the basic educational training the child is enrolled in the regular classroom. The following points are considered while placing a child in an inclusive set-up.

- Distance of school from the home of VI children
- Government support
- School Support

After enrollment Sightsavers assist the government in the development of school infrastructure in order to provide barrier-free environments like handrails, tactile flooring, and inclusive toilets in the schools where children with VI are enrolled.

Providing Supportive Devices: After enrolment into the regular classrooms Sightsavers provide various devices for fulfilling the learning needs of CVI. Some of these are as follows:

- Braille slate

- Taylor frame
- Abacus
- White foldable cane
- Daisy reader for classes 3-5
- Mobile for classes 6-8
- Laptop for classes 9-12
- Talking watch and calculator
- Braille book
- Audiobooks library
- Reading guide
- Signature guide
- Magnifying glasses

Training of Teachers for inclusion of CVI

Sightsavers had taken an initiative with **Jharkhand Education Project Council** conducted a training program for resource/regular teachers trained to provide direct/ online support to children with visual impairment. A self-study training module was developed by Sightsavers in collaboration with NCERT, New Delhi, NIVH Dehradun, NEB, New Delhi. The module is divided into three parts:

Part 1: Concept of inclusion and understanding the needs of visually impaired children in mainstream education system. This part of module includes:

- Understanding the concept of inclusion
- Inclusive classroom set-up (Role play)

Part 2: Detailed Explanation of teaching methodologies which includes:

- Teacher's role in inclusive classroom set-up
- Introduction of inclusive TLM and its development
- Development of inclusive lesson plan.
- Introduction of Braille Hindi and English
- Teaching methodologies for inclusion in different subject areas.
- Demonstration of ICT devices like daisy reader

Part 3: Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation: The source of continuous and comprehensive evaluation is taken from NCERT package 2012. This part deals with assessment and evaluation of CVI.

Challenges face by Sightsavers for inclusion of children with visual disability

The challenges faced by Sightsavers are as follows:

- Policy Challenges
- Challenges of financial support
- Challenges of Government support
- Human resource and volunteer challenges
- Lack of community sensitization

Educational Implications: The National Policy of Education 2020 emphasizes the recommendations of Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2016, for bringing the CVI into mainstream. Every impoverished child's education in India requires access to high quality study materials, inclusive format, teaching/training process that is critical for India's economic and social progress. An NGO like Sightsavers acts as a connecting link between people and government. In today's world, a more inclusive education style including participatory and community-based approaches is preferred with the government recognizing NGOs as a source of innovation and professional resource center in order to attain large-scale results.

Conclusion: The Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDG4) and NEP 2020 recognize the goal of attainment of inclusive and equitable education by 2030. Government alone cannot reach the grassroots level in all facets of inclusion. Therefore, NGOs like Sightsavers act as a connecting link between the government and the people. Sightsavers play a significant role in Jharkhand for children with VI. It provides community-level services, residential services, ECCE and preschool services, school readiness, and school education. Properly managed and

adequately administered programs act as great support for the government of Jharkhand for inclusion of CVI.

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