



Reflections and  
Beyond  
Disability

## Introduction

This brief is prepared for AVI's sixth Partners Forum to be held in Chennai on 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2013.

CRUSADE's 'Reflections and Beyond on disability' addresses the issues of disability in the two blocks of Sholvavaram and Minjur in Tamil Nadu. This brief provides a background on disability in the areas of our work, implementation strategies, and case studies.

People with disabilities around the world, especially in the developing countries, are among the poorest of the poor. Poverty and disability are interrelated. Poor people are more likely to have disability because of the conditions in which they live, limited opportunities and discrimination.

In general, disability interventions focus on reducing social discrimination and bringing people with disabilities, into the mainstream of society so that they can participate in daily life—attend school, go to work, raise a family, access services and institutions—like all other citizens. They look forward to a full integration in society where people with disabilities are socially accepted citizens who can contribute to the socioeconomic development of the country.

People with disabilities deserve quality of life through increased knowledge. Knowledge includes access to information through education, training, and research.

In the few years of our work with people with disability, we have created awareness and educated the community on disability and ways to overcome the hindrances caused. The people with disabilities from the two blocks have fewer facilities to access health, rehabilitation, support, education, and employment. We have addressed different barriers that people with disabilities face – attitudinal, physical, and financial having done justice to those within our reach.

CRUSADE wishes to take you through some of the impacts it has been able to achieve in the field of disability. This demonstrates the success of such projects in the community. Nevertheless, we have faced challenges.

We hope that these stories will lead to a better understanding of the myriad challenges faced on the ground by the people with disability.

Thank you

CRUSADE TEAM

## A beginning

### *Aim:*

CRUSADE aims to identify and transform the life of people with disability to enable them to lead a life with dignity and self-reliance.

### *Objective:*

For CRUSADE, working with the poor and transforming their way of life has been the main objective. CRUSADE was very keen to incorporate disability issues in poverty reduction strategies and programmes.



In this context, CRUSADE first step into paving the way for the people disability began in 2008.

CRUSADE formed two groups to facilitate the people with disability at Panchayat level to exercise their rights. We initiated two such groups in 2009, one each in Sholavaram and Neithavoyal with 10 and 14 persons respectively. CRUSADE provided help in opening their bank account and arranged transport for the groups to visit the District Collector on individual as well collective capacities.

Today these two groups have grown into 30 and the number of members is 324.

CRUSADE followed the following methods to work towards disability in the community:

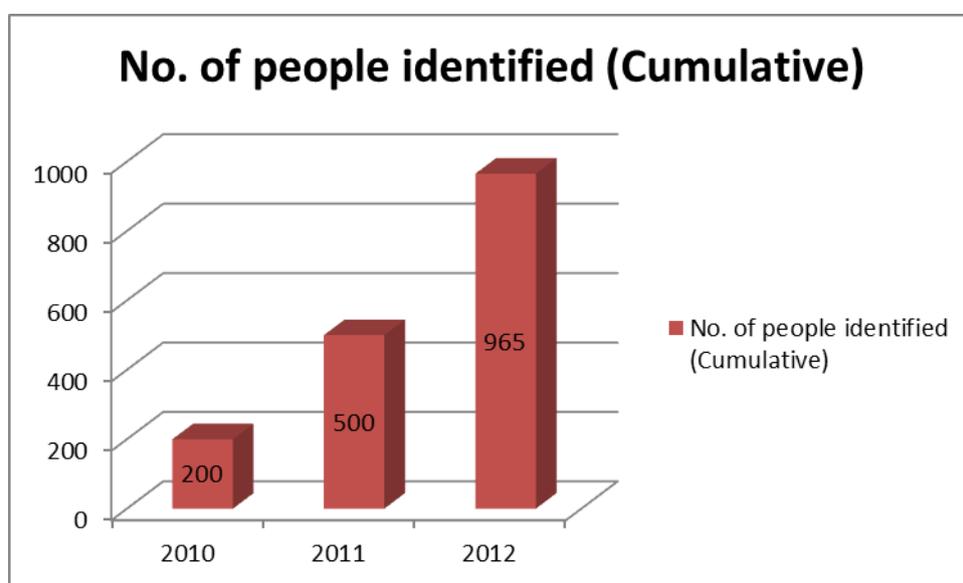
- Identification
- Training on rights of disability
- Assisting in obtaining government schemes
- Providing proper and affordable medical care
- Creating income generation opportunities
- Renovating houses

## Identification of People with Disability

Our survey in identifying people with disability enabled us to carefully plan and support the needy.

