

Project: Comprehensive Special Education and Rehabilitation Services to Persons
with Deafblindness and their Families

Project Location: Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh

Project Timeline: October 2024 to March 2025

Project Report: October 2024 to February 2025



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Sense International India

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Introduction:

Deafblindness is a complex and challenging condition encompassing hearing and vision loss. This dual sensory impairment significantly impacts how children perceive and interact with the world around them. For children with deafblindness and multiple disabilities, everyday activities, from communication to mobility and learning, are shaped by barriers that others may not face. These children require specialized support to ensure they have opportunities to thrive and develop essential life skills. Without the support of family, community, and rehabilitation professionals, these children would lead extremely isolated and restricted lives. As Helen Keller poignantly said, *"Blindness separates people from things; deafness separates people from people."* With deafblindness, a child is often excluded from family, community, and their surroundings. Their world becomes limited to what they can experience through their fingertips.

The project title "**Comprehensive Special Education and Rehabilitation Services to 520 persons with deafblindness and their families (130 children and 390 family members for 2024-2025)**" is designed to enhance the quality of life for children and adults with deafblindness and multiple disabilities (MD) by developing specialized interventions. Our goal is to empower these children to engage meaningfully with their surroundings, fostering independence, social inclusion, and holistic development. The project, supported by the Mukul Madhav Foundation, commenced in October 2024, providing services to 146 children and adults with deafblindness and multiple disabilities through both center-based and home-based programs including 56 service users receiving direct services and 90 receiving support services as per their need.

Recognizing that persons with deafblindness and MD often require a multi-faceted approach, the project thrives on collaboration with families, educators, healthcare professionals, and community stakeholders. This holistic approach ensures that children and adults receive the comprehensive care and support they need. Families play a vital role in understanding their child's needs and are integral in implementing personalized interventions. Educators and other rehabilitation professionals, working in tandem, help tailor strategies that align with the child's needs, creating an environment that fosters learning, growth, and development.

At Sense International India, we are deeply committed to fostering the holistic development of children and adults with deafblindness and MD. Through the project, we aim to build the capacity of key stakeholders, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to create a more inclusive society for people with disabilities. This capacity-building effort focuses on empowering educators, healthcare professionals, and caregivers with the tools they need to identify, understand, and address the specific needs of children with deafblindness.

A key component of the project involves providing technical expertise to our partner organization, Madhya Pradesh Viklang Sahayata Samiti (MPVSS) in Ujjain. This collaboration ensures that MPVSS teams are well-prepared to offer targeted interventions for both children and adults with deafblindness and MD. By equipping the partner team with specialized knowledge and practical tools, we ensure that individuals with deafblindness and MD receive the personalized care they deserve. Looking ahead, Sense International India remains committed to expanding the reach and scope of this project.

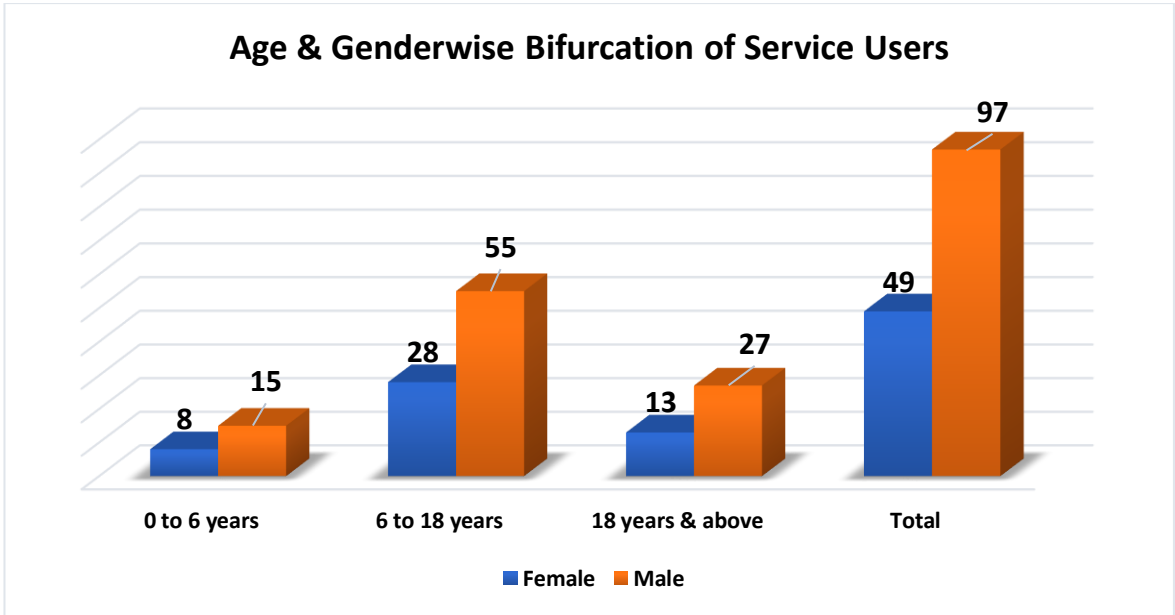
Specific Objectives of the Project:

Specific objectives aligned with the overall goal of the projects are as follows:

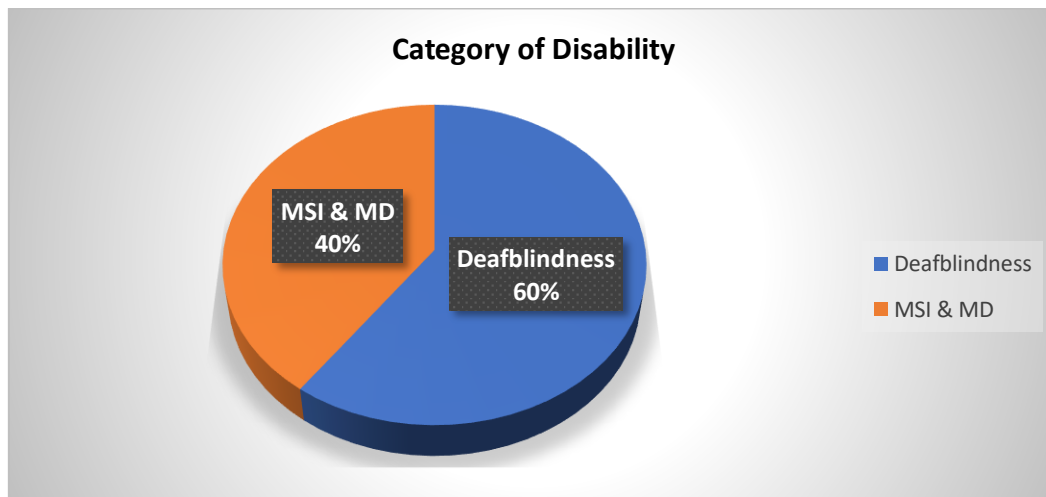
- Enhance and sustain the services at the State Deafblind Centre in Ujjain, MP.
- Provide comprehensive education services tailored for children and adults with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.
- Offer specialized rehabilitation programs focusing on the unique needs of these children.
- Create a central hub for educational support and interventions.
- Enhance the overall quality of life for children with deafblindness and multiple disabilities in the region.

Project Reach:

Currently the project reach stands at 146 children and adults with deafblindness and MD. The details of service users are given below-



Graph 1: Bifurcation of children and adults on basis of age and gender



Graph 2- Bifurcation of children and adults on basis of category of disability

Key Achievements:

The project addressed the multifaceted needs of persons with deafblindness and MD and ensured sustained and continuous support. Through comprehensive support systems, including functional activities, personalized education plans, and mobility training, the project is helping children and adult in developing the skills needed to lead independent and engaged lives. Furthermore, by fostering partnerships with families, educators, and other stakeholders such as ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, we are laying the groundwork for a future where children with deafblindness can fully participate in their communities, and enjoy a fulfilling life. We are impacting the lives of 580 children and adults with deafblindness and MD, parents and family members across Ujjain and nearby areas. Below are some of the key achievements-

1. Education and Rehabilitation Services

- 146 children and adults (97M, 49F) with deafblindness and MD received educational and tailored rehabilitation services as needed.
- 18 children and adults (14M, 4F) from low-income families received medical support, leading to improved health and greater participation in project activities.
- 15 children and adults (9M, 6F) underwent functional/clinical vision and hearing assessments, which guided the development of personalized intervention plans.
- 9 individuals (7M, 1F) with deafblindness and MD were provided with assistive devices, including hearing aids, wheelchairs and smart canes supporting them in mobility and improved hearing abilities.
- 8 service users received consistent, center-based physiotherapy services to improve their physical mobility and overall well-being.



Centre Based Services



Home Based Services

2. Sensitization of Govt. officials

- 5 officials from key government departments—including ICDS, Divisional Railway Office, Inclusive Education, and Medical College—were sensitized to the issues of deafblindness through one-on-one networking meetings. These meetings aimed to foster support from relevant departments, address the challenges faced by individuals with deafblindness and their caregivers in accessing services, and explore opportunities for collaboration between the partner organization and these departments. As a result of networking with govt. officials, team could support 15 services users to apply/ update and avail disability certificate.
- 30 MRCs educators sensitized on deafblindness and adapting curriculum as per needs of children with deafblindness and multiple disabilities. The training focused on establishing a referral network.

