

ASHA KA JHARNA

Half Yearly Activity Report (April 2020 to September 2020)

This mid-year activity report for the period April 2020 to September 2020 of **Asha Ka Jharna (AKJ)** special schools is aimed to depict, describe and list various activities undertaken with children, staff and community members during the preceding period. The report also illustrates the various events organized by the organization, visits of prominent personalities, awards, honors and accreditations received etc.

- ❖ COVID 19 caught all of us unprepared and magnitude of this kind of unprecedented pandemic threw up enormous challenge which is multifold given the nature of prevailing situation. To carry on relief measures coupled with physical distancing norms, we followed Government directives. As our project locations Jhunjhunu & Sikar at Rajasthan (India) fall into high risk zones with many cases of Corona patients' present and fairly high chances of community spread, administration imposed total curfew in our operational areas. Under this constraint and Near Zero Mobility, we executed following relief activities:
 1. We contacted every single family of our special children and counseled them about this disease and prevention steps. We also enquired of their needs. More than 30 families were linked to Government support & schemes. We followed up with authorities to ensure that all of them received Dry Ration Packs.
 2. In association with another like - minded benefactors and supporters, Asha Ka Jharna provided 250 dry ration kits worth one hundred and fifty thousand rupees to most needy families. One ration kit was sufficient for one week food supply to one family. We also distributed 52 kits to needy families of intellectually disabled children across three districts of Rajasthan.

3. We distributed more than 3000 face masks to persons manning front operations like Police personals, Health workers including ambulance teams, sanitation workers in municipal areas and CHILDLINE team.
4. 10 Ltrs of sanitizer solution was also distributed to cleaners manning garbage pickup vans.
5. We also provided our manpower support to organize cooked food distribution.
6. Govt of India had issued the advisory for creating Single Point contact for persons with disabilities. We continuously followed up with Rajasthan state govt. and requested principal secretary, social justice department to activate the mechanism in our state. With our efforts, state and district level nodal officers were appointed to provide all COVID related support including food, medical, shelter, counseling etc. to PWDs in Rajasthan.
7. We distributed Ayurvedic immunity booster 'Kadha' recommended by Ministry of Ayush to 500 families.
8. Our CHILDLINE 1098 Team at Sikar remained fully operational and active during these trying times responding to calls for children in need of care and protection. They managed to reunite missing children to their parents; provided milk, food and dry ration to desperate families and counseling support.

AKJ Alternate Strategy for Education Delivery during COVID

Special Measures to continue education of children were taken by us during COVID 19 Lockdown. Schools were forced to shut down vide Govt. Orders in Rajasthan from 15th March 2020 onwards but we ensured that education must not be compromised. We took a mix of remedial measures to enable children and families access our services.

1. Digital E-Learning (From March till September):

Our educators had initiated E-learning for their special needs children confined to homes. With the help of parents and siblings, they had been contacting children through video / voice calls and training them. Instructions were given to hearing impaired children through sign language and intellectual disabled children through work sheets and demonstrations. Regular home work was given. Our physio therapists also guided parents to do simple exercises with their children. Recreational activities like art & craft, dance & drama movement, Yoga, assisting in household jobs, gardening, flowering plants and so on were also practiced by children under the advice of our educators. Parents were much relieved accessing this crucial hand holding support by AKJ.

a. As decided by AKJ management during March third week, our senior technical advisor took school wise conference calls with all educators and oriented them about continuing training of children confined to homes with the help of family members. Few logistics like recharge on team member mobiles and basic procedure to conduct video calls were taken care of by us.

b. All educators recollected and noted down present goals being taught to their respective class children. They also called the parents to schedule convenient time slots for connecting the homes as few of them were busy in farms harvesting their produce.

c. Every day, one educator connected with three to five children through video calls or voice calls (if families or our staff did not possess smart phone or network issues). S/he takes parents and siblings on board by persuading them to accompany the child. For children with hearing impairment, curriculum or lessons in different subjects were taught through sign language with the help of

text books available at homes. Home work and practice exercises were given with families asked to monitor their wards. For children with intellectual disability; verbal & physical prompting, adaptive daily living, recognition of body parts, colours, household objects, prewriting & writing through work sheets, cognitive & social skill enhancement, story- telling and picking the concept, behavior modification etc. were taught.

