# **OUARTERLY NEWSLETTER**

# <u>January 2022 – March 2022</u>



**School for Potential Advancement and Restoration of Confidence** 

(SPARC) India

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#### INTRODUCTION

School for Potential Advancement and Restoration of Confidence (SPARC)-India is a non-profit organization with its Head Office in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and has been in its existence for 25 years now. The Founder Director and Chairperson, Dr. Amitabh Mehrotra is himself having Cerebral Palsy (CP) with mild spasticity since birth and it was his cherished dream to work for the cause of disability. He did his Post graduation from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai and served Corporate and CSOs in Bihar and UP. Recently, he completed his PhD from Department of Psychology, University of Lucknow and was awarded PhD degree in Applied Psychology. At present he is nominated as member in Steering Committee of State Election Commission, Government of Uttar Pradesh and nominated as member (renewed) of State Coordination Committee on Disability. He is also member of State Advisory Board on Disability of Uttar Pradesh.

SPARC-India was formed in 1995 and registered in July 1996, as a voluntary organization which aimed to empower people with various disabilities especially people with CP. SPARC-India started its Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) program in the year 1996 for persons with disabilities (PwDs) in the urban slums of Lucknow. The thrust of the program was on health and medical rehabilitation, formation of Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs) / Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of PwDs& their families and to establish linkages with the government schemes.

In due course of time, SPARC-India gradually established Jyoti Kiran School (JKS) for children with CP in the year 2003. Recently, SPARC-India has been aligning itself to the philosophy of 'Inclusion'. It emphasizes that inclusive environments will help in minimizing segregations and deep rooted misunderstandings and prejudices between the children with disabilities (CwDs) and non-challenged sections of the society. In 2005, SPARC-India setup a Vocational Training and Placement Cell for PwDs to provide placement services to them. SPARC-India has immense experience in imparting vocational training and skill development programs for PwDs.

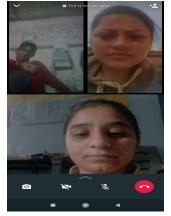
SPARC-India established Uttar Pradesh Viklang Manch (UPVM) to develop a support system for CwDs / PwDs to help them exercise their statutory rights and avail entitlements. SPARC-India has provided counselling to approx. 12000 community members, vocational training to about 2500 PwDs and has created self-employment opportunities for more than 1200 PwDs and their family members.

# JYOTI KIRAN SCHOOL (JKS)

#### RESTART OF ONLINE CLASSES

Due to the pandemic restrictions that were imposed by the govt. Jyoti Kiran School was closed for the offline classes and the online classes started from 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022 for the students so that their online education and online therapy sessions could resume. Students and parents were excited that the online classes were restarting and actively participated in them. The teachers and therapists discussed the time schedules of the students with their parents/guardians.







#### PEA POD PEELING ACTIVITY

*Pea pod peeling activity* was conducted as part of the online Saturday Activity on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022. The main aim of the activity was to improve the fine motor movements and eye contact in the students. Since the activity was conducted at home so the best available resource was the seasonal vegetable pea. Peeling of pea pods to obtain peas was a very interesting activity for the students and they enthusiastically participated in the activity. Some of the students were



supported by their parents and siblings in the activity. Pranjal Srivastava, Akshita Singh, Abhinav Gupta, Ritik Rawat, Nawed Akhtar, Pragya, Uvaish, Anshi Singh and Viccy Kashyap participated in the activity.

## **SPRING CLEANING ACTIVITY**

A *spring cleaning activity* was organized as part of the online Saturday Activity on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2022 for the students of JKS. All the students had to help their parents and siblings as much as they could in doing the daily work of their house like cleaning the house, folding the clothes, keeping the items of the house organized, cleaning



the stuff, dusting etc. The main aim of the activity was to do ADL activities which would not only help the students but also inculcate a habit of cleaning the area of living and a sense of achievement in helping their parents. The students actively participated in the activity and enjoyed the household work. Pranjal Srivastava, Deepali Gautam, Sivan Rajput, Raj Shekhar, Pragya and Adarsh Ranjan participated in the activity.

