



HELEN KELLER INSTITUTE FOR DEAF & DEAFBLIND

ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

Homage to the pioneer

"Life is either a daring adventure or nothing" was the favourite Helen Keller quote of Ms. Beroz Vacha, our founder whose courage and dedication towards the people with deafblindness inspired generations of people around the world. She not only pioneered the movement for the education and rehabilitation of children and young adults with deafblindness in South East Asia by starting the first program for these children in this region but also started the first training center for the prospective teachers of children with dual sensory challenges. She gave us the vision and the dreams which made us strive for better and better. She strived for improving their quality of life till the end and left for her heavenly abode on April 24, 2014. Let us all make an effort to keep her dreams alive and help our children move further on the path of education and self reliance - a path which will live by her legacy for ages to come

A glance through the year:

Some of the highlights of the year are as following:

On the educational front:

- **New Center at Chembur:** No. of beneficiaries - currently 8

In July 2013 we started a small outreach center in Chembur. We had done extensive screening in the neighbouring areas during the summer vacation. These areas are the ones where a large number of residents belong to lower socio economic strata of society and the children identified had never received any intervention. Currently we have 8 students getting services at this center. We have provided free pick up and drop back service to these children in order to ensure regular attendance, This center runs on three days a week and two teachers provide need based services. A physiotherapist also visits the center once a month to recommend appropriate positions and movements.

- **Outreach program at Byculla served 24 children** (2 months-10 years age group) this session. After an initial developmental assessment elaborate individualised program was made for each of these young ones and systematically followed by five teachers who worked here. Each one received 2-12 hours of services per week as per their age and needs. Three of these children are also attending a single disability school We are providing resource work in order to supplement the learning taking place at the other program and to help the children function more effectively over there. Following our moto that every child needs to be integrated in society as far as possible this program has been able to integrate more than 10 children in mainstream schools or at least in single disability programs
- **The deafblind program at Vashi** too provided a variety of services to **36 children** in the age group of seven months to 18 years. Six teachers worked to enhance the communication, cognitive, motor and social skills of young ones (0-10 age group) using music & play, pre-

literacy activities, activities involving manipulative skills, art & craft, group activities and well planned daily living activities.

Seven teachers taught the school age children using the mainstream curriculum adapted to suit their needs. Braille, large print and computer was used as per their potentials and needs. A lot of emphasis was given on language enhancement but the students in their teens also enjoyed their science and social studies topics like human anatomy, development of civilisation, map reading, plant life etc. These topics were taught using tactile teaching material specially prepared by the teachers and computer presentation (for low vision children). Apart from this they were also updated about the current affairs during the time slot for news reading. An important segment of their training included various independent living skills like independent travelling, cooking, shopping, interaction with the people in community with the help of communication cards and so on. We will try our best to take these students upto secondary level. Those who cannot due to sensory, cognitive or medical limitations will be trained in vocational skills after they reach 18. Two of them Ms. Shishna and Naresh have already started spending a couple of hours in vocational center every day in order to be prepared better for this transition.

A third group of students - five of them - who could not go for the academic stream were trained into various routine functional skills like taking care of personal hygiene, dressing up, basic snack preparation and other small house hold chores, nursery activities etc.

- **The school for the deaf** provided full time school education to **79 children** with deafness this year following the SSC curriculum with the special provisions for the deaf. 8 children have appeared this year in the SSC Board exam - 6 through Marathi medium and 2 through English medium. The staff strength is currently 10 teachers and one care taker. One teacher out of this is going to retire this year but a couple of new teachers are going to be appointed in the coming session.

