

# A BRIEF REPORT ON THE STEPPING STONE SCHOOL FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

[I block, No: 179/A, Gnanavinayanagar street, MMDA colony  
arumbakkam, Chennai – 600106, Tamil Nadu, INDIA]

During February – 7<sup>th</sup> – 1975, late Mr. Nanal (a retired headmaster), late Mr. George and Mr. A.S. Dhanapal (Electrical Design Engineer of Indian Railway) came together to start a school for Mentally Retarded Children at Kilpauk, Chennai – 10, the common factor which bounded these three gentlemen of divergent background was that each of them had mentally retarded children and there was no ‘special’ school in their vicinity to train their special children.

Ms. Cicily George, wife of late Ms. N.J. George had special training at Bala Vihar, Chennai – 10 ( A Tamil Nadu government social welfare organization ) to train and manage mentally retarded children and so under her secretaryship and supervision the Deepa school for mentally retarded children was started in May 1974 with only five children at the back verandah of Mr & Ms. George first floor rented residence at 425, Kilpauk garden road, Chennai-10

When the owner of this rented house objected, we shifted the school to one of the rooms at Mercy Home Kilpauk (a catholic institution for destitute orphans) for sometime and there after to another independent rented house at Thiagappa Mudali Street, Kilpauk, here too the owners greed to increase the rent for the rented accommodation he provided with unhygienic surrounding cattle shed near by made us to search for our own land and building to house our school.

We formed the Deepa Society for retarded children with the parents of the retarded children themselves its members and got it officially registered vide certificate of registration of societies (under act XXI of 1860) Sr. No.79 on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1978 by the registrar of societies, Chennai north District, government of Tamilnadu.

We were able, of course with great difficulties, to mobilize funds from various individual & social clubs in and around Chennai and also from France and Germany and by God's help to continue our own school building at the above address with a built in plinth area of 2000 sq.ft. It has a hall, three class rooms, one consultation room, an office room, kitchen & toilets with playing area at the rear.

Among the foreign donors the continuation from a school run by the Secours Catholique of France in Paris sending their school annual day collection at their ice cream stall amount in nearly to Rs.80,000/- and the timely and major financial aid sent by M/s ASW (Aktionsgemeinschaft solidarische Welt C.V) aiming for world peace & having their headquarters at Berlin by regular installments from March 1980 to August 1982 aggregating to Rs. 2.89 Lakhs, are worth recording with deep felt thanks.

Ms. Ruth Neuwirth of M/s ASW came all the way from Germany to take part in the inauguration of new school building by Hon.

Dr. H.V. Hande, the then minister of health, government of Tamilnadu, on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1983.

As Deepa school became popular for its Selfless service with kind staff and good results its student strength increased. We started getting not only mentally retarded children but also speech defective and hearing impaired children. And this made it necessary to change the name of our school from “Deepa School for mentally Retarded children” to the “STEPPING STONE SCHOOL FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN” from 1<sup>st</sup> September 1992.

The social welfare Department of the Government of Tamilnadu has been kind enough to include the students of our school to travel in all the state transport corporation buses free of charge along with one escort, vide G.O.No. MS-829 dated 24.07.1989.

The financial activities of both the Deepa Society for Retarded Children and the Stepping Stone School for Handicapped Children are audited regularly every year by Chartered accountants and IT returns are submitted.

On admission, every child is evaluated by a team of specialists (like specially trained Teachers, Psychologist, Speech Therapist, Physician etc.) and after their assessments, individual training programmes were chalked out for a particular child based on its needs of capacities.

Since Deepa Society as a whole is run only by the parents of the handicapped children for the benefit of the handicapped ,we pool all our energy to give the best training under ideal environment to our children with out any bias of Caste, class or creed.

But of late the parents voice their anxiety about future when they become old and inactive or when Nature take them away from this world. They desire for a roof over their children’s head, food for their hunger and cloth to cover their shame until the state makes the necessary statutory provisions and protect its handicapped citizens.

**By constructing a 1000 sq. ft hostel accommodation in the first floor of our existing school building, a hostel for the handicapped children can be started to fulfill the above urgent need. When worked out, the estimated cost of the proposed hostel for the handicapped children for the above address comes to Rs. 25 lakhs inclusive of civil structure, furniture, cooking utensils etc. Details of the estimated cost along with lay out of the proposed lay out is available on request. The plan approval is obtained from the government.**