



Education and Livelihood Opportunities (ELO), a whole community approach for inclusive education, 2006-2011

Harave & Kasaba hoblis, Chamrajnagar Taluk, Chamrajnagar District, Karnataka, India

A DDP project in partnership with Mobility India

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Education and Livelihood Opportunities (ELO)

Chamrajnagar, Karnataka, India

A whole community approach for inclusive education

Synopsis

ELO's over-arching objective was to improve the quality of village government primary education provision for all children while promoting equality of opportunity in it for disabled and otherwise marginalised children. We began with one crucial question: what needed to change so that disabled and other marginalised children could enjoy educational opportunities, and how could that change be achieved? We believed that we already knew in broad terms the answer to the second part of that question – by supporting statutory authorities to achieve their own objectives – but the first part asks about bridging the gap between the principles enshrined in policy and grassroots implementation. The programme design explicitly acknowledged that education provision does not exist in isolation and it therefore seeks to identify and cater for all of the variables that affect children's experience of primary education in the target area.

Where and why

ELO took place in the 76 villages that comprise Kasaba and Harave hoblis (administrative units) of Chamrajnagar taluk (known as a “block” in other parts of India), Chamrajnagar district in the state of Karnataka in southern India. The 76 villages are formed into 16 Gram Panchayats (GPs), which are the key structures for local self governance in India. With the exception of Chamrajnagar town, ELO's target area was rural with agriculture being the predominant mode of subsistence.

According to most indicators of deprivation, Chamrajnagar is the second poorest district in Karnataka (e.g. 51% literacy rate). In 2005, Mobility India (MI), who were to implement the programme, and DDP conducted a situation analysis in Chamrajnagar and found a primary education system unsuited and insensitive to the needs of disabled children. It was not so much the case that disabled children were wholly absent from schools, but more that their experience of education was poor as there had been neither sensitisation to disability institutionally or individually among teachers, nor provision of accessibility or resources to enable disabled children to participate in and benefit from education.

Between 2000 and 2004 DDP and MI had run a programme called *Makkala Bhavishya* (MB – Children's Future)¹ in the Banashankari slum areas of Bangalore city. In brief, MB's objective was to promote an environment in which out-of-school children would (re)join education, prioritising disabled children and girls. Part of MB's design was to secure the active involvement of disabled children's parents in their education, and income generating initiatives were set up to make this more possible. At this point, armed with the lessons learned from the implementation of MB and knowledge of the need in Chamrajnagar, DDP and MI decided to work in partnership to design and develop a programme appropriate to that rural context.

ELO – a pragmatic approach

Typing the phrase “inclusive education” (IE) into Google yields nearly thirty two million results. While there is consensus as to what IE is and what it should seek to do, ELO argues that, just as a generally agreed principle of IE itself is to change the system to fit the needs of children rather than shape children so that

¹ Funded by Comic Relief, UK

they conform to the system, so the nature of IE in any given situation must adapt to and be relevant to local socio-cultural circumstances. ELO holds no dogmatic view as to the role of “special” schools in disabled children’s education; rather, it responds pragmatically to the reality of life in Chamrajnagar: the question of “special” schools is begged in that there are none and, even if there were, their fees would be far beyond the means of most disabled children’s parents.

Taking the view that is counter-productive to try to establish a system running parallel to or in competition with government provision, ELO’s methodology was to support Indian statutory education policy to contribute to the achievement of its objectives. This policy leaves little to be desired: in April, 2010, India’s Right to Education (RTE) Act came into force, consolidating previous legislation in pursuit of the goal of universal elementary education (to age 14). The main policy delivery tool is the 2001 *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA – literal meaning “education for all”), which states that, “SSA ensures that every child with special needs, irrespective of the kind, category and degree of disability, is provided meaningful and quality education”².

In Chamrajnagar, indicators derived from SSA data show that nearly 99% of children complete five years of primary education and that the teacher attendance rate is 99%. Similarly, all disabled children are enrolled in primary education except those whose disabilities are so profound that they are enrolled in Home Based Education (HBE) under SSA. However, our research in collaboration with MI suggested that these data are simply inaccurate and that up to 30% of children were not attending primary school or attending so irregularly that they derived little educational benefit. An article in the Times of India³ stated that about one-third of children have dropped out of school by Standard 5 (10-11 years old) and that this figure rises to two-thirds by the end of primary education. Enrolment and attendance figures are also artificially inflated by the midday meal scheme – we know that some children go to school for the meal and leave once they have eaten (teachers have been known to do the same). Whatever the merits of the quantitative data, government village primary schools certainly lacked the means to provide high quality education for children with disabilities and other special needs.

At its root, then, ELO seeks to develop and test a model designed to adhere to the principles enshrined in policy and to find practical solutions to the constraints that lead to the yawning gap between this policy and its implementation.

The ELO approach

In supporting statutory policy, ELO has learned the lesson that it does not pay to adopt an adversarial, hostile or confrontational attitude. The aim from the outset has been to create a “grand coalition” of all stakeholders working together to achieve consensually agreed objectives. These stakeholders include: disabled children’s parents, disabled adults, teachers, anganwadi (pre-school) workers, local government officials, members of School Development Monitoring Committees (SDMCs), village and religious leaders, and local citizens. In ELO, this is called the “whole community” approach, which is intended to make the question of children’s education everybody’s business as well as to counteract stigma and discrimination against disabled people and foster social inclusion.

ELO supports statutory education policy by using real social and political infrastructure. The 73rd amendment to India’s Constitution established the current tripartite system of local self governance, the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs): Zilla (District) Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats and GPs, designed to devolve power to communities, and to mobilise citizens to work with elected Panchayati officials to bring about change – all in pursuit of the Gandhian vision of *gram swaraj* (village self governance). We have noted that many education interventions adopt a “top down” method, where effort is focussed on achieving change at the strategic level in the hope that it will cascade downwards into communities. While in no sense denying the importance of affecting strategy, ELO eschews this method as its outcomes have all too often fallen into the gap between policy and practice referred to above. In other words, whatever the noble intentions and material outputs of such interventions, their impact at the grassroots has mainly been negligible.

Rather, ELO starts from the point and perspective of the “smallest unit”, in the case of the programme area, individual villages. It is here where citizens are mobilised initially, where attitudes that militate against education for disabled children, for girls and for other marginalised children are tackled. The village decision-making structure or forum, where PRI officials can be held to account, is the *gram sabha* (village meeting).

² [http://ssa.nic.in/inclusive-education/overview-on-inclusive-education/Overview synopsis. PDF](http://ssa.nic.in/inclusive-education/overview-on-inclusive-education/Overview%20synopsis.pdf), viewed January 16th, 2012

³ July 9th, 2009: p.2

Using the 2005 Right to Information Act, citizens are entitled to know and are provided with the means to find out what statutory resources are available for their village. For ELO, those of prime importance are to do with development assistance generally (often through the District Rural Development Agency) and education allocations and disability benefits specifically. None of this can happen without a concerted effort to improve the quality and quantity of information available to people, particularly disabled people, and more widespread community sensitisation (see below: *process*).

To re-state, in holding officials accountable at village meetings, the atmosphere is not one of demand and accusation; rather, ELO forges a collective unity of purpose in which ways are found for PRI officials to be supported by citizens and their organisations to achieve the results desired by all.

In all of this, there is one element central to both ELO's philosophy and methods: community participation. We encountered in Chamrajnagar the widespread view that education is something that happens *to* communities and not *with* them, that communities could not exercise any influence over their children's education, and neither was it proper for them to do so. But if ELO intended to derive a model consonant with strictly local socio-economic circumstances, then for practical as well as ethical reasons, community engagement was vital. We elaborate this in the section below.

The ELO process

MI were fortunate indeed to recruit as ELO Programme Manager Mr Anand S.N., a native Kannada (the language of Karnataka) speaker, familiar with the programme environs, and with significant community development experience. The field staff team numbered 36; to many, this may seem excessive but MI and DDP had worked closely to identify all the roles needed to ensure a comprehensive programme, and the Big Lottery Fund were happy to sanction our budget. Of these, 16 were Community Facilitators (CFs – known in other parts of India as “Animators”), one per GP. The people to fill these posts were recruited from the GP in which they would work so that they would be already known in the area. We were determined to promote employment opportunities in ELO for disabled people and for women, and, of the 36, 8 people were disabled and 15 were women.

Following intensive training by Mr Balakrishna Venkatesh, an international disability consultant who is blind, the CFs began work in their villages. ELO's entry point was rehabilitation service provision, and the first step was a household census in the target area, visiting every dwelling to identify disabled adults and children. From MI's research and the absence of service provision locally, we knew to expect low levels of knowledge about rehabilitation services in villages, to the extent where some people did not know that any aids, appliances or assistance even existed for their disability.

It is easy to over-emphasise the prevalence and impact of “traditional beliefs” about disability in rural India. While certainly it is not uncommon for people to ascribe disability to “karma” (wherein disability may be viewed as a punishment for a sin committed in a former life), neither is it universal. Nonetheless, a component of rehabilitation service provision was to provide practical information about the causes and consequences of disability. Choosing services as the entry point was designed to counteract the wariness and suspicion initially shown by many community members, which had been caused by their previous experience of other non governmental agencies arriving in Chamrajnagar, making many promises, and delivering little or nothing – sometimes even taking money from citizens. ELO therefore showed immediately that it was putting resources into the community and would be engaged in the longer term.

At this stage, the services were provided by visiting teams of technicians from MI headquarters in Bangalore, some 200 km. distant, and concentrated on people (particularly children) with mobility impairments who comprise 52% of all disabled people in the programme area. Using the goodwill engendered by service provision, the next step was to mobilise disabled adults and the parents of disabled children to form self help groups (SHGs – known locally as *sanghas*). As an inclusive initiative, ELO promotes opportunities for disabled adults but in a “mixed” setting, precluding the possible “ghettoisation” that could result from a separatist approach.

Mr Venkatesh guided the first phase of SHG establishment and gave SHG training to the CFs and other team members. The methods and purposes of SHGs are well known in development and so will not be detailed here. In principle, ELO intended there to be one SHG per village with 10-20 members of both sexes. In practice, and in accord with ELO's ethos, we were prepared to be flexible and accommodate local reality so that population dictated SHG formation with the effect that larger villages and Chamrajnagar town would have more than one while other villages would join together to form one group. At the end of ELO's five years, there were 90 SHGs with a membership of 1,252. 57% of members are men but more than

50% of office bearers (i.e. Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers) are women. As we write, six months later, all of these groups continue to exist and thrive.

SHGs were always intended to be the programme's "engine room" and engage in a greater array of programme activities than usual. It was only once rehabilitation services had been established and continued, and SHGs were embedded into their communities, that education, after all, the key lever of ELO, could be introduced – well into ELO's second year. This was not as per our original timetable but it bears repeating often that we wanted the model to evolve according to circumstances as opposed to being implanted onto the community and then expect or compel the community to change to conform to it. As with battling against misconceptions about disability, the first requirement was to show the value of education for *all* children: some disabled children's parents had explicitly stated that education for their child or children would be a waste of time and money.

As we said above, education does not happen in isolation; for effective and sustainable structures to grow, variables that affect children's educational opportunities must be identified and catered for. These include (and it is a long list): availability of rehabilitation services; family circumstances; income; caste; gender; socio-economic status; health; and other factors within the local education system such as teachers' attitudes and the quantity and quality of their special needs training; attitudes and capabilities of local education officials; and the physical accessibility of school premises. All of these factors affect the component elements of educational opportunity: access, enrolment, retention, achievement, and enjoyment: we emphasise the quality of children's experience of school. We had discovered that children's education was often pre-empted, interrupted or curtailed by their family's economic circumstance and that this was especially true of disabled children. ELO is so named for exactly the reason that equality of opportunity to education for children with special needs or who find access difficult for other reasons is linked very closely to livelihoods. Therefore, as SHGs became established, they engaged in a range of income generating activities. All SHGs began savings and loans schemes such that the total saved is over Rs.1,537,500 (£20,500); small loans (of under Rs.1,000) taken is just over Rs.1,875,000 (£25,000); a higher figure than saved because repayments have started revolving.

One of the key aspects of low levels of knowledge among disabled people about disability in general was low awareness of benefits and entitlements. Although disability legislation (the 1995 Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, (Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act and others) stipulates provisions, they are scantily publicised and the onus is on individuals to file claims rather than on government officials to identify those who qualify. ELO has helped disabled people and their groups to claim these benefits, and this is one of many things that now happens autonomously. In total, and taking into account benefits for non-disabled people, well over 4,000 entitlements have been gained. The programme has also focused on skills training, with over 200 people receiving some form of training (tailoring, food processing, sericulture, shoe and bicycle repair, IT skills, book binding etc.).

The ELO team has additionally formed links between SHGs and banks. Traditionally, banks have been loath to lend to disabled people as the amounts concerned were not deemed worthwhile and because disabled people were judged bad risks for repayment. In Chamrajnagar, through an intensive campaign, ELO has changed this situation such that many mainstream banks with branches in the district have cleared over Rs.7,125,000 (£95,000) worth of loans to SHG members – disabled adults and disabled children's parents. SHGs recommend and guarantee members' individual bank loan applications for amounts over Rs.10,000. The National Agricultural Bank for Rural Development (which should be commended for its receptiveness to new ideas) has subsidised training needs for SHGs. This is quite revolutionary as an example of attitude change leading to practical action. To date the default rate on interest and repayments on SHG and bank loans is a remarkable zero.

Next steps in the process of building SHGs as social organisations were to set up GP level groups of SHGs (*maha sanghas*). Seven of these are running auto rickshaw cooperatives as a further livelihoods initiative and continuing revenue stream, with the vehicles owned, managed and regulated by maha sanghas and a named person holding the vehicle in trust. Cooperatives' profits at the end of the five year programme stood at well over Rs.75,000 (£1,000). One auto rickshaw has been adapted as a travelling mini rehabilitation workshop and to carry rehabilitation supplies.

The process: education

Some aspects of education are easier to deal with than others: enrolment, for example, is the subject of an annual camp organised jointly by the ELO field team and SDMCs so that all children due to join the

academic year's intake are identified and enrolled.

Following sensitisation work among disabled children's parents, the next stage was to begin a system of community education (often known elsewhere as supplementary education). 40 community education centres (CECs) have been established and are regularly (daily) attended by 1,000 children – disabled and non disabled alike. The CECs use school or anganwadi⁴ premises and run for two hours combining study of the formal curriculum with time for play. These sessions are led by community education tutors (CETs) – one per centre – who, as with the community facilitators, are recruited from the village where their centre is. Of the 40, 32 are women and six are disabled people, and they receive small monthly stipends. Typically, the CETs have a basic level of education, having completed at least primary schooling.

At the end of five years, some 4,000 children had had some experience of a CEC, and, at the time of writing, 35 CECs continue to operate every day for nearly 900 children.

To make community education a worthwhile experience for the children, we faced two major challenges: firstly, to find a way to provide training for CETs that would be appropriate to their level of education, local social and cultural circumstances (including language) and to equip them with the skills and knowledge to cater for children's differing needs; and, secondly, to find a source of teaching and learning materials to meet the purpose of CECs.

Few such enterprises as ELO could be undertaken by one agency alone. One of the field team's responsibilities has been to identify and develop relationships with potential collaborators to complement and supplement their own competencies. A series of meetings with the Bangalore organisation, Seva in Action (SIA⁵), led to the solution to the first of these problems. Established in 1985, SIA have become government approved experts in the field of community based rehabilitation and inclusive education (their Director, Ms Ruma Banerjee, is a Karnataka state SSA Committee member). