

## ***Crossing the Divide: Community work 2015-16***

Everybody can be great because everybody can serve. These words of wisdom by Martin Luther King Jr. reflect the innate power that we all have within us. This will to create a difference in the world, irrespective of your position is what is necessary to be upheld by Education trainers. This feeling will help them to surpass the multiple challenges and barriers they encounter in schools. These barriers are often created by society. One major challenge that educators of today are facing is that the social community at large is unaware of the correct and appropriate idea of inclusion or inclusive education. Inclusive education brings in all students in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students. Inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse learners – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning – are exposed to teaching strategies that reach them as individual learners.

According to UNICEF's Report on the Status of Disability in India 2000, there were around 30 million children suffering from some form of disability. The Sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT, 1998) reports that of India's 200 million school-aged children (6–14 years), 20 million require special needs education. While the national average of gross enrolment in school is over 90 per cent, less than five per cent of children with disabilities are in school.

The training of general teachers at pre-service and in-service levels should address the issue of education of children with disabilities, so that teachers are better equipped to work in an inclusive environment. Some of the issues in training that need to be addressed include the methodology to be adopted for identifying children with disabilities; classroom management; use of appropriate teaching methodologies; skills for adapting the curriculum; development of teaching–learning materials those are multi-sensory in nature; evaluation of learning; etc.

Sensitizing trainee-teachers right in the beginning of their training is an important way to achieve the idea of inclusion in its true sense. Keeping these objectives in mind, Rizvi College of Arts, Science, Commerce and Teacher Education designed and implemented a one week (7 days) plan to take a small step towards Inclusion. The college believes that engaged citizens lead to stronger

communities. This objective was realized through a carefully planned community service that was devised keeping in mind the essential elements of community work viz:-

### **Assessment of community needs**

Community voice is essential to bring about change and solve problems. The need was felt by the institution that the trainee teachers need to be equipped with dealing with issues of inclusion. Need analysis was reflective of the fact that the trainee teachers were not correctly informed of the concept and issues related to inclusion.

### **Education**

The trainee teachers were sensitized towards various disabilities and the concept of inclusion through modules developed by Ummeed Child Development Centre.

### **Meaningful action**

After successful completion of module, trainee teachers conducted an Awareness Generation Campaign at Bandra Station and helped people clarify any queries on Inclusion and Learning Disabilities.

