

Vaani, in service of hearing impaired



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One out of every 1000 children born, is born deaf. An undiagnosed deaf child at 3 years of age will know about 25 words, compared to over 1000 words for a hearing child of the same age. Eighty one percent of the parents of a deaf child never learn to communicate with their child. About 530 schools in India educate around 50.000 children with hearing impairment in the age group of 5 to 18 years. The other children do not receive any formal education. Ninety percent of the deaf children grow up in hearing families with little or no experience of deafness.

Deaf children face a complete disconnect from the world around them. A feeling of isolation and desperate loneliness develops within the child. Vaani, a Deaf Children's Foundation, based in Kolkata came into existence to serve such hearing impaired children and their families in India. About seven years back in the year 2005 on August 9, this organization was registered as a Trust. This Trust emphasizes on the parents of deaf children, teachers and lay people need to understand issues around deafness which is very complex disability. Being deaf results in the inability to develop language which means that the deaf child does not have any means of learning or communicating. Establishing a mode of communication and thus on avenue for learning is crucial for the development of a deaf child.

Vaani supports the development of accessible sustainable services for deaf children and their families. Its model of service delivery is unique as it works in partnership with existing local agencies in the disability sector and strengthen their capacity to provide appropriate intervention to young deaf children and their families. The Trust provides support and training to families, teachers and community workers ensuring that the communication and learning needs of every deaf child are met.

Vaani's vision is to advocate for the rights of every deaf child to a full and complete life with respect and dignity. Its mission is to promote the entitlement of every deaf child to total and complete access to communication, education, protection and personal safety, equity and equality in all spheres and information and knowledge to reach his or her full potential as an individual and as a member of the society .

Vaani's mode of working is to support the empowerment of families of deaf children to advocate for more accessible and sustainable services for deaf children and young people. To promote the exchange of clear and balanced information between families of deaf children and professionals who work with them and create opportunities for them to come together, access information and develop their knowledge, to influence development practitioners and policy makers to include the needs of deaf children and their families in their work and establish partnerships with NGOs and strengthen good service delivery models to ensure their sustainability.

So far Vaani has reached over three thousand deaf children and their parents in the last five years with their news letter Lakshana published in Assamese, Bengali, English and Kannada. It has reached over 3000 families in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Gujarat and Karnataka at workshops seminars and group meetings. Vaani has conducted more than 200 training programmes for community workers, teachers and families of deaf children. It has designed training material for community workers and parents with deaf children. It has also sensitized over 4000 people from all walks of life about childhood deafness. It is also collaborating with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) to develop a curriculum for training of parents of deaf children.

Website: <http://vaani.in/>

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