

From Isolation to Opportunity: Give Education to Deafblind Children in India



The Project

This project will transform the destinies of 250 deaf and blind children by giving them the opportunity of an education and tailored support for the first time. As a result, they will learn to communicate and play a valuable role in their families and communities.

This will be achieved through the strengthening of a Regional Learning Centre (RLC) in Uttar Pradesh, eastern India, which long-term will become a centre of excellence in the region. The Centre will identify and provide specialised services to 250 deafblind children and its impact will be felt across the region as it will be a centre of training and expertise in deafblindness.

The Regional Learning Centre's impact will not only be seen in the lives of deafblind children but in their families as well. Many parents of deafblind children feel overwhelmed with the stress of looking after their deafblind child. This project will alleviate the isolation they experience and will give them the tools to communicate with their child for the very first time. Truly life transforming for a parent.

Why is this project needed?

As 95% of what we learn comes through sight and hearing, the estimated 444,000 deafblind people in India are some of the most isolated. Before Sense International (India) began working in east India in 2001 there were no services available for deafblind children in Uttar Pradesh and the adjoining states and very limited services were available in the entire east India region. This project was designed in order to meet the growing number of requests from states like Jharkhand and also the strengthening of existing services in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh where only basic support for deafblind people are currently being offered.

How will the project work?

This project aims to:

- **Increase** the specialist one-to-one support and the quality for deafblind people and their families;
- **Empower** deafblind people and their families to realise their human rights;
- **Increase** significantly the numbers of deafblind people identified and accessing rehabilitation in rural communities through supporting disability organisations to include deafblindness in their programmes;
- **Strengthen** support networks for deafblind people, their families and teachers so that information, and support is shared right in the heart of rural communities.

Of vital importance long-term is developing the Regional Learning Centre (RLC) so that it becomes a flagship 'hub' in the region, using its expertise to show how best to communicate and support deafblind people. The RLC will train community workers in how to work with deafblind people effectively, sharing information and best practice.

In addition to training, information materials will be provided for medical practitioners, disseminated through hospitals, health centres and disability organizations, having an impact across the whole region.

This project will provide essential home-based services to 250 deafblind children who currently have no support. A community based worker will carry out medical and clinical assessments of the newly identified deafblind children and they will then receive regular home visits at least once a week. The community based worker has the expertise and understanding to work with a deafblind child effectively. They will design an Individual Learning Plan for each child, involving the family, the relevant professionals such as occupational therapists and the wider community. The learning

programme takes account of the child's individual needs and circumstances and gives clearly identified milestones. For a deafblind child, the initial focus might be to develop mobility, helping the child to sit on their own and then progress to standing and walking. The worker will involve key members of the family at all stages of the education of the deafblind child with the aim of encouraging family members to continue the learning development in between home visits. The community based worker will identify appropriate mechanisms for the family to participate in the monitoring of their child's progress i.e. where illiteracy is an issue, pictograms might be used.

Project objectives

- To run vital services for deafblind children and their families
- To become a centre of excellence in the region
- To lead the development of deafblind services in the eastern region
- To develop information materials on deafblindness in regional languages
- To support organisations in the region to develop services for deafblind persons
- To support the networks of adult deafblind, families and teachers of deafblind persons

Expected results

- **Deafblind children's lives transformed:** 250 new deafblind children will be identified and provided with specialised services;
- **Families strengthened:** 1250 family members will experience the joy of communication with the deafblind child for the first time;
- **Expertise developed:** Ongoing training in providing specialised services for deafblind children will be provided for local disability organizations;
- **Awareness raised:** Booklets and posters on deafblindness and related issues will be produced.

Meet Chetna



Chetna was born deaf and blind and was identified by Dipak Chauhan, a Sense International Educator. When Dipak first met her, Chetna was almost three, had no control of her limbs, and was unable to walk or to feed herself. She spent her day strapped to a chair. Dipak began by explaining Chetna's condition to her parents and designing an Individual Education Plan for her, giving clearly identified milestones. The first goal Dipak set was for Chetna to be able to sit on her own and then to progress to standing and walking.

Seven years later and the progress is remarkable. Chetna helps her mother with daily chores around the house and now walks on her own every morning to collect water for her family. Dipak has worked with the teacher to allow Chetna to attend the local school so that she can be integrated into her village community - this will be vital as Chetna grows up and needs continuing support from her family and friends. Chetna's latest goals are to help her mother make chapattis and learn to sew so that she can contribute financially to the family. Without support from Sense International, Chetna would still be living a life of complete isolation with no involvement in her family or wider community and with no personal dignity.

Background to Sense International India's work

Sense International (India) was established in 1997 as a Public Charitable Trust with the aim of ensuring that all deafblind people in the country have access to the opportunities and support which will enable them to exercise their right to be full and active members of society. As a result of the work of Sense International (India), there are now 37 deafblind programmes in over half the states in India. Since 1997, we have made an enormous impact on the lives of many deafblind people and we are very proud of these achievements. We want to build upon our expertise and experience that we have gained to date in the next stage in our development to make an even bigger impact. We now have the organisational capacity to accelerate and expand our work and make even more significant and lasting difference in the lives of deafblind people.