Apart from the classroom curriculum children were also encouraged through the year to participate in sports and a variety of cultural activities. They have won many prizes and recognition from well established organisations (pl refer to 'The Cultural Scenario')

News from the vocational centers: The main highlights of this year have been -

- Three of our young trainees with deafness and mild visual issues who have been training at our vocational center since last three years in cooking, money management and various other skills have been employed by Sharyu Motors since early this year. The two girls run their canteen now and Yogesh - the third of our trainees readies the newly manufactured cars for the show room.
- A solar dryer which was donated to us by a well known company has opened up a lot of possibilities for our trainees. They are learning a number of skills in the process of placing articles like Amla (goose berry) and Methi leaves for drying, collecting the dried articles, packing and labeling them. Since these articles have a market in rural areas as well it has generated a lot of interest among the parents also.
- 7 young people with hearing impairment/deafness completed their training at the animation center situated at our Byculla center. After the completion of their training all of

them were employed either to work as the instructor at Byculla center or at the animation studio owned by their coordinator Nikhil Jeewa

- Our young deaf adults along with their training coordinator trained a group of underprivileged women in various types of art and crafts during a training program organised at Akshaysakthy Thane
 - Like every year this year too 6 young adults with deafblindness were trained full time and two were trained part time through the year at different levels keeping their needs and potentials in mind in the following skills-
 - paper bag making
 - necklace and bracelet making using different kinds of beads & stones
 - candle making
 - packing and labelling
 - Nursery activities (watering, pruning, cutting grass using lawn mower etc.)
- Similarly 8 young adults with deafness were trained in the following trades-
- artistic jute bag making
 - making coffee paintings (paintings of beautiful Egyptian and Persian figures made of coffee powder and glue)
 - painting decorative earthen lamps (diyas) & candle stands in novel and unique designs
 - making embroidered dupattas, saris, bed sheets, bags, pouches etc.
 - making crocheted pouches and hand bags
 - making wall hangings, pen stands, coasters and other decorative items

All the items were very well received by the patrons and members of public and big sales were organised through different exhibitions, a list of which is given in the Index No. 1. The most popular and prestigious one of these exhibitions known as PRATIBIMB' was a 4 days affair organised through the years by Rangoonwala Foundation

Human Resource Development :

- **Teacher Training Center-**

Human Resource development has been a major concern in the field of Deafblindness . Our teacher training course which was started in the year 2000 by Ms. Vacha thus played a pivotal role in filling the gap between the large number of children estimated to be facing dual sensory challenges in our country and the availability of trained professional who could effectively work with them.

- Extended Duration- This RCI recognised diploma course which was earlier one year long has now been extended to two years to make it more comprehensive. One full time and one part time lecturer was
- Number of students this year- 38 students (20 in second year and 18 in the first year) from all parts of the country underwent training during this academic session
- Content of training- Extensive theoretical as well as practical hands on training in various aspects of multiple disability with vision impairment was given. Apart from working with the children in our own school they also received practical experience through placements and visits of other programs in Delhi and Mumbai catering to the needs of children with different disabilities. Apart from attending the regular classes, practical lessons and tutorials the trainees were also expected to participate

in extra training sessions by planning and conducting recreational sessions with the residential students with deafblindness as well as helping them in routine activities.

- Current staff strength- Apart from the existing training coordinator, one full time lecturer and a full time office assistant, two more staff members-one full time and one part time lecturer- were appointed this year. The Director education and three other staff members of the deafblind school too took classes on various topics. A number of leading professionals from various organisations in the country were also invited to teach and inspire the trainees.
- 10 of these students got an opportunity to attend the National Conference on deafblindness organised in Delhi in the month of January.
- Job prospects this year- Two of these trainees and two from the previous batch have been inducted as teachers in our deafblind school to work from June when the school reopens after the Summer vacation. Many other programs too have shown interest in appointing these trainees as teachers once they finish their training.

Rangoonwala Foundation and Hiohton Perkins International has helped us meet the escalated cost the boarding lodging of these students by sponsoring some of them.

- **Staff development through various short term courses and in-service training -**

- Ms. Rashmi jadhav - a teacher in our early education center who has recently added a Bachelor's degree in Sp. Education to her existing Diploma one was nominated and sponsored for a 10 days extensive training on 'Feeding issues of children with multidisability' at Chennai in the month of February this year. The trainer was an experienced professional from U.S.A assisted by a team of professionals from Chennai.
- Ms. Charanpreet Kaur, the then Diputy Director, education attended a 7 weeks long online training on 'Autism Spectrum Disorder & Visual Impairment
- Ms. Varsha Dubey, a teacher who has been working with the older deafblind children since last two years is currently undergoing an eight weeks training on 'Better Curriculum for children with Autism Syndrome Disorder and Visual impairment.
- Ms. Pushpa Vishwakarma attended a 5 days refresher course hosted by NAB Mumbai

All the above trainees were sponsored by **Hilton Perkins International**.