The following table illustrates the number of people identified from 2010 – 2012:

Year	Number of people identified (Cumulative)
2010	200
2011	500
2012	965



After conducting the survey, we send the differently abled persons – either physically or mentally challenged, in batches to the Training & Rehabilitation Centre at Chennai to assess the extent of their disability. This exercise enables them to get the National Identity Cards to have access to different Government schemes.

The following table indicates the number of people benefitted through different schemes of CRUSADE:

Schemes	Supported by CRUSADE
ID Cards	643
Govt. Jobs	-
Tricycle	-
Walking sticks/ Crutches	7
Hearing Aid	-
Income generation-loan	14
Income generation-grant	10
Sewing machine	1
Educational scholarships	-
Monthly allowance	-
Old Age Pension	-
Medicated sandals	1
Housing	8
NREGS - National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>684</b>

# Profiles of Progress

## Disability is not a barrier to Dayalan

Dayalan lives in Kumarasirulapakkam village with his wife and an adopted son. Naresh is in seventh standard.

Dayalan, aged about 45 has studied up to third standard. He is found to have orthopedic problems. His wife Saraswathi aged 42 works under the MGNREGP scheme.

Dayalan wanted some work to make both ends meet. Through our revolving fund, we gave him Rs 10,000 to buy a cow and a calf.

Now the cow gives him 3.5 litre of milk every day is able to make a profit of Rs 50 per day.



## Tale of struggling parents

It is enough of a challenge being poor in rural Tamil Nadu, but having a daughter with disability is something else altogether. Just ask Muniammal. This 60-year-old woman from the village of Sholavaram has an uphill task taking care of her daughter - Rajeswari who suffers from frequent Generalized tonic-clonic seizures. Rajeswari is dependent on her parents and accompanies them even on their work.

Dhanapal and Muniammal collect firewood for "Yagasala" (a sacrifice pooja conducted by Hindus). They earn Rs 90 to 120 per day. "We get this money as advance for our daughter's medical expenses," says Muniammal in between collecting firewood. "We have nothing left out of our salary at the end of the month. But, all we need is Rajeswari to get better, says a tearful Muniammal."



Rajeswari has previously attempted to get Disability Identity Card, without any success. However, with CRUSADE's efforts, she was able to get the ID card. This helped her to apply for the maintenance fund to the District Differently abled Rehabilitation Center. Rajeswari now receives a monthly allowance of Rs 1000, which is of great help to her parents.

As Rajesawari's parents are in a desperate situation, CRUSADE helped them in getting Government Funds as well plan to provide a loan from Revolving Fund meant for Special Groups.

## New House and New Life for Padma



Only small children could stand in side this house. When it rained, the house was flooded and during summer – the insects found it a cooler place to relax. That is where Padma of Athur village lived a few months back, with her son, who is hearing and speech impaired. Though Padma has her Identity Card for Govt. jobs, she does not go for work. Her son is a rag picker and barely earns anything.

When Padma could not live in the house anymore, she approached CRUSADE. With her contribution of Rs 1000 and CRUSADE's of Rs 7500, we helped her renovate her house.

**Padma's  
new  
house**



## Repairing his life successfully

Sudhakaran's hands work swiftly repairing a customer's bicycle. His hands move very fast and with an accurate concentration, he repairs the bicycle. Looking at him working swiftly, one would not believe that Sudhakaran is a person with disability.

While talking to the team of CRUSADE, he also negotiates with another customer who has come to hire his bicycle.

Sudhakaran did not want to seclude himself with the disability. Taking the support of CRUSADE, he began this income-generating activity. CRUSADE gave him a loan of Rs 5,000 to expand his business.

Sudhakaran has about five bicycles, which he gives on hire. This brings him an income of Rs 300 per day and repairing cycles give him Rs 2000 per month.

With the support of CRUSADE, he has submitted an application to the government authorities to get a tricycle for him. Sudhakaran says, "My parents are old and I do not want to be a burden. I want to go out buy my tools and also help my mother with her groceries."

Repairing the bicycles makes him occupied and rejuvenates his life from boredom. He says, "I am a relieved and content person wanting to make my parents happy."



## Balraman shops for innovative ideas



**B**alraman's shop adorns a colourful look with all the snacks hanging around. There is a hustle and bustle going on with children inquiring the price of each snack. You could find very few shops in Kanniyampalayam and Balraman earns more than Rs 2000 per month.

Balraman is unmarried, aged around 24 years. He has orthopedic problems and is not able to walk properly. He

has two sisters and two brothers. His sister is married and the other brothers are working.

Balraman's mother helps him with the activities of the shop, which is of great help.

CRUSADE gave Balraman Rs 5000 towards expanding his shop and today he has plans to invest more. He wants to be an agent for mobile recharging and TV network. These are his dreams for the future. Balraman can cycle and goes to the next town - Minjur to purchase things for this shop.

Balraman is thankful to CRUSADE for transforming his life. He is able to demonstrate a significant progress in his life.

## Enjoying the break from school

Anbu 12 years and Dilli Babu 10 years are chirpy, cheerful but enjoy missing school. Since they attend a regular school, they find it difficult to follow the lessons and seem to run away from school quite often.

The mother too is not stable and finds it very difficult to manage to run the family. She goes for work under the MGNREGP scheme.



With the efforts of CRUSADE, both the boys receive a monthly disability allowance of Rs 1000 each. This support is of great help to the family and the mother is keen that both these boys at least get some basic education.

## A place called home

**N**agabhushnam does not sleep during rainy days in order to protect her three children from drenching. Finding a safe corner to sit, she cuddles her children and hope the rain would seize. The thatched roof has seen its end.

In addition to her misery, one of her daughter, Sunitha is mentally challenged. Her husband passed away two years back due to kidney failure.



Nagabhushnam lives in Attapalayam village working on the MGNREGP scheme of the government. If she has to go to work, either her daughter Manju, 10 years misses school or her relatives oblige to take care of her mentally challenged daughter.



She is very happy today and says, "It's very good now – there is ventilation, no leakage and my children can sit and study comfortably."

## New roof for Raja and his family

**R**aja though 22 years behaves like a small child. He eagerly looks at some of the children playing in his neighbourhood. Alamelu, his mother, looks at him with a heavy heart. "He is mentally challenged from his small days" says Alamelu with lots of concern. His father Ravi, aged 48 years, rears seven goats. Raja's sister is the sole breadwinner. She works in a factory and earns Rs 1800 per month.

CRUSADE staff while identifying the people with disability for support, came across Raja's family. With CRUSADE's effort, Ravi gets Rs 1000 as monthly disability allowance. We realized their house is in a bad shape. After the initial visit and gathering of details, CRUSADE has renovated their house.



## Taking care of her goat silently

Krishnaveni and her husband Rajendran share the joy and sorrow with each other in a special manner. They are a hearing and speech impaired couple. Their son works as machine operator at a paddy-harvesting unit.



Krishnaveni and Rajendran are not able to do any work due to their impairment. They find it extremely hard to manage their expenditures. CRUSADE, after learning their difficulties, provided her with a goat that yielded a kid recently.

Krishnaveni is enthusiastic about the progress and spends time taking care of her goat.

## A ray of hope for Devi



– from earning to helping Devi in her household work.

Life is bleak for Devi – with the roof of her house leaking during rainy season. Her attendance to MGNREGP Scheme is irregular due to domestic chaos.

CRUSADE, after evaluating her situation, has decided to renovate her house.

Devi struggles to prepare the meal for her four children. Her elder daughter heeds to Devi's request in between playing with her siblings. Devi, aged 40 is partially blind.

Devi lives at Attapalayam village. Her husband who was an astrologer passed away in early 2012. Trouble began to Devi from that time. Her husband took care of everything when he was alive

## Way forward

CRUSADE and its team members, together with their funding partner, are glad to have provided support to the people with disability in Minjur and Sholavaram blocks. CRUSADE identified 965 people having various forms of disability and provided support to 684 people from the two blocks of Minjur and Sholavaram from 2010 to 2012. Yet, there remains a large, and rapidly growing, unmet need for care and support.

Our experience in working with the people of disability has helped us identify the following barriers that exist in general and particularly in the areas, that CRUSADE works:

1. Inadequate policies and standards
2. Prevention mechanism
3. Negative attitudes of the people
4. Lack of provision of services
5. Problem with service delivery
6. Inadequate govt. funding
7. Lack of accessibility to information

Due to the above barriers, the poor rural village people experience:

1. Poor health outcomes
2. Lower educational outcomes
3. Economically inactive
4. Higher rates of poverty
5. Inability to live independently or participate fully in community activities

CRUSADE is of the opinion that it needs to concentrate on the above areas to overcome the problems the people with disability face. Keeping this in mind, CRUSADE plans to increase two more blocks in Tamil Nadu. This would open a completely new world of opportunities for people with disabilities, children, and their families.