Apart from academics, recreational and leisure activities were also done with children. Some indoor games aimed at fun, entertainment and learning were suggested to families. Skills such as drawing and painting, gardening, singing, dancing, playing instrument, support in household chores were encouraged during lockdown. We announced a sort of competition in which parent sent one minute video depicting such activity.

d. Our educators also designed and prepared question papers for home examinations. Children were told to be prepared for their annual exams. Revision and doubt clearing sessions were conducted online. Parents were given tasks to periodically make and check the study time table. Yearly assessment was done both online and by calling individual child to school post which s/he was promoted to next grade.

e. Educators had also been told to upgrade their skills at home through digital means. They got online ideas about how to make creative teaching and learning material for classrooms. New pedagogy and innovative methods of special education, use of visual & expressive arts in teaching, effective storytelling, engaging families, setting child centric goals etc. are few of suggestive topics on which we have asked them to explore.

Monitoring: We constantly monitored and recorded the home-based study program by all educators. Every week, three or more group conference calls with all staff lasting more than two hours each were conducted apart from individual mentoring support. Besides, they wrote the daily lesson planning and tasks done with children in their notebooks which was reviewed regularly by us. These would be appended to regular class files once schools reopen. Thus continuity was maintained.

Impact:

- We saw in one video that one child with intellectual disability; when told by his father that there was a call from his school teacher; immediately went inside and came out after wearing school uniform without being told so.
- A girl was seen confidently climbing up the stairs with the verbal prompting of her grandmother on field and our team member on phone.
- Children seen assisting their families in kitchen, sweeping & mopping, cleaning clothes, watering plants, eating their food without any help and so on after our counseling and intervention with them.

2. Small Group Teaching at School (From June Onwards):

When the Unlocked was declared and employees were permitted to attend their organizations by Govt, we changed our strategy and offered the parents to come to school along with their child on individual basis. Our educators had been imparting education to a focused small group (of three children max) for a duration of two hours at school premises itself. Most of the parents dropped and picked up the child themselves while we also arranged for skeleton transport services keeping social distancing and Govt. directives in mind.

3. Small Group Teaching at Home (Cluster Approach) (From June Onwards) :

Similar to above, we also innovated a cluster approach in community. Three children residing in same locality assembled at the home of one of the child where our educator visited them for two hours of small group teaching as per IETP. This methodology was used for children from very poor families. Transportation cost of our educators was borne by AKJ only.

4. One on One Teaching at Home (From June Onwards) :

This facility of one to one teaching at home was offered to those parents who were somewhat willing to pay our educator transportation cost. She took personal sessions for one and a half hours daily with the chosen child as per IETP and planning.

- ❖ During July, ten of our team members were trained in online ISL (beginner & intermediate level) certificate course spread over three weeks conducted by V-Shesh. All of them cleared the end term assessment with flying grades and competency. They are now better skilled to interact with children with hearing impairment and those with communication issues.
- ❖ As part of our convergence with other stakeholders, an immunization camp was organized by health department on 13th July at AKJ Nawalgarh where children living in near vicinity from zero to ten years were vaccinated against many life threatening but preventable diseases.
- ❖ During lockdown also, we had been assisting children through different means. New corrective aids for limbs got measured and delivered to two of our intellectual disabled children with locomotor issues. Now their mobility is much improved.
- ❖ A review meet with Ms Shabina Bano , Program Manager, THF was held on 15th July in which a stock taking of ongoing activities was undertaken through virtual media. All team members shared their workings and strategies to engage the children in meaningful way during these times. Challenges faced were also discussed along with probable solutions.
- ❖ CHILDLINE SIKAR managed by Asha Ka Jharna celebrated its fifth foundation day on 15th July. We have covered an eventful journey so far with more than 2000 children in need of care and protection supported by us. Learning & sharing workshop was organized with child welfare officers of three police stations and GRP; assistant director child empowerment; CWC member and media in attendance. Various issues in child protection were briefed upon and solutions envisaged. We urged each component of ICPS to join the dots. Cake was cut by a child (reason for our existence) and a 1098 sticker for pasting on public vehicle was released. We also met District Collector Sikar Mr Avichal Chaturvedi who had taken the charge only last week. We apprised him of our activities which he appreciated a lot. We also narrated few challenges in child protection to which he assured to look into. We requested to call DIstrict Child Protection Unit meeting

overdue for seven months now due to COVID-19. Our first interaction was highly positive.