### **Reflection**

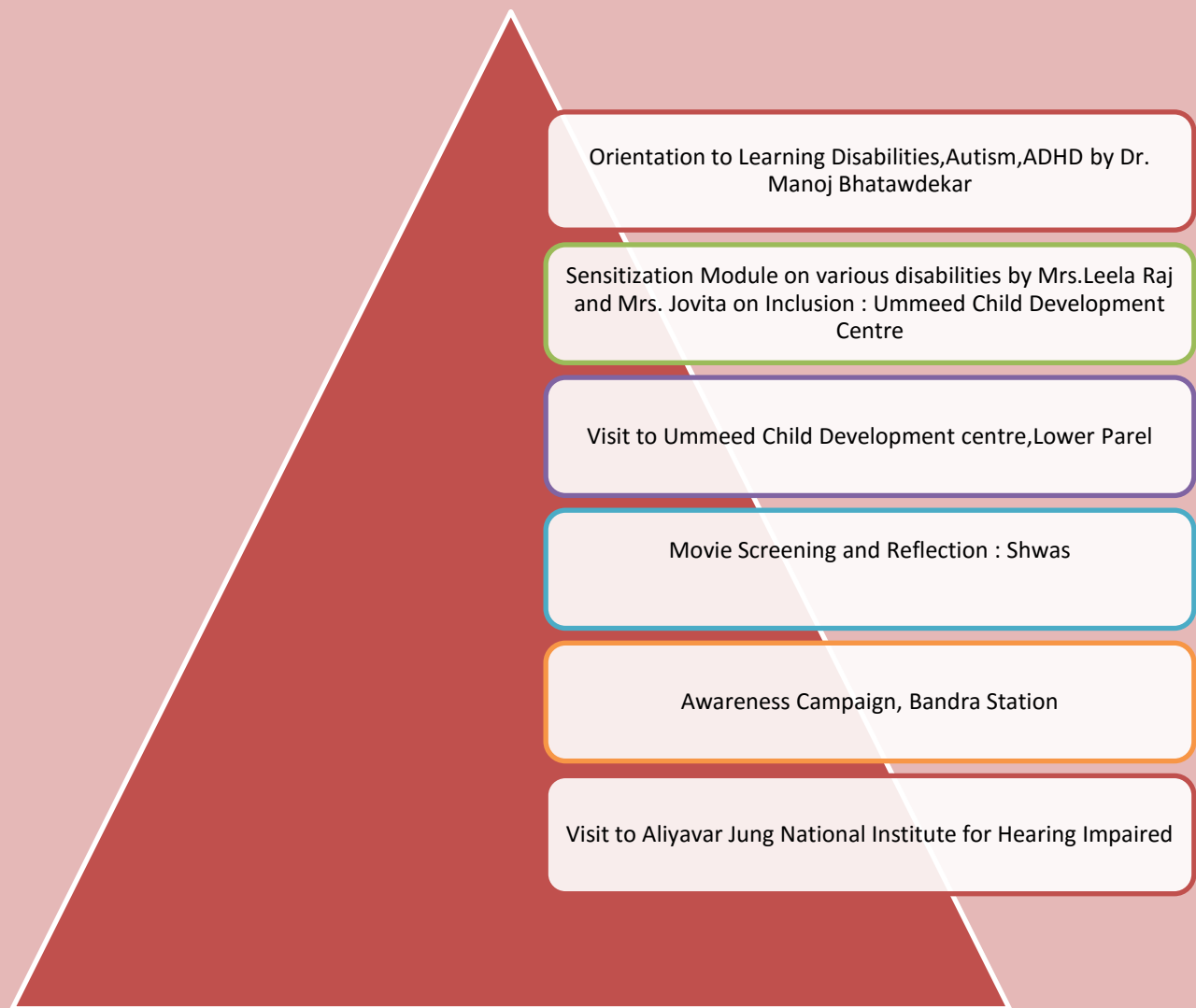
Reflection was encouraged throughout the 7 day schedule in the form of questionnaires, reflection sheets, reports etc.

### **Evaluation**

The effectiveness of the community service was gauged through careful evaluation at every step and a thorough feedback at the end of the week.

The plan was realized through collaboration with Clinical Psychologist, Dr. Manoj Bhatawdekar, Ummeed Child Development Centre, Mumbai and Aliyavar Jung National Institute for Hearing Impaired, Mumbai. The 7 day plan was itinerarised in such a manner that the trainee teacher's are better equipped to deal with the challenges that arise in the the process of

inclusion. Below is the itinerary of the 7 days activities that were carried out in tandem with our vision.



### **7 Day plan as implemented by Rizvi College of Education, Mumbai.**

Community participation has been elevated to a list of “must-have” elements in government, university, and training institutions. However, while described as delivering a myriad of benefits, it seems that we still know little of the extent to which these benefits are in fact delivered, to whom the benefits inure, and the mechanisms by which the benefits are conveyed. Rizvi College of Arts, Science, Commerce and Teacher Education has made a humble attempt towards community participation with a different framework because we believe

teachers are the agents for crossing the divide between their diverse students. To bridge this gap further, the teacher trainees will spread the message of inclusion during their internship programme in various schools in Mumbai.

*Reported By*  
*Dr. Radhika Vakharia*

*Children, who learn together, learn to live  
together."*

#### **References**

1. <http://www.unicef.org/rosa/InclusiveInd.pdf>
2. <http://uikeyclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Planning-Service-in-Your-Community-Five-Critical-Elements.pdf>