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## **The Role of Ngos in Nurturing Inclusion of Visually Challenged Children in West Bengal**

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### **Abstract**

*The main purpose of the study was to define the role of NGOs in promotion of inclusion of visually challenged children in West Bengal. It was found that although various schemes have been initiated by various NGOs are working for the benefit of the visually challenged children, yet they are not fully benefitted from these schemes. So, while continuing with existing schemes and involvement of NGO in the field of nurturing inclusion of visually challenged children, efforts should be made to identify technically competent NGOs and enable them to assume a larger role in sync with government agencies in a significant manner. Inclusion is viewed in terms of promoting a holistic development of the child and providing equality of access to opportunities.*

***Key Words: NGOs, Inclusion, Visually Challenged Children, West Bengal.***

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### **Introduction**

It is recognized that NGOs have played a significant role in the development of inclusion for persons with disabilities worldwide. This has been done regularly in the absence of Government involvement and initially took an institutional, charity-based approach. Present day developments, however, favors a participatory, community based approach, complementing and liaising with Government plans and services, and working with all the stakeholders' groups. NGOs and Governments vary in their capacity to change their working practices to achieve these aims. Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) are difficult to define and classify due to the terms in consistent use. Non Governmental Organization, Non Profit Organization and Private Voluntary Organization are the most used terms and are used interchangeably despite differing definitions. These are very heterogeneous entities and range from large bi-lateral funding agencies operating in various countries. According to the UN (1945) "all kinds of confidential organizations that are autonomous from government control can be renowned as NGOs. NGOs cannot seek to moderate a nation's government in the outline of an opposing political party. NGOs also need to be non-criminal and non-profit." So the most common focus on 'orientation' and 'level of operation'. According to the World Bank, NGOs are "value-based organizations which depend, in whole or in part, on charitable donations and voluntary service," and in which "principles of altruism and voluntarism remain key defining characteristics".

Inclusion is seen as the wider reform of the education system to create a more effective education system and society. Actually inclusion is a pairing of philosophy that allows each student to feel

respected, confident and safe so he or she can learn and develop to his or her full potential. It is based on a system of values and beliefs centered on the best interests of the student, which promotes social cohesion, belonging, and active-participation in learning, a complete school experience, and positive interactions with peers and others in the school community. Inclusion such as inclusive education is based on the rights of all learners to a quality education that meets basic learning needs & enriches lives. Focusing particularly on Vulnerable & marginalized groups, it seeks to develop the full potential of every individual. The ultimate goal of inclusion is to end of all forms of discrimination & foster social cohesion (UNESCO, 1994.) from many sides. According to that view point of UNESCO, one of the most Vulnerable group that is touched by the study is visually challenged children. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (2008) that persons with disabilities should be guaranteed the right to inclusion education at all levels, regardless of age, without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity. With that principles, the special need community such as the visually challenged should have the right to access to pre-school, primary and secondary education, general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education.

If the necessary measure has been taken to meet this special need community, visually challenged person in the country should be able to participate in all sorts of programmed. The question is does all this happen in the reality? In fact, the Convention did make participation of the disabled as one of its principles, stating "The principles of the present Convention shall be:...Full and effective participation and inclusion in society", subsequently enshrining the right of disabled to participate fully and equally in the community, education, all aspect of life in the context of rehabilitation, employment, political and public life, cultural life, leisure and sports.

Many studies have already been done about the role of NGOs for challenged people such as, Mubarak Singh & Anupama Sethi considered the role of NGOs in Promotion of education of disabled. It is a case study of Jammu district. It was found that although various schemes have been initiated by the state government and various NGOs are working for the benefit of the disabled, yet they are not fully benefitted from these schemes. M. Thomas Kishore & R.K. Nagar (2011) discussed the Identification camps for persons with disabilities are conducted by both government and non-government organizations (NGOs) in India. The experience of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2005) showed that the structural support through NGOs in west Bengal. But very little study was found in the role of NGOs in the education of visually Challenged children. A.K.Mittal (2009) discussed the contribution of NGOs in post independent era for the education of visually Challenged children. C.D.Tamboli (2009) showed that Implementation of Inclusive Education of Visually Impaired Children by National Association for the Blind in Delhi.

But in West Bengal no study were known where role of NGOs in nurturing inclusion of visually challenged children. Therefore present study dug in that corner.

## **Significance of the Study**

It has been estimated that 6 to 10 percent of children in India are born disabled with the total number of disabled in the world standing at 10 percent of the entire population. According to **Census (2001)** the population of visually challenged people in West Bengal is given below table: 1.