3. Capacity building of project staff to work with children and adults ensuring the project's continued effectiveness

- 8 team members from MPVSS encompassing project coordinators, special educators, community-based rehabilitation workers (CBR), and physiotherapists have been capacitated to

work with the children and adults and in project implementation through onsite training visits, mentoring visits, and project monitoring and evaluation visits. Through visits, the team was trained in conducting need assessment of the children, developing individualized education plan using S.M.A.R.T. goals, preparation of need-based teaching learning material, adapting the curriculum as per the needs of the student, use of different teaching strategies and documentation of the project activities.

'The project team is cooperative. The teams accept and follow the suggestions provided during the visit. It is good to see that the team stays in contact and contact me with regards to children performance and guidance when needed.'

Deepa Joshi, Mentor to MPVSS



Ms. Deepa Joshi, mentor visiting a child residence

- 2 special educators got the opportunity to attend 5 regional training on deafblindness and MD organized by the West Deafblind Regional Centre- Blind People's Association. The educators not only refreshed their knowledge on deafblindness, communication skills, assessments, laws, and policies but also learned from the experiences and good practices shared by rehabilitation professionals from other organizations.

'Through the regional training I gained insight into the scope of income generation activity and how adults from different organization are involved in it. I also gained information on implementation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and how other organizations are networking with govt. officials to link children and their families with govt. schemes.'

Ravi Tatawat, Special Educator

- 2 project staff including the project coordinator and a special educator completed Sense India's Web Ed. course on deafblindness enhancing their understanding of deafblindness.

'The Web Ed. course has helped me a lot in understanding deafblindness and how children with deafblindness with deafblindness can be supported in activities related to daily living and developing independent living skills. I also gained information on Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 and other govt. schemes for the welfare of persons with deafblindness and other disabilities. With the knowledge gained, I could relate more as compared to earlier with the caregivers and guide them.'

Leena Joseph, Project Coordinator

4. Capacity building of caregivers/ parents to work with children and adults ensuring the project's continued effectiveness

The project team at the ground level sensitized 435 parents and family members as per the needs of the child. Caregivers/parents receive continuous guidance both through centre and home-based visits to the service users. Caregivers were involved in the centre and home-based sessions which ensured their hands-on training to conduct the activities, understand the child's needs, as well as share their feedback with the team. Some of the basic aspects in which caregivers received training and guidance are as follows-

- Conducting activities of daily living in a manner that the child learns steps and tries to complete activities with minimal/ no support such as brushing, bathing, buttoning cloths, wearing own clothes, toileting, identifying own clothes, applying oil-talcum powder, menstrual hygiene, etc.
- Conducting independent living skills activities- engaging and guiding child/adult in household work such as cleaning room, identifying own utensils, cleaning table after lunch/dinner, washing utensils, washing own personal garments, buying groceries and making simple dishes.
- Training on basic stretching, sensory stimulation, and speech exercise- Caregivers of children and adults in need of therapy were also trained on basic stretching exercises, correct positioning, sensory stimulation activities which can be repeated at home with the use of available resources within home.

5. Efforts under Network and Advocacy initiatives:

A strengthened network of caregivers and adults with deafblindness is essential to provide ongoing support, promote inclusion, and ensure the empowerment of persons with deafblindness and MD. MPVSS, Ujjain organized State Level Network and Advocacy meeting with support of network partner 'Digdarshika' in Bhopal on 29th Nov. In total 35 caregivers including 4 persons with deafblindness and MD attended the meeting. The meeting provided much-required platform to the caregivers and govt. officials to interact, address grievances and update on disability welfare schemes. The meeting also encouraged adults with deafblindness to share their experience of using the govt. schemes.



Ms. Jyoti from Railway Divisional Officer addressing caregivers on facility offered to persons with disabilities by the railways

Programme Plan till March 2025:

Apart from the regular activities, following major activities will be implemented till March 2025.

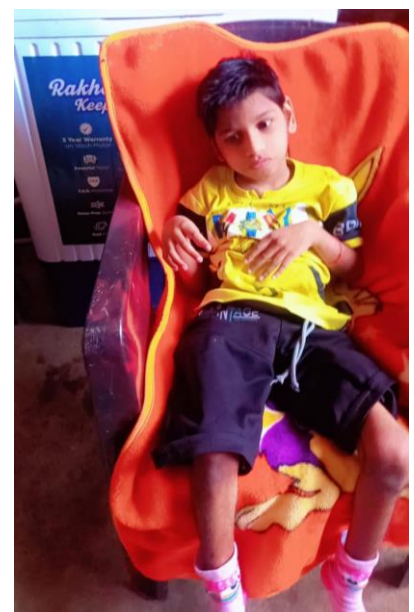
1. Capacity building of project coordinators, caregivers, special educators and adults with deafblindness and MD through theme-based National trainings from 17th-20th March 2025.
2. Clinical and functional assessment of children.
3. Distribution of need based assistive devices to children and adults.
4. Networking visits to disability-based organizations in other districts to create awareness and strengthened rapport.

