

**Press release** - For immediate release

April 2016

**UK charity builds a school for children with disabilities**

UK charity sewa UK are proud to announce the opening of a residential school for tribal children with disabilities in India.

The building of the school was made possible due to the generosity of the people of UK

We are pleased to announce that Bob Blackman MP will formally inaugurate the school on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Bob Blackman Conservative MP and Chairman of APPG for British Hindus met with the International co-ordinator of Sewa International Mr Shyam Parande on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016

Shyam (based in Dehli, India) briefed Bob Blackman on the work of Sewa International and various projects in India. The discussions led to formally inviting Bob to the inauguration of the Divya school in Jawhar.

The Divya school is the first project following a decision by sewa UK in 2010 to focus its attention on helping People with Disabilities (PWDs)

Previously the school (known as Gulmohar School) housed 50 children in 3 dilapidated rooms with meagre facilities

The Divya School will provide a cosy environment for 100 children with sufficient space to carry out all the activities in dedicated classrooms. The school will also have large play areas, and separate residential quarters with ample room for each child.



**L – R Chandrakant Sharma Social worker UK | Rt Hon Bob Blackman MP for Harrow East  
Shyam Parande - International Coordinator for sewa International**

## **Notes to Editor**

### **DIVYA SCHOOL at Jawhar**

The residential school is situated in Jawhar in the district of Thane which is about 100 kms from Mumbai.

The moving spirit behind the Gurudev Trust (organisation that runs the Divya School) is Pramila Kokad an educationist and a committed social worker.

She derived the inspiration towards social work from her late father who used to advise his children to devote one hour each day for the cause of selfless social work.

She graduated with a degree in special education from Pune. She was offered teaching jobs in large cities such as Thane and Mumbai but she was determined to work in the most backward areas of Thane District.

In 1984 she met Vasantrao Patwardhan, a visionary and a social worker. Vasantrao invited her to join a school for the deaf and dumb that he had then started in Jawhar. She served that institution as teacher and later principal for over two decades.

Over the years she became aware of the difficulties that tribal children with disabilities faced.

She observed that those with visual impairment and those that are mentally challenged among them needed special care. These two conditions make up more than 50% of all disabilities among the tribal communities in Maharashtra.

She vowed to take up this cause after retirement and started Gulmohar School (now Divya) for Blind and Mentally Challenged Children in Jawhar in 2007.

Pramilatai has remained single and has devoted her entire life to the cause of educating the tribal children with special needs.

In recognition of her untiring and selfless social services she received the Award for Best Individual and Institution Working for the Cause of Persons with Disabilities from the President of India in 2009.

Her mission was to have a school offering education up to primary level with the best facilities including a science laboratory, a computer lab and hostel for about 100 tribal children with special needs.

sewa UK were moved by the dedication of the team at Jawhar and the plight of the children and agreed to sponsor the building of a new school for these Children

## Additional Information



### **Divya School - a Residential school to provide an education to Children with Special Needs**

*Real education is that which enables one to stand on his own legs. – Swami Vivekanand*

#### **Current educational status of children with disabilities in India**

The lives of PWD (people with disabilities) are largely marked by poverty and marginalisation from mainstream social processes. A recent study by the World Bank (2007), noted that children with disability are five times more likely to be out of school than children belonging to scheduled castes or scheduled tribes (SC or ST). Moreover, when children with disability do attend school they rarely progress beyond the primary level, leading ultimately to lower employment chances and long-term income poverty.

Illiteracy levels are high across all categories of disability, and extremely so for children with visual, multiple and mental disabilities (and for children with severe disabilities across all the categories).

NGOs have played a central role in the development of educational provisions for children with disabilities across the globe and more so in developing economies, such as India. Not only has their involvement been historically revered as bringing the concerns of this marginalised group into the spotlight, they continue to have a significant impact on current practices.

In 2011, following conclusive examination of all the facts and our due diligence, **sewaUK** decided to build a residential school for children with special needs in Jawhar, Maharashtra and so give these children a chance to better their future

I am proud to say that the school building was completed in January 2015. The handing over of the building took place on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2015. Work continues on the residential block which will be ready in March 2016.



**From here**



Registered Office: 110 High Street, Edgbaston, Middlesex, HA8 7HE, England, UK  
Administration Office: 1100 Stratford Road, Hall Green, Birmingham, B28 8AD  
Tel: +44 (0)121 777 4045, Email: [info@sewauk.org](mailto:info@sewauk.org), Web: [www.sewauk.org](http://www.sewauk.org)  
Charity No: 1185425 Company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales No: 00676220



area where the residential building will be



The School and in front area where the residential quarters will be b



The work on the residential quarters

**Contact**

For further information

[www.sewauk.org](http://www.sewauk.org)

[info@sewauk.org](mailto:info@sewauk.org)