#### PALM AND THUMB PAINTING

*Palm and thumb painting* activity was organized as part of the online Saturday Activity on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2022 for the students of JKS. The main aim of the activity was to improve fine motor development and bring out the creative side of the students. Students participated in the activity with great enthusiasm. Some students who could not conduct the activity on their own were supported by their parents and siblings. Pragya, Uvaish, Anshi, Ayush Srivastava, Viccy, Ritik, Nawed, Raj Shekhar, Shivan, Deepali and Tauhid participated in the activity.



#### YOGA ACTIVITY

**Yoga Activity** was organized as part of the online Saturday Activity on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022 for the students of JKS. The students did various yoga pose and *pranayam* in the activity. Along with this the parents and teachers told the students about the various benefits of doing yoga and *pranayam* daily and how it increases immunity in the body to fight against various diseases. The photos and videos of the activity were shared by the parents in the WA group of their ward's class.



Pranjal, Tauhid, Suraj Yadav, Pragya, Anshi and Yash Maurya participated in the activity.

#### HOLI DRAWING / CARD MAKING ACTIVITY

Holi drawing / card making activity was organized as part of the online Saturday Activity on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022 for the students of JKS. The students according to their abilities made drawing of different things that represent Holi celebration. Parents and guardians not only supported them but also told them about the importance of the festival. Some students also made water gun (pichkari) out of paper. Pragya, Ritik, Shivan, Gungun, Deepanshu, Ayush Srivastava, Adarsh and Suraj Yadav participated in the activity.



## **PRESENTATIONS**

**Dr. Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India) participated in various webinars and meetings which were organized by various organizations on virtual platforms. The list of them is given below:-

#### STATE STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING ON ACCESSIBLE ELECTION

A *state steering committee meeting* on Accessible Election was virtually (on Google Meet) held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2022. The consultation meeting was held to identify ways to ensure accessible elections for PwDs. **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India) participated in the event.



## WEBINAR ON ACCESSIBLE VOTING FOR PWDs

A *webinar* (on Zoom) on "Accessible Voting for PwDs" was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2022 to motivate and facilitate accessible voting for PwDs. It is very important to ensure active participation of PwDs in elections and to include them in the mainstream. This session was moderated by **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India and Member of the State Steering Committee for Elections



in UP) and the convener of the event was **Dr Kshama Srivastava** (Director, Shubhasheesh Shiksha Avam Vikas Sewa Sansthan, Raebareli, Member of SNAC-UP, National Trust Member ZCC, Rehabilitation Council of India). The Key Note Speaker at the webinar was **Ms Smita Sadasivan** (Accessibility Consultant, Election Commission of India).

Ms Sadasivan in her address told everyone that there is a govt. order since 2004 for availability of ramp and provision for caregiver/companion to assist the PwD at the voting booth. Government has conducted various consultations with PwDs at both national and state level to identify the needs of PwDs. She further spoke about different facilities provided by govt. viz wheel chair, ramp, volunteer to help in navigation at the polling station, postal ballot, PwD app etc. She further added that a PwD who needs assistance in casting vote can fill form 14a which can be received from the presiding officer and also the caregiver/companion can immediately cast vote after the PwD. The session was attended by about 33 participants.