These trainings proved to be extremely helpful in dealing with the issues concerned with our own children.

Both Rashmi and Charanpreet held workshops for other teachers after the completion of their training. Apart from this Director and Diputy Director ,Education constantly strived for staff developments through discussions, brain storming over various issues concerned with our students' growth and multidisability in general.

- ***Visits by our senior staff members to other parts of the countries as well as to other Asian countries as mentors and consultants:***

- Ms. Anuradha Bagchi visited SENSE deafblind projects in Nashik, Srirampur, Dhule and Kolkata as mentor through the year. Dhule and Srirampur are rural projects.
- Ms. Sheela Sinha visited Chittagong,Bangla Desh twice this academic year as a Perkins consultant during this period. She worked with the early intervention team

of O-Ma-Shishu-Hospital in Chittagong and also spent a couple of days in Dhaka training the students attending teacher training course as well as audiology course.

Mainstreaming of children with vision impairment and developmental delay:

We have been making constant efforts to mainstream our young students - both socially and educationally. Apart from helping the family to make their children a part of community and participate in various social events, we also see to it that wherever feasible, they start going to a mainstream school or at least in a single disability program in the pre- school and elementary school stage itself. We continue to provide them with our services in accordance with the requirement in the new program till the child and the parents are fully comfortable in the new set up and the child starts coping with the expectations over there. Often they even come back to us for support after a gap if the family feels that our continued input will help them work better within the new system. This year 5 of our young children started attending another mainstream play school or primary school. With our constant one to one individualised and focussed intervention they had reached a stage where they could participate in a bigger group and take advantage of peer interaction

Empowerment of families & care takers:

- **Two Family Camps:** Families of our students have always been our equal partners and empowering them with appropriate knowledge and information is something which we have always considered to be one of our prime responsibilities. In our attempt to fulfil this responsibility in an effective and enjoyable manner we organised two family camps this year -

The first 3 days camp was organised from 25-27th November, 2013 in a resort in Pen, an area situated at the outer skirts of Mumbai. About 200 people -40 families (students, parents, siblings and in some cases members of extended families / care takers), 8 adult deafblind vocational trainees & 55 staff members attended this camp.

Apart from being very spacious with a number of comfortable cottages this resort had a lot of greenery and lovely scenic ambience. Moreover, there were enough means to entertain people of all age groups- children's train and merry go round, large models of jungle animals and reptiles placed in natural surroundings, swimming pool with a life guard and a shop to buy swimming gear, huge water amusement park, boating facility in a small lake at the back, facilities for horse riding and taking rounds in horse carts and large green areas for play and morning walks.

A number of workshops were conducted on a variety of topics for providing useful information to the parent:

- Dealing with the challenges faced by a parent- By Paromita Banerjee, the mother of a child with autism who is the founder and Principal of a well established school for children with autism..
- How to grow and keep moving in face of the challenges - By Ms. Nina Gandhi, an experienced councillor who runs a remedial program
- The two basic requirements of a child with disability - being able to communicate with the world and being relatively independent in daily life - By Sheela Sinha, Director (Edu), HKIDB

- Nutritional needs of an individual and selection of food items, cooking medium and method of food preparation- By Nutritionist Ms. Aarti Nair
- The concessions and facilities provided by the government of Maharashtra- By the district officer of Maharashtra State Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation..
- Entrepreneurship and formation of support groups- By Mr. Samir Ghosh, a well known consultant who lost both his hands at the age of eight in an accident. He has been working on several World Bank and Indian Government's projects concerned with entrepreneurship, training and rehabilitation of people with Disability.

A number of recreational events and fun activities like games and art competitions for the siblings, drama performance by the parents, games for them, Dj Night, Camp fire, swimming etc. were organised during the evenings.

The second 2 days family camp was held at our New Mumbai premises in the end of April this year, just prior to Summer vacation when the parents of children staying in the hostel came to take their children. The stay arrangement of these parents was also made over there. The family members of day scholars stayed with us till the evening. This camp also covered similar topics like importance of developing the children's communication and daily living skills, investment planning for your child, various government schemes that offer financial support offered for vocational rehabilitation of people with disability, getting out of the cycle of own grief and supporting other parents.

