

**Project Title: Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Educational
Services for Persons with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities**

Project Location: Salem, Tamil Nadu

Project Timeline: January 2024-December 2025

Project Report: January 2024- January 2025



Submitted to:

Mukul Madhav Foundation

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Introduction:

In Salem, Tamil Nadu, persons with deafblindness and multiple disabilities often face significant challenges in accessing education, healthcare, and rehabilitation services due to a lack of awareness and limited specialised support. Sense International India, in collaboration with the Mukul Madhav Foundation, has taken significant strides to bridge these gaps and improve the quality of life for these individuals. The 1st phase of the project, which spans from January 2024 to December 2024, aimed to provide comprehensive rehabilitation and educational services that enhance independence, communication, and overall well-being.

This initiative operates through a structured combination of centre-based and home-based services, ensuring that each service user receives personalised support tailored to their needs. The programme's primary focus includes early identification, therapeutic interventions, skill development, and advocacy efforts, all of which contribute to the long-term empowerment of persons with deafblindness. By working closely with families, educators, therapists, and government stakeholders, the project has created a strong ecosystem of support that fosters sustained progress.

Beyond direct services, the initiative has been instrumental in sensitising local communities, training professionals, and advocating for policy-level changes to enhance the inclusion of persons with deafblindness and multiple disabilities in mainstream services. Strengthening networks among families, educators, and service providers has been crucial in building a sustainable support system that ensures continued development and access to resources.

This report highlights the key progress and impact achieved from April 2024 to February 2025, underscoring the transformative changes brought about by the project in the lives of individuals with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.

Specific Objectives of the Project:

The following objectives were established to guide intervention strategies:

- **Strengthen Early Identification and Intervention.** Enhance community outreach and screening mechanisms to ensure early detection and timely intervention for children and adults with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.
- **Enhance Service Accessibility.** Expand the reach of therapy, education, and rehabilitation services through improved centre-based and home-based programmes.
- **Enhance daily living skills, fine motor abilities, and sensory processing among service users.** Implement structured therapy sessions focusing on essential skills to improve independence.
- **Ensure effective implementation of Individualized Education Programmes (IEPs).** Develop and monitor personalized learning plans structured to each service user's needs.

- **Capacity Building and Skill Development.** Strengthen the competencies of special educators, therapists, caregivers, and community volunteers through structured training modules.
- **Strengthen advocacy efforts and networking with stakeholders.** Build collaborations with policymakers, NGOs, and government bodies to promote inclusivity and awareness.
- **Policy Advocacy and Stakeholder Collaboration.** Engage with government bodies, policymakers, and allied organizations to improve policy integration and funding support for deafblindness services.
- **Promote Inclusive Communities.** Conduct awareness campaigns and community-driven initiatives to foster social inclusion and reduce stigma.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making and Impact Evaluation.** Implement structured monitoring systems to track service user progress and refine intervention strategies based on evidence-based practices.

Project Reach: Details of service users:

Age Group	Male	Female	Total Beneficiaries Impacted
0-6 years	3	0	3
6-18 years	17	5	22
18+ years	3	0	3
Total	19	5	26

Key outcomes and Impact

A. Transforming Lives through Identification and Support of Persons with Deafblindness and Multiple Disabilities

- Identified and provided specialized support to **26 children and adults (21 males, 5 females)** with deafblindness and multiple disabilities, ensuring they receive essential interventions.
- Identification efforts through **screenings and 4 assessment camps** led to the identification of 22 children, of whom **8 were enrolled** in the project, **ensuring targeted interventions that enhanced access to specialized care and helped mitigate developmental delays.**
- Through community outreach programmes at **Anganwadi Centres, Government Schools, and NGOs**, the project **bridged gaps in service delivery** for vulnerable children, **enhancing inclusion** within mainstream education and health services.



- **More than 150 stakeholders** (special educators, therapists, Anganwadi & ASHA workers and social workers) were sensitized, **strengthening the ecosystem of support** for individuals with deafblindness

B. Enhancing Quality of Life through Centre-Based and Home-Based Services

The project activities are implemented through home based and Centre Based activities. The impact of some the activities under these modes of services are given below.

- **Improved mobility and posture** for **8 individuals** (7M & 1F) through **regular physiotherapy**, enhancing their ability to perform daily activities with greater independence.



- 5 service users (5M) have benefited from speech therapy, leading to enhanced communication skills and improved social interactions.
- 2 service users (2M) benefited from occupational therapy, resulting in improved daily living skills and enhanced motor coordination.

- 3 children received early intervention support, leading to measurable improvements in motor skills and cognitive functions.
- 21 service users (16M, 5F) received nutritional support, contributing to better health outcomes and overall well-being.
- Medical support enabled 7 service users (6M, 1F) to receive essential healthcare, overcoming financial barriers and enhancing their quality of life.
- 14 clinical assessments led to the development of tailored Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), ensuring personalized learning and rehabilitation strategies for each child.
- The distribution of assistive devices improved the independence and daily functioning of 9 service users (8M, 1F), enabling them to lead more active and fulfilling lives.

C. Strengthening Expertise through Capacity Building of Project Staff and Special Educators

Capacity building is an integral part of the project to ensure the quality of service for service users in the project. The major impact of capacity building programmes are narrated below.

- Enhanced the skills of **project staff and special educators** through participation in **regional and national training sessions** on deafblindness and multiple disabilities.
- **Specialized mentorship and guidance** were provided through on-site visits, reinforcing best practices in specialized intervention strategies, improving the quality of intervention strategies.



- The **South Regional Training on Mental Health** enhanced awareness and practical skills to address the psychological needs of service users and their families.
- Exposure visits to leading disability centres like **Spastic Society of Tamil Nadu** provided hands-on learning experiences.

D. Empowering Families for Sustainable Support through Capacity Building of Parents and Family Members

- 15 caregivers (11M, 4F) were trained in home-based rehabilitation, leading to greater confidence and competence in caregiving.

- Parents gained expertise in functional assessments, communication strategies, and daily living skills, enabling them to support their children's independence and well-being.



- Expert mentorship transformed parental engagement, ensuring sustained, informed support for children with deafblindness and multiple disabilities.

E. Strengthening Networks of Families, Educators, and Adults with Deafblindness for Advocacy and Systemic Change.

Three local network meetings fostered stronger connections among families, professionals, and policymakers, amplifying advocacy efforts. The State Level Network and Advocacy Meeting in Chennai led to increased policy engagement, improved accessibility to government support schemes, and collaborative strategies for systemic change.

Programme Plan till March 2025:

To sustain and expand the impact of the project, the following will be implemented by March 2025:

1. Continue provision of rehabilitation services on need basis to children and adults with deafblindness and MD.
2. Expand therapy interventions to additional service users. Strengthen home-based and centre-based therapy programmes to reach a wider group of beneficiaries.
3. Strengthen partnerships with medical institutions for affordable healthcare. Establish MoUs with hospitals and diagnostic centres for concessional services.
4. Continue networking with like-minded organizations, govt. dept., community based health workers i.e. Anganwadi workers, ASHA workers etc. to expand reach and strengthened ties.

Sustainability Plan

To ensure continued impact and benefits, the following sustainability strategies will be adopted:

Capacity Building and Knowledge sharing:

- Establish ongoing training programmes for caregivers, educators, and medical professionals to maintain and enhance skills in supporting individuals with deafblindness.
- Develop a mentorship framework to ensure experienced professionals guide and train new personnel in the field.

Community Engagement and Policy Advocacy:

- Strengthen parent support networks for continuous peer interaction and shared learning.
- Engage with policymakers and advocate for sustained government support to improve service accessibility.
- Establish a volunteer programme for continued engagement.

Resource Mobilization and Infrastructure Development:

- Form long-term partnerships with local organizations and sponsors to secure financial and logistical support.
- Enhance referral mechanisms and collaborations with healthcare providers to ensure uninterrupted access to medical and therapeutic services.

Monitoring and Evaluation for Impact Measurement:

- Implement a structured impact assessment framework to measure progress through periodic evaluations.
- Utilize data insights to refine therapy interventions, educational strategies, and overall service delivery.

By implementing these sustainability measures, Sense International India and its project partners aim to create a long-term support system ensuring that individuals with deafblindness and multiple disabilities continue to receive comprehensive care and opportunities for holistic development beyond the current project cycle.

Hope Story: K. Nithyashri's Path to Learning and Confidence

K. Nithyashri, fondly known as Nithya, was born on 4th October 2008 in Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu. She lives with her parents, grandparents, and younger brother, K. Mani Shankar. Her father, Kumar, is a farmer, while her mother, Senthamarai, is a homemaker.

Diagnosed with deafblindness at the age of one, Nithya faced significant challenges, especially in communication. Initially enrolled in an inclusive school, she struggled as there was no

specialised support available. Her family, unaware of schools that could meet her needs, believed such facilities were only found in big cities like Chennai and Bangalore.

In 2024, during a visit to Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, a doctor referred them to National Charitable Trust. Following this recommendation, Nithya joined the **Centre-Based Direct Service Programme** on 24th May 2024.

Before Intervention

Before joining the programme, Nithya faced several difficulties in communication and learning.

- **Limited Interaction:** Due to her communication challenges, she found it difficult to express her needs, making social interactions limited.
- **Struggles in School:** Although she attended an inclusive school, she did not receive the support required for her learning and daily activities. Without specialised assistance, she was unable to fully grasp lessons or communicate effectively with her peers and teachers.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Living in a village, her family was unaware of the existence of schools and programmes catering specifically to children with deafblindness.

These challenges left Nithya with a limited learning experience, and she had few opportunities to develop independence in daily activities.

During Intervention

With one-on-one sessions provided by a special educator, Nithya has made significant progress.

Key improvements include:

- **Better Communication:** She now uses total communication methods, making it easier to express herself and understand instructions.
- **Academic Skills:** Nithya has learned to read place names written on public transport.
- **Practical Knowledge:** She can now identify different vegetables grown on her family's farmland.
- **Family Support Services:** Her family received assistance in obtaining medical facilities, social security schemes, a BPL card, a ration card, and a disability pension.



After Intervention

The improvements in Nithya's communication and learning abilities have been a source of happiness for her family.



- **Increased Curiosity:** She now asks questions and engages more actively with her surroundings.
- **Independence:** Her ability to recognise written names and objects has helped her become more confident.
- **Parental Involvement:** Her parents regularly seek feedback from educators and actively support her learning process.

Reflecting on her journey, her parents share:
"Initially, we struggled to find the right

support for our daughter. However, after enrolling her in the programme, we have seen remarkable improvements in her communication skills. She is learning to read, identify vegetables, and ask questions. Our sincere thanks to National Charitable Trust and Sense International India."

Future Goals

The educators plan to focus on:

- **Improving Communication Skills:** Helping her express herself more clearly and confidently.
- **Academic Progress:** Supporting her in preparing for her 10th standard examinations.
- **Technology Skills:** Encouraging her interest in using computers.



Nithya's progress has been possible due to the dedication of her parents and the guidance of **Mrs. Mahalakshmi, Special Educator.**

With ongoing learning and encouragement, Nithya continues to build her confidence and skills each day. She is gradually becoming more independent in her daily activities, improving her communication abilities, and expanding her knowledge. With the dedicated support of her family and educators, she is steadily working towards achieving her goals and shaping a future where she can navigate the world with confidence and self-reliance.