**Table -1: Population of visually challenged people in West Bengal**

State	Gender	Rural	Urban	Total
West Bengal	Male	329861	139074	468935
	Female	280360	112778	393138
<b>Total=</b>				<b>862073</b>

Based on the above scenario of visually challenged person may face with various challenges. Therefore, they should be given an equal opportunity and right to access to the educational opportunity at all level. To achieve these goals, all government agencies, society and mainly NGOs should take a lead to enable them to overcome such obstacle. Unlike other state, West Bengal pays little attention for education and services for the visually challenged children. This people cannot use most services, products and facilities that one would take for granted. Visually challenged children in West Bengal are the most vulnerable group. The key focus of this paper is to discuss how inclusion programmed executed by the NGOs serving the visually impaired in the state. Based on the finding, we hope that eventually the data can be used as a significant resources and referral to the government and NGOs for designing a holistic model for inclusive learning for the differently able community. Consequently, differently able community will be able to enjoy and live as a effective and have full participation in the inclusion society. So the present qualitative study conducted by the investigator would throw lamp on the role of NGOs in nurturing the inclusion for visually challenged people.

## Objectives of the Study

Present study attempts at -

- To investigate the roles of NGOs in promotion for inclusion of visually challenged children.
- To share the current practices of NGO serving the visually challenged children in west Bengal
- To finding the how NGOs achieved the goal of inclusion for visually challenged children.
- To identify on how visually impaired can facilitate through NGOs.

## Methodology

### Interview

Interviews have been carried out with a few NGOs leader especially the leader from Alakendu Bodh Niketan and the principal of Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys' Academy. With such interview, they were sharing with us on how does the inclusion being carried out for the visually challenged children in this state. Of course, they did touch on some of the issue and challenges faced by the visually challenged pertaining the inclusion matters.

### Secondary Data

In order to discuss the inclusion within visually challenge community, there have a few important documents has been referred and used as a main source of data. The documents mention here is refer to the 2008-2009 list of proposal of state government. Based on the reports, we were able to see and analyze how the inclusion which implemented by NGOs to help the visually challenged to upgrade and improve themselves in the inclusive setting.

## Findings

The list of main NGOs and their purpose is given in Table- 2.

**Table- 2**  
**NGOs working of the visually challenged people for inclusion in Rural and Urban Areas of West Bengal with their project**

Sl. No.	District	Name of the NGO	Project
1.	24 Parganas	Ramkrishna Vivekanda Mission	Residential Special School for VH (Girl)
2.	Kolkata	Bikash Bharati Welfare Society	Running of Training cum Production & Physical Rehabilitation Unit for OH & other Handicapped in Jhargram.
3.	Kolkata	Bikash Bharati Welfare Society, Kolkata	Running of Training cum Production & Physical Rehabilitation Unit for OH & other Handicapped like VI, HI etc in Tarkeshwar.
4.	Jalpaiguri	Jalpaiguri Welfare Organisaition, Jalpaiguri	Special Education Centre
5.	Birbhum	Sri Sri Ramkrishna Satyananda Education & Charity Trust, Birbhum	Residential School cum VTC for VH
6.	Nadia	Karimpur Social Welfare Society, Nadia	School-cum-Training Centre for VH
7.	Siliguri	North Bengal Council for the Disabled, Siliguri	Spl.school for VI. Project at Jalpaiguri
8.	Kolkata	Voice of World, Kolkata, WB	Special School for VH
9.	Kolkata	Remedial Education Association Counseling of the Handicapped (REACH), Kolkata	Special Child Development Centre at Kolkata
10.	Kolkata	Alakendu Bodh Niketan	Spl. School cum VTC for MR & other handicapped.
11.	Durgapur	Society for Handicapped Programme and Education (HOPE)	Special School for Multiple Handicapped with VTC Component
12.	24 Parganas (S)	Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys Academy	Agricultural & Technical Training
13.	24 Parganas (N)	Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys Academy	Swimming Pool Project
14.	24 Parganas(S)	Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys Academy	Braille Press Maintenance

15.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Indian Red Cross Society, Dakshin Dinajpur.	DDRC
16.	Kolkata	Haldane Society for Eco-Research & Enterprises.	Braille Resources Centre
17.	Nadia	Blind Persons Association	School for VH by Helen Keller Samiti Vidya Mandir
18.	Howrah	Ananda Bhawan, Howrah, West Bengal	Special Education-cum-VTC for VH
19.	Kolkata	The Society for Comprehensive Reh Service,	Comprehensive reh of disabled
20.	Midnapore	Midnapaore Rehabilitation Centre for Children, Paschim Midnapore	Res. School for HH, VH & MR

## Analyses & Interpretation

The aims of this paper are to investigate and discuss how and what are the role play by the NGOs in nurturing inclusion for the visually challenged children in West Bengal. It also enlightens us how the lifelong learning activities took place within visually impaired community in the state. In order to get a clear picture of what and how the inclusion occurred. Analysis on 2008-2009 report the following works have been done by NGOs. Table- 3