Both the camps were very successful and we got excellent feedback from the families.

- ***The cultural scenario:***

The students of both sections have participated in a variety of extracurricular activities through the year and won several awards and appreciation from all quarters. Some of these events and the details of prizes won are listed below-

- The celebration of our 36th Founders' Day was proved to be a great success. A colourful cultural evening was organised in Cawasjee Hall situated in South Mumbai. The show started with a graceful invocation dance performed by six female students of both the sections. Thereafter, a themed play with 8 beautiful dances woven in the captivating success story of Khushi -a little deaf girl who grows to become an expert dancer and makes her parents proud. The play was choreographed by a group of young teachers and children of all age groups from both the sections participated in this show depicting Khushi and her friends at different stages of life. The show was widely appreciated and many members of audience were seen wiping their tears. A few children received prizes for good performance in different areas and departmental heads talked about the activities of their respective departments.
- 10 students from the Deaf School participated in the ten days training camp organized by NATYA SHALA which involved training students in music, dance, drama & MALKHAM (rope gym & pole gym).
- A dance performance titled 'We are Alive' was done by a group of our students at the annual contest organised by well known theatre personality Pearl Padamsee and her team. It was very well received and the participants received a number of gifts

- Silent National Anthem recording was done by 'We Fest' where Amitabh Bachan was in the lead role along with a group of special children. 10 of our kids from the deaf school had performed which was recorded on 25th Feb'14 and that video will be released on World Deaf Day
 - Teenaged Saurabh from the deafblind section received a special prize for his signed speech made during the awareness week organised by Rangoonwala Foundation. Our children also participated actively in Bal Utsav celebrated by this Foundation. Our teacher trainees worked as volunteers during these celebrations by Rangoonwala Foundations
 - Deloitte Impact Day was celebrated by the young executives from Deloitte in our school by making a variety of teaching learning aids for our children as per the guidelines provided by our teachers
 - A large group of students - both deaf & deafblind, teachers and other staff members were taken for a tour to Amritsar from Sept 27, 2013 to Oct 2, 2013. The tour was organised by Anam Prem, an organisation working for many social causes and coordinated by Mr. Yogesh Desai. The group visited the Golden Temple , Jalianwala Bagh and Wagah Border. The students came back rejuvenated and enriched by the variety of experiences and information that they gained through this trip.

- ***Assistance in clinical intervention:***

Like every year this year too we have provided assistance to the families in availing medical intervention for their children through the year. Some of the

 - . Medical Tie up with Eye hospital AEHI has been established. Every Wednesday we take our students to AEHI for their eye testing.
 - Tie up with Yerala dental college, Kharghar has been established. A dental camp was conducted at our institute thereafter further free treatment is being provided at kharghar hospital.

The above two projects will be for the children of both deaf & deafblind section

 - We have been constantly getting hostel children checked and treated (in case of any ailment) at D.Y. Patil Hospital and other private clinics. Some examples are- Durgesh was treated for a bad spell of stubborn skin infection. The two brothers Naresh and Santosh who suffer from a degenerative neurological condition were taken for expensive tests like MRI and continue to be on medication as per the doctor's advice.

- ***Financial assistance to parents/guardians for travelling:***

We have provided financial support to families of ten children of deafblind section through the year by either providing them the transport facility free or by reimbursing the money they have spent in transporting the children to and fro school.

- ***Awards & acknowledgements:***
 - The prestigious Kapil Sibbal Award was conferred on our organisation this year. It included Rs. three lakhs and a citation which was read out in the presence of an

August gathering in New Delhi. The Director education, Ms. Sheela Sinha received the award on behalf of the institute.