- ❖ On 8th August, an exciting webinar on New Education Policy was attended and inputs provided by us. It was indeed a wonderful opportunity to listen from horses' mouth. Sector stalwart's Dr Anupam Ahuja, Aloka Guha, Bhushan Punani, Arman Ali along with Akhil Paul threw light in lucid manner on nitty gritty of NEP with reference to education of children with disabilities.
- ❖ On 9th August, a review meeting with Asha Ka Jharna team members was conducted. Surprise test on Indian Sign Language training and discussions on enabling our children to continue getting education during this pandemic through digital means , focussed group teaching , home based education and cluster approach were held. Let no child remain devoid of learning and social skill enrichment.
- ❖ On 11th August, Under National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction, we crafted and submitted a detailed action plan to make Jhunjhunu nasha-mukt. Being a task force member, action points with implementation schedules were explained by our chief functionary in district level committee meeting chaired by District Collector Jhunjhunu. From awareness raising to capacity building, participation of students to community push, medical intervention to counselling & rehabilitation, taking PRIs on board to media engagement - all our points were appreciated by the administration and are now part of official strategy to combat the menace of substance abuse.
- ❖ AKJ chief executive Sudeep Goyal was nominated as Executive Committee member at National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (NIEPID) by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Govt of India. We aim to get policies framed & executed to the best of our intention & abilities so as to get just & equitable space for persons with intellectual & developmental disabilities - Most marginalized & neglected section of our community. On 20th September, we attended first EC Meeting of NIEPID under the chairmanship of Dr Prabodh Seth, Joint Secretary, Govt of India. Many issues of national importance were

discussed and decided. We stressed upon developing innovative solutions, focusing on R & D and providing relief to families during COVID times. Also requested to establish CRC at Jaipur for comprehensive rehabilitation services to the community in this region. These were highly productive deliberations.

- ❖ On 4th September, we provided inputs in a webinar to finalize India country status report to WHO on protection of children from violence - an alarming issue in child rights. Our focus was on children/girls with disabilities specifically those having cognitive deficiency to comprehend the abuse they face at the hands of community & families equally.
- ❖ On 14th September, Under Accessible Elections for All, at district level disability committee meeting chaired by District Collector Jhunjhunu, we submitted our views and learnings of National Consultations held last year detailing measures to be taken to include persons with disabilities in the electoral process. Awareness generation, social media integration, designing barrier free polling booths, making special provisions for benchmark disabilities, appointing brand ambassador, activation of toll-free number & control room for grievance redressal, sensitization of polling parties – all our suggestions were well taken of.
- ❖ On 20th September, a webinar on attending sexual needs of children & adults with special needs by attended by 22 of AKJ team members. Expert Arpita Yadav delved into this vital but hidden topic in detail. She explained the nuances both theoretically and practically. Through intense interaction with participants comprising of parents and professionals, she dispelled many myths. Our team was now more competent to handle this issue both at school and counsel the parents at home.
- ❖ As part of achieving greater governance, Financial Tracker was finalized in collaboration with Tool Box India as part of our short-term strategic framework. We also interacted and initiated parleys with Dhvani for developing Goonjan software to be used for maintaining database of children and updating goals & progress made thereafter.

- ❖ An advocacy and sensitization session with parents was organized by us during which we informed them of legal guardianship and Govt entitlements. Detailed procedure was explained resulting in few online applications. We being LLC member processed these and LG certificates were issued to few children with intellectual disabilities.
- ❖ Children with intellectual disabilities at AKJ displayed some fine self-advocacy skills. A funny photo competition was organized by PARIVAAR NCPO in which one of our children Shahrugh submitted his camera clicks and bagged certificate & cash award. Another girl Rashmi presented her speech in a webinar held on 26th September among an impressive gathering of 100 plus participants. She expressed her thoughts on rights & responsibilities in a lucid manner independently in a very clear way.
- ❖ During the reported period, Asha Ka Jharna took part in two massive advocacy campaigns. During July first week, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt of India proposed dilution of Rights of Persons with Disability Act 2016 by proposing deletion of punishment clauses arising out of violation of human rights of disabled persons. We led the civil society in this region and made strong representation against this move by writing letters and raising our voice on social media platforms. Our collective efforts paid off and department shelved the idea.