**Table- 3**

### Provide services of NGOs in nurturing inclusion for the visually challenged children

<b>Services for Pre schooling</b>	
▪	Early Education and Training Centre
▪	Integrated Programme in Child Care Centre
▪	Special Child Centre
▪	Residential Special Child Care Centre
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Service</b>	
▪	Sheltered Workshop
▪	Supported Employment
▪	Integrated Vocational Rehabilitation Services Centre
▪	Integrated Vocational Training Centre - Day
▪	On the Job Training Programme for People with Disabilities
▪	'Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise' Project
▪	Sunny way - On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities
▪	Work Extension Programme (WEP)
<b>Residential Services</b>	
▪	Care and Attention Home for the Aged Blind
▪	Hostel for Severely Mentally Handicapped Persons with Visual Impairment
▪	Hostel for Moderately Mentally Handicapped Persons with Visual Impairment
▪	Supported hostel for mentally handicapped person with visually impaired
<b>Community Support Service</b>	
▪	Rehabilitation and Training Centre for Visually Impaired Persons
▪	Communication and Information Service for Visually Impaired Persons

▪ Social and Recreational Centre for the Disabled
▪ Self-help Organizations of People with Disabilities / Chronic Illness

The table above strongly indicated that NGO has created the inclusive learning opportunity to the Visual challenged people such as community. This was a great achievement for NGOs. In fact, continuous education and training always considered as a best approach to improve their social and economic status. It also helps the visually challenged persons to develop the kinds of skills as required in their daily living and at the work place. One of the important finding show that the visually challenged community are able to have an equal rights and opportunity to learn especially to those who have no formal education as well as those staying in the ruler areas. Again, it proven that NGOs has played an important roles to promote such inclusive learning opportunities.

It is proud to say that NGOs has put inclusion as one of the important agenda it their efforts to empower the community. In fact, NGOs have a very clear mission and vision to help the visually challenged people to live independently through inclusion. This finding proven that NGOs have taken some necessary measures to improve the quality of life among the visually impaired community.

### **Educational Implication**

As for any other group, education is critical to expanding the life prospects of people with visually challenged. In addition, the socialization of children with visually challenged through education assumes an unusually important role in societies such as Westbengal where social exclusion of PWD (Person with disabilities) is significant. Despite its importance, educational outcomes for children with visually challenged remain very poor. Illiteracy rates both for all PWD and for school-age visually challenged children remain much higher than the general population, and school attendance among school age visually challenged massively lags that of non-disabled children. A review of the current performance of NGOs in the promoting inclusion to get children with visually challenged into school and improve their learning outcomes follows. An overview of non-government initiatives in PWD education then follows, before conclusions and recommendations.

### **Conclusion**

As discussed above, we would like to say that inclusion has been nurturing within the visually challenged people in this state under the effort of NGOs. One of the important finding is the role of NGO is being recognized and should be given a credits. This study also has identified what the key areas of inclusion has been implemented especially at rehabilitation of visually challenged children. Such NGOs effort should be praised and perceived as a role model by others. This paper also recommended some suggestions to enable the visually challenged children to achieve the objective of inclusive learning like “learning doesn't stop at the age of children and teenager; it should accompany a man for his whole life. Therefore, the ideas of Inclusion and rights based are always being recognized and put it in a practice. All parties should remember that do not just talk and never come out with any concrete action. Our ultimate goals is enable the visually challenged persons to have effective access to general education programmed and continuing training opportunities to empower them to live independently. Government agencies, private sectors and others mainstream bodies should always put the special needs community as one of their important element in their developmental plan. Finally, we believe that the task of NGOs in nurturing inclusion to all children with disabilities (which, of course, includes the visually challenged) is challenging and daunting.

Properly managed and adequately supported NGOs hold the key to achieving this stupendous task within the given time-frame, in quantitative as also qualitative terms. The government and the corporate sector have to work in close partnership with NGOs in this regard.

## **Recommendation**

Some additional advice may serve as useful guidelines for NGOs to nurturing effective inclusion –

- NGOs may undertake and stimulate action research to identify new techniques and methodologies for providing visually challenged children unimpeded access to subjects like Mathematics, Science and Geography for which special facilities in regular schools are rarely available.
- Monitoring programmes on inclusive education and the special scheme of assistance to children with disabilities to ensure that the interests of visually impaired children receive due attention.
- NGOs may take the lead in cooperation with special educators from inclusive settings to widen the range of integrated sports and recreational activities for visually challenged children.
- Private sectors are encouraged to help NGOs to implement inclusion.
- NGOs may motivate and provide necessary specialist advice to the concerned scientific community and technology institutions across the country for undertaking necessary research and development activities for prototype development and large scale production of various technological devices, including low vision devices of various types.
- A vigorous awareness campaign may be launched in different districts to identify and detect visually challenged children at the earliest possible opportunity. The services of panchayat leaders/officials, health workers and ICDS functionaries may be utilized for the purpose.
- NGOs also need to tap more effectively the resources of organizations like National Institute of Open Schools for reaching out to visually challenged learners, currently outside the existing organized services, so that the out- of- school visually challenged population could be suitably benefited.
- Government should allocate certain amount budget through government annual budget to enable NGOs to carry- out inclusion programme.

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