- On Monday January 13, 2014 HKIDB received Global Visionary Award conferred by Chairman, Shri Naren Shah, Vision Foundation, Ahmedabad. Our CEO Mr. Yogesh Desai had gone to Ahmedabad to receive the Award on behalf of HKIDB. There was an all round appreciation of HKIDB services to the Deaf & Deafblind community
- Ms. Nutan Sarnaik, the coordinator of vocational center for the deaf, received the Vocational Award from Rotary Club of Navi Mumbai Industrial area in January, 2014 for her efforts in the area of rehabilitation of young adults with hearing impairment
- ***The structural and environmental modifications:***
 - All the earlier tube lights on our New Mumbai premises were replaced by solar lights which has brought down the expenditure on electricity considerably. This project was funded by HDFC
 - Taking ahead our **nursery project**, a team from Cactus which supports us in maintaining our garden, planted many new flowering plants. Under this project a mini kitchen garden was also made and maintained this year where vegetables like tomatoes and egg plants were planted. Older children learnt about different kinds of plants and how to take care of them through this project. The vegetables grown here were plucked and cooked by the students
- ***Fund raising through the Annual Marathon organised by Standard Chartered Bank:***

Like every year this year also large number of people from public as well as private sector helped us raise fund by participating in Dream Run. A group of our older students too participated in it along with their teachers and all in all it became a great show of strength and support. We were declared one of the highest fund raisers and the event helped in creating a lot of awareness regarding disability sector.
- ***Special achievements:***
 - A National Conference on deafblindness was held at Delhi from 16 – 18th Jan this year. A couple of staff members have always been presenting well appreciated papers in national and international conferences. However, in this conference for the first time 8 papers were presented by the teachers and deafblind adults from our institute. 6 papers were presented by the teachers of deafblind section and 2 by Pradeep Sinha & Sishna (deafblind adults) .
 - Akhter Dhale & Pradeep Sinha -two of the deafblind adults who completed their diploma course in Assistive Technology this year were appointed as teachers in deafblind section. They proved to be excellent teachers of students in their teens and managed their responsibilities very well. The third trainee too was offered the post of teacher. However he got absorbed in the cloth shop opened by his family.
 - First ever **Continuing Rehabilitation Education (CRE) training program** was organised by us at our Vashi Premises. This training is conducted with Rehabilitation

Council of India's permission as a refresher course for the professionals working in the field of disability. Ms. Anuradha Bagchi, Ms. Sheela Sinha, Ms, Devyani Hadker, Ms. Charanpreet Kaur Walia, Ms. Prabhata Nair & Ms. Bharati paradker were the staff members who conducted various sessions relevant to vision impairment with additional disabilities. 30 participants -28 from Mumbai and 2 from Dhule and Pune attended this 3 days program. Apart from theory, the training had practical elements also including simulation exercises and making teaching aids.

- A new beginning was marked by a **six weeks vocational training conducted at our New Mumbai vocational center for people with different disabilities** in the month of April. It was a joint venture between the Government of Maharashtra and Helen Keller Institute under Maharashtra State Rural livelihood scheme. This project was funded by World Bank and the training was open to self help group members and young entrepreneurs. Fourteen trainees from rural Maharashtra received extensive employment oriented training in one of these three streams-
 - Tailoring (by Nutan sernaik & her team)
 - Basic computer skills (y Mr. Yogesh Desai & Ms. Devyani Hadkar)
 - Horticulture - (by guest trainer)

Their boarding Lodging was organised at our residential unit and all care was taken to make their stay comfortable and enjoyable. The group included two wheel chair bound people and one blind female participant.

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List of exhibitions our vocational centers participated in

- 1) J.P. Morgan all branches in Mumbai
- 2) Johnson and Johnson all branches in Mumbai
- 3) Unilever India Ltd at CBD Belapur
- 4) Tata Power, Chandivali Division
- 5) West Pioneer Elphinstone Road
- 6) Marico Limited, Kalina branch
- 7) Madhyam exhibition at Lower Parel
- 5) Vashi Bengali Association
- 6) Centre one mall at Vashi
- 7) Rangoonwala Foundation/Pratibimb Exhibition

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List of large orders executed by our vocational centers

- 1) K.E.M. Hospital Gastro Dept. : 350 canvas bags
- 2) P.V.S. Hospital Cochin : 400 canvas bags
- 3) Breach Candy Trust : 350 rexine bags
- 4) I.D.F.C. BKC : 30 jute folders
- 5) K.E.M. Hospital Pathology : 300 canvas
- 6) Breach Candy Club : 350 rexine bags