#### AWARENESS PROGRAM ON ACCESSIBLE VOTING FOR PWDs

An *awareness program* (on Google Meet and Facebook) on "Accessible Voting for Persons with Disabilities" was held on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2022 to motivate and facilitate accessible voting for PwDs. The event was organized by Office of The Chief Electoral Officer, UP in association with SPARC-India & Composite Regional Centre for Skill Development, Rehabilitation and Empowerment of



Persons with Disabilities (CRC)-Lucknow (PDUNIPPD, DEPwD, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India). The program was moderated by **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India and Member of the State Steering Committee for Elections in UP) and **Mr Ramesh Pandey** (Director, CRC) was the Chief Patron. The Key Note Speaker of the program was **Ms Smita Sadasivan** (Accessibility Consultant, Election Commission of India) and Resource Person at the event was **Mr B. D. R. Tewari** (Additional Electoral Officer, Govt. of UP). Ms Sadasivan spoke about the various facilities that were provided by the government to persons with disabilities for ensuring accessible elections.

#### **NATIONAL WEBINAR**

A *National Webinar* on "Resilience Building for young Persons with Disabilities" was virtually held on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. The webinar was organized by National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities (Divyangjan), (DEPWD, MSJ&E Govt. of India) Chennai. The resource persons at the event were **Ms Niranjana** (Clinical Psychologist, El&IPS Project, NIEPMD), **Dr J Sujathamalini** (Professor, HOD of Special, Education & Rehabilitation, Science Dean-Faculty of Education, Alagappa University, Karaikudi), **Mrs V R P Sheilaja Rao** (Former HOD of Special Education, NIEPID, Secunderabad) and **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Chairperson and Director of SPARC India, Lucknow). Dr Mehrotra gave a presentation on the topic "Resilience Building: Youth with Sensory & Motor Disabilities". He explained need for resilience and how to develop resilience in youths with disabilities and action areas. About 182 participants participated in the webinar.





#### VIRTUAL MEETING WITH IIT CHENNAI TEAM

A *Virtual meeting* (Google Meet) was held on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022 with IIT Chennai for understanding the role of Technology to improve the quality of lives of PwDs. **Mr Justin Jesudas** and **Mr Samson Daniel** from IIT Chennai, **Dr P K Seth** (Vice President, SPARC-India), **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India) and team

members of SPARC-India participated in the meeting.

Some of the points discussed in the meeting were:

- How digitalization can transform the lives of persons with disabilities (PwDs).
- Any available technology for HI which is available as everyone does not know sign language
- Any available technology for writing, hand coordination
- Any available technology that can read mind and express their thoughts (esp. for CP and Autism)
- Any available technology for students that can understand but are unable to clearly respond
- Tele-rehabilitation
- Accessibility of new available technology

Mr Yesudas shared that they have been working on assistive technology for the loco-motor needs of persons with disabilities. He added that details of problem statement could be discussed in future in presence of engineers. He also assured that he could share any other information if available on the above topics. Dr Mehrotra added that officially IIT Chennai could act as knowledge partners of SPARC-India in developing user friendly and affordable technology for children with disabilities and requested if a MoU can be signed with IIT Chennai in this regard. Dr Seth suggested that engineers or students of IIT Chennai could visit SPARC-India to better understand the concerns and develop technology accordingly.

## VIRTUAL MEETING ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING

A Virtual meeting (Zoom) on Vocational Training of persons with neurological disability was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022. The resource person in the meeting was **Mr Anil Joshi** (Retd. IIM Professional and President of Parents Association of persons with Mental Impairment at National level), who is also a parent of a Down syndrome girl. The meeting was attended by parents of some students of JKS and staff



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of JKS along with **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India). About 16 participants were present in the meeting. The main aim of the meeting was to understand the employability prospects for Neurological Impaired (NI) adults.

Following points were discussed in the meeting:

- How can we start the training of NI adults for Activities of Daily Living?
- How to groom their Social Skills so that they can be adjusted in society and employment environment?
- How to involve the prospective employers and corporate to provide placement opportunities and provide their CSR funds for training purpose?
- What kind of expertise is required to find out a specific skill of the student?
- How to make a development plan for the candidates in consultation with parents?

