**“Leave no one behind…”- A step towards making inclusive education effective in schools.**

**Current Scenario**

Education for all has become an aggressive agenda of government and non-government organizations, especially in developing countries. Many programmes such as Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan (Education for all) and RMSA (Rastriya Madhyamik Sikshya Abhiyan- secondary education) have been launched as a result and have been successful to an extent in enrolling children in primary schools. The retention of children in schools however still remains a big challenge. This is especially true for children with disabilities in rural India.

**The Challenge**

Despite hardships, parents may be motivated to send their children to school if they encourage the academic growth and social development of their children. However, this is hardly the scenario when it comes to children with disabilities in rural India. In spite of the growth of inclusive schools, there is a lack of understanding and knowledge among teachers on managing children with disabilities. Moreover, schools are not adequately staffed to attend to children with disabilities, who often require more attention. Prevalence of designated speech therapists and sign language specialists is yet to be formalized in many communities and schools. An inaccessible school environment and facilities are yet more challenges. Such limitations not only deprive children with disabilities of academic education but their social life with friends and peers is also snatched away, leaving them isolated and restricted.

**Our Project in Response- Counteracting the Challenges**

Keeping these facts in mind, our project trains teachers to attend to children with disabilities, provides counseling to parents and teachers to understand the specific needs of children with disabilities, and focuses on creating physical accessibility features within the schools to ensure the smooth mobility of children with reduced mobility. We also are involved in the formation of support groups and networks working for the rights of children with disabilities. Forming a local youth base and orienting them on the needs of children with disabilities at school helps them cope with the curriculum and achieve more.

**Work Ahead**

Thus far, Aaina has been involved in this process in 6 districts of Odisha and mainstreamed nearly 600 children with disabilities. Aaina aims to expand its scale and reach out to another 1,000 children with disabilities in the coming years to increase their level of education and provide extra tutorial classes to ensure children meet their requirements. Our aim is the enrollment, retention and increase in level of education of more 1,000 children with disabilities in primary and secondary schools. In addition to the aforementioned activities, Aaina will be creating support structures at local levels. A group of young and middle-aged people will be attending to children with disabilities in and outside the classrooms as needed. The support staff will go through training and will be paid for their services. To make inclusion easier, events like Inclusive Sports & Cultural Programs in schools will also be organized. Children with disabilities will be encouraged to take part in extracurricular activities.

**Usage of Funds**

The funds will be utilized towards capacity development of volunteers, teachers, and staff, honorarium to new employees, creating an accessible environment, and reasonable accommodation for children with disabilities in cases where the schools do not have funds for this (e.g. a child with cerebral palsy might be in need of a standing frame along with special seat which generally schools do not provide). Pf a total estimated budget of $100,000, we have been able to raise approximately $20,000 so far and are further requiring $80,000 to enable 1,000 children to complete their schooling. The funds raised will go towards:

* Forming an adequate number of support centers at local levels with a volunteer base
* Capacity development of volunteers, teachers & staff
* To pay honorarium to support staff
* To create reasonable accommodation & accessible features, supplying special aids and appliances.
* To organize events to facilitate Inclusion-Inclusive sports & cultural programs.

**Impact of The Project**

At least 1,000 children with disabilities will be able to complete primary and secondary schools and will be eligible for higher study to contribute to society and live a dignified life. Their potential in all areas can be showcased to gain the acceptance with their disability.

**Appeal:** Education is the key to development, and inclusive education is a qualitative component that not only has an impact on children from the excluded community, but also helps all children at large. We strongly believe that children who LEARN TOGETHER, LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER. Let us not leave anyone behind! Let this message be viral and reach many of your contacts who are interested in creating change but are not aware of how. A society can be inclusive when many people know, understand, internalize and practice INCLUSION. To know more about our work, please log on to [www.aaina.org.in](http://www.aaina.org.in)

*Any amount of support has an immense impact on someone’s life! Isn’t that a reason to be part of this initiative? Keep forwarding this message and support the cause by donating through the Global Giving Open Challenge. It may not be a big amount for you but it is a BIG cause which will enable children with disabilities to lead dignified lives.*

Team AAINA, India

70/3530 (ground floor), Jaydev Vihar, Tel-91-674-2360630, Bhubaneswar, 751013

info@aaina.org.in, secretary@aaina.org.in, www.aaina.org.in