Similarly, during September last week, we got the information that in the name of austerity measure, finance ministry was mooting the idea of merging The National Trust for the welfare of persons with ID , CP , ASD and MD with DEPwD. This would result in further marginalization of this neglected community which is at the bottom end of all disabilities and can not advocate for themselves. We again mobilized our accomplices and raised our protest with ministry and PMO.

- ❖ To keep the staff motivated and comforted during the COVID exigency, we had regularly transferred the salaries on time during entire lockdown period. Special health insurance was done of all team members. Personal safety kit comprising of Sanitiser, Face Shield & Masks (Disposable & Reusable) was provided to them. This was a huge relieving step for them.

❖ As a new normal, on line meetups, webinars, conference calls and learning cohorts were regularly organized by various stakeholders. We participated in these events as delegate as well as speaker. Few of these included:

- a) Draft CSR Rules By SRRF on 9th April 2020
- b) Executive Council Meet By PARIVAAR NCPO on 17th April
- c) Social Impact and Management By ISDM on 17th April
- d) Match Based Fund Raising By GuideStar India on 18th April
- e) Financial Management- During and After the Lockdown By Tool Box India on 22nd April
- f) Orientation of CHILDLINE frontline functionaries on Psychosocial Support to Children By CHILDLINE India Foundation on 4th May
- g) CBM India - UNESCO webinar on the impact of Covid19 on Persons with Disabilities" on 22nd May
- h) National Colloquium on " Are we Ready? Preparedness of Special Schools for Reopening By NIPIED on 4th June
- i) AVPN - Adobe International Conference on 10th June
- j) Sustainable Solutions for Persons with Disabilities: Educational and Rehabilitation Outreach By AIEFA on 13th June
- k) Rajasthan State Level NGO Meet By National Trust on 16th June
- l) Learning Cohort on Effective Digital Media Communication and Engagement By Tool Box & Social Lens on 2nd to 5th July
- m) Accessibility Standards Webinar By Enable Me Access on 3rd July
- n) PARIVAAR NCPO Meeting to Discuss Proposed Amendments in RPD Act on 6th July
- o) Why the Social Stock Exchange Matters for the Non Profit Sector By Omidyar Network on 9th July
- p) Child Safeguarding Workshop By CBM on 10th July
- q) Intelligent Fund Raising By CROWDERA on 17th July 2020
- r) Making Digital Education Inclusive By Vidhi Centre for Legal Rights on 20th July 2020
- s) Embracing Diverse Learners By SNDT Women University on 22nd July 2020
- t) How Accessible is Our Curriculum By SNDT Women University on 24th July 2020

- u) Universal Design of Learning By SNTD Women University on 31st July 2020
- v) National Education Policy By Child Rights Rajasthan on 05th August 2020
- w) National Education Policy By CII New Delhi Chapter on 06th August 2020
- x) National Education Policy By SENSE India on 08th August 2020
- y) Cohort on Business Continuity & Change Mgmt By Social Lens on 12th August 2020
- z) National Education Policy By NITI AAYOG on 22nd August 2020
- aa) Excel in Accessibility By Access for All on 30th August 2020
- bb) Disability Inclusive Agenda By Anjlee Agarwal on 30th August 2020
- cc) Cohort on Organization Development By Social Lens on 05th September 2020
- dd) Children Parliament By Pratyek on 09th September 2020
- ee) IT Section 80 G & 12 AB By GOODERA on 10th September 2020
- ff) Digital Dialogue on Monitoring & Evaluation By Social Lens on 12th September 2020
- gg) Shift towards Successful Digital Marketing By Social Lens on 19th September 2020
- hh) Decoding FCRA Amendment Act 2020 By FMSF on 29th September 2020

❖ During the reported period, national festival Independence Day ; Eid-ul-Fitar ; Shri Krishan Janamashtami were celebrated as low key affair keeping Govt. regulations in mind.

Special School 1 : Harlal Ka Kothi NAWALGARH - 333042 Phones 91-1594-223094
Special School 2 : Khemi Shakti Temple JHUNJHUNU - 333001 Phone 91-1592-237537
Special School 3 & CHILDLINE National Children Help Line No. 1098 (24 x 7) : Bhagat Singh Colony Nawalgarh Road SIKAR - 332001 Phone. 91-1572-256537 Rajasthan (INDIA)

Emails: sudeepgo@rediffmail.com
info@ashakajharna.org

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