

## **School on wheels, Kalam Express**

During the study to conceptualize this idea of school on wheels, it was noticed that various children with Special needs living in slum, rural and rehabilitation colonies of the city who cannot commute to schools for attaining education and also require different therapies because of their physical limitations. There was a need of such novel concept for those who cannot afford it and are confined to their homes, and the need is to include them in the mainstream society. It was also studied that one of the factor i.e. the inability of the parents to provide such care due to lack of resources and awareness leads to neglect of these children

School on wheels, a mobile school-cum-bus called Kalam Express, which aims to provide quality education to children with special needs, right at their doorstep Kalam Express an initiative of Indian Red Cross Society, U.T., Branch, Chandigarh aims to promote, develop and then maintain the skills needed by children with special needs to function in their homes and in a social setting. This is a mobile Educational cum Rehabilitation unit for Children with Special Needs living in slum, rural and rehabilitation colonies of the city who cannot commute to schools for attaining education and also require different therapies because of their physical limitations.

During past one year and four months ,

- The team has identified 294 CWSN that qualify for this assistance.
- The team is currently catering 205 children in the city slums .
- Of them, they have helped 52 children to get admissions in various government and six kids to special schools such as Vatika in sector 19, Chandigarh.
- Daily visit per day is 9 to 11 children

School and education boards coordinates and audits the services of Kalam express to ensure the quality education gets delivered to needy children at their doorstep and end up getting the admission to schools

There were several challenges faced while implementing this scheme:

1. High Cost involved for setting up infrastructure and running this scheme
2. Spreading the reach and awareness of this scheme among the citizens of Chandigarh specially the Children with Special Needs living in slum, rural and rehabilitation colonies of the city who cannot commute to schools for attaining education
3. Identifying the CWSN for assistance.

It is resolved by:

- issuing of public notice by publishing in the leading news papers. Spreading awareness by distributing of pamphlets and brochures about the scheme. Awareness through various other channels like Radio, social media handles like facebook, Twitter etc
- Resources or teachers who were ready to serve for this purpose.
- Educator & a physiotherapist have been identified equipped with audio visual and tactile teaching aids like Braille kits, toys, special Oro Motor kits etc. The team goes door to door in slum areas to provide education to special children who are unable to attend regular school.

A team of Special educator & a physiotherapist have been visiting these children in the mobile unit equipped with audio visual and tactile teaching aids like Braille kits, toys, special Oro Motor kits etc. The team goes door to door in slum areas to provide education to special children who are unable to attend regular school. The service is free of cost and has helped many children improve & even made them capable of attending regular school. Strategy is to cater to visually impaired, hearing and speech impaired, mentally challenged children and provide this service free of cost and help children improve & even made them capable of attending regular school. Also to explore various teaching methods to various kids depending on the IQ of the child. For physically challenged children, a set of basic movements is done to ascertain which way the joints can move after proper assessment by the physiotherapist. The families are taught the techniques and are asked to regularly practice it with the kids.

Issuing of public notice by publishing in the leading news papers. Spreading awareness by distributing of pamphlets and brochures about the scheme. Awareness through various other channels like Radio, social media handles like facebook, Twitter etc. Aim is to reach to every corner of the city and provide education to Children with Special Needs living in slum, rural and rehabilitation colonies of the city. The community is also supporting this noble cause by donating stationary items, wheel chairs, commode chairs etc for these children. Working closely with parents in order to enhance independence & social interaction of these special children.

The various areas covered under Kalam Express are Maloya, Dhanas, Manimajra, Mauli jagran, Bapu dham, & Colony no. 4. The positive response to the service & need for more such units to cater identified CWSN, Indian Red Cross Society has a plan to expand the service. The new units will focus on reaching out to more children in other areas.