Students of parents of JKS discussed about the concerns and future of their children. Mr Joshi said that there is lack of time and focus due to non availability of infrastructure during growing years. Right time of intervention is needed for the NI children. Mr Joshi added that basic skills (read, write) can be compensated through technology based assistive devices. Some students are visual learners. He further added that examples may differ from case to case. Start focusing on letting the child becoming independent starting from home itself and do not become over protective of the child. Participation of parent in growth of a child with disability is very important.

He further added that it is necessary to identify the interest of the child. Vocation should be sustainable and should lead to earning throughout life. Every child has capability and the only need is to identify that capability and groom it to the fullest. Profiling of each child irrespective of age should be done and then set goals for the child. Employers even if are willing to hire a youth with disability would not want to hire someone who would not be able to do job for longer time.

#### ADAPT VALEDICTORY MEETING

A Virtual (Zoom) *Valedictory meeting* on *Six week's Training program on inclusion matters* was conducted by ADAPT on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022. **Ms Varsha Hooja** (Training Director, ADAPT) and **Dr Mithu Alur** (Founder Chair Person, ADAPT) organized the valedictory program. Dr Alur started the meeting by welcome speech and described the concept and salient



features of the Teacher's training program on Inclusion matters. Participants from 10 Countries (India, Bhutan, Tibet, Combodia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Srilanka, Tajakistan, Mangolia) participated in the meeting and shared their views and best wishes to the trainees. **Dr Amitabh** 

**Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India) was invited as guest. He addressed the passed out trainees to follow the concept of inclusion in their respective countries and communities. More than 90 participants were present in the meeting.

#### MEETING WITH IIT KHARAGPUR TEAM

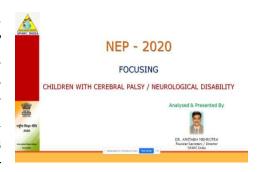
A Virtual (Google Meet) *meeting with IIT Kharagpur Team* was organized on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2022 to identify the future prospects of collaboration in regards to the volunteer participation of IIT Kharagpur students. **Ms Aaditri Vaibhav** (Secretary Community and Crisis Subcommittee, Students' Welfare, Technology Students' Gymkhana, IIT Kharagpur), **Mr Shival Ethape** (IIT



Kharagpur), **Ms Nidhi Basu** (Director, LOGICBOX Communications Pvt. Ltd.) and **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India) were present in the meeting. Ms Basu and Dr Mehrotra explained the programs that are currently running at SPARC-India and the areas of the programs where the volunteers of IIT Kharagpur can render support. Ms Basu suggested the development of Apps viz. SPARC-India App, Jyoti Kiran App and Livelihood App.

# NATIONAL LEVEL CRE WORKSHOP (VIRTUAL)

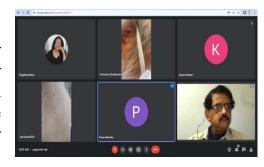
Rehabilitation Society of the Visually Impaired (RSVI), Lucknow Virtually (Google Meet) organized *a two day National level CRE workshop* on "Disability Rights and Status in India, Policy and Programs which was approved by Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), New Delhi on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2022. **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India) was invited as a speaker on the second day of the event. Dr



Mehrotra spoke on the topic "NEP 2020: focusing on Children with cerebral palsy / neurological disability". The convener of the event was **Ms Shraddha Srivastava** and the coordinator of the event was **Mrs Rinki Sharma**. About 25 participants were present in the meeting.

#### WEBINAR CONDUCTED BY IFRA

A Virtual (Google Meet) meeting was organized for Disabled Welfare Schemes and Expenditure in Uttar Pradesh on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2022. The meeting was organized by IFRA (Indian Forum for Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology). **Dr Amitabh Mehrotra** (Founder



Secretary cum Director, SPARC-India) is a member of the group and was invited to join the webinar. The objective of the meeting was to start the budget analysis in all departments and identify if there is a provision of 5% budget allocation for Rehabilitation of all Persons with Disabilities. It was mentioned that in this regard Andhra Pradesh is the only State which is practicing this. Total six members were present in the meeting.