



Deaf Children's Foundation

FRIENDS OF VAANI

E-newsletter | April - June 2011



VAANI SPEAK...

As monsoon sets in, we take you through the journey of Bipin Das, a Community Based Rehabilitation worker, whose dedication towards his work we admire.

VAANI looks forward to inspire more such people to work for our cause. It is people like them who give meaning to the work we do. We also bring to you the story of Massar – a queer case of life's unfairness – to share with you a story hidden in the hills of the Northeast.

And we hope to continue to be a voice for deaf children. Do support us. So that we can VISIBLY SUPPORT AN INVISIBLE HANDICAP.

All donations made to 'VAANI Deaf Children's Foundation' are exempt from Income Tax under section 80G of the IT Act, 1961.

Best Wishes,

The VAANI Team



Mary (on top of the wall) & her friends; Mary's brothers making brooms; The village of Massar

Massar is a picturesque village housing about 600 people in the East Khasi Hills in Meghalaya. Stairs made of stone going down the hills on one side of the road and up the hills on the other, are lined by little houses where dwell the inhabitants of this village. The village is, however, more known for a disability that plagues about 20 families than its beauty.

Massar, a village spread over two hills, has 43 deaf people, all of them belonging to the Nongsten clan. In what is one of the major problems in the village, and one that needs immediate intervention, the majority of the people of this clan suffer from progressive deafness.

One of the residents of this village is Mary, who studies in Class IV. Mary is the only member in her family who can still hear. But she too, is suffering from a mild hearing loss already. She responds well to loud sounds but does not hear softer sounds. Her disability is invisible. Often in course of a normal conversation she will stare at the person who is speaking to her. It is then that one realises that she is lip-reading. Her mother and her three brothers are all deaf and so is her maternal uncle who lives with them. The family makes brooms to sell for a living like several others in the village.

Mary doesn't talk much, but she tends to smile a lot. A smile, after all, is known to be able to cross the boundaries of all language.

VAANI HAS REACHED OUT TO...

March 2010 – March 2011

Deaf Children: **740**

Families: **1095**

Professionals: **2644**

April 2011 – June 2011

Deaf Children: **424**

Families: **356**

Professionals: **309**

“WE ARE VAANI”

VAANI, Deaf Children's Foundation is an NGO working to empower deaf Indian children and their families.

VAANI means 'eloquent in words, sound'. We believe that VAANI, Deaf Children's Foundation stands for 'sound of the soul', and exists as a platform for deaf children and their families to make themselves heard.

VAANI AND I...

BIPIN DAS is a Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) worker working with deaf children for the past five years. He works with Swabalambi, a partner of VAANI, Deaf Children's Foundation working out of the Dimoria Block in Assam.

Swabalambi is a cross-disability organisation and so, as Bipin puts it very simply, “Before VAANI's intervention, a disability was a disability, and I never thought a deaf child needs any kind of special attention among other disabled children.” As time passed, he realised it was tough to get his message across to the deaf child. He used gestures to communicate, but often ended up frustrated because he did not know what to do.

Today, it comes naturally to him to understand that fear, insecurity, isolation and loss of confidence form part of the attitude of a deaf child. He understands that a deaf child is different from other disabled children and needs individual attention.

Bipin has been working with disability for the past five years. After attending the capacity building programmes of VAANI, it surprises him today to think that even to him, deafness was invisible once. “Now I realise the communication gap, with the parents, peer group, community and the world around them. It is my job to bridge this gap.”

It is easy to spot the camaraderie between Bipin and 12 year old Rituraj, one of his students. Rituraj is a naughty child, says the teacher affectionately. Bipin has made an arrangement with Rituraj's school to let him be part of his learning process. The teachers and the principal seek his help if they have any problems communicating with Rituraj. He speaks to every new teacher to sensitise them to Rituraj's deafness.

Human beings are social animals. We all know that. To be social, one has to communicate. Most of us do not realise that hearing is the stimulus which creates the need in us to communicate. How does a child live a normal life without being social? It is people like Bipin who have understood how isolation affects children who are deaf, and are working hard help them connect.



The best teachers teach from the heart, not from the book.