Impact Stories:

A Journey of Progress and Hope Through Early Intervention

Dev Das, from Ujjain is 10 years old. He has congenital visual impairment, cerebral palsy, no speech, and sensory issues as a result of birth asphyxia. His family belongs to low economic strata. His father is the sole earning member in family of 5 members and works as a labourer. The team identified Dev during a survey. Before receiving any intervention, Dev would spend most of his time either lying in bed or in his mother's lap. As a result of cerebral palsy he was unable to hold his neck up, and his muscles were very tight, making it difficult for him to stretch or move his legs.

Identified through survey, Dev has made significant progress as result of continued intervention. He is now able to hold his neck up and tries to sit with support. With constant guidance and training his mother now actively conducts motor skill activities at home and has also learned basic exercises. Dev now responds to light-up balls and loves spending time with his siblings.



Apart from therapeutic intervention and specialised session by the educator, Dev has been provided with a CP chair and MSIED kit through ALIMCO. He also benefitted from the regular nutrition and medical support.

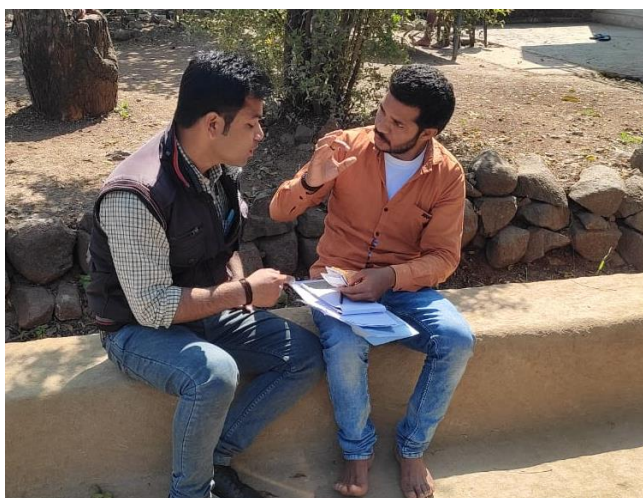
Ajay Dapen: A Journey Towards Independence and Empowerment

Ajay Dapen, a 26-year-old from Ujjain, lives with his family and has faced challenges from birth due to profound hearing loss and low vision. Growing up, Ajay's disability made communication and socialization difficult. He would spend most of his time sitting idly at home, without any means of expression or engagement with the world around him.

Ajay's journey took a significant turn when he joined MPVSS, Ujjain 'Sparsh' centre for persons with deafblindness and MD after being identified through a survey. Before joining, Ajay had no social interactions, no way of communicating, and seemed disconnected from his surroundings. However, since entering the program, his progress has been remarkable. Ajay has begun to communicate with his teacher using facial expressions and objects. He can now understand and follow instructions, perform money concepts, and engage in basic home management tasks.

His parents, especially his mother and grandmother, have been instrumental in his progress, helping him practice new skills and providing emotional support. His parents are very happy with his progress, expressing that their son is now happier and has the desire to run his own business one day.

Ajay aspires to become independent in all aspects of his life. He follows his teacher's instructions attentively and cooperates well in the learning process. His parents also share this hope, wishing for him to live a life of autonomy and self-sufficiency.



Looking ahead, Ajay's goals includes working on enhancing pre-vocational skills, such as purchasing items at wholesale prices and enhancing his understanding of money. His educators are focused on ensuring that Ajay continues to develop the skills needed for independent living, particularly in managing his basic needs. Through skill-building training and support from family, Ajay is gradually moving towards a future where he can thrive independently.

Financial Overview:

Payment released by MMF during the relevant period	INR 1500000/-
Actual Expenditure Incurred till December 2024	INR 719422/-

Sustainability plan:

To ensure the continued impact and benefits of the project beyond the implementation period, Sense International India continues to build capacity of project team and organization in aspects covering working with persons with deafblindness and MD, project management, and fund raising. Apart from organization development, the project team at ground level is training caregivers through both centre and home based visits to ensure sustained work with the children. Stakeholders such as health workers at grassroots level, Govt. officials and rehabilitation professionals from other like-minded organizations have been networked with to create awareness on deafblindness and MD, linking service users with welfare schemes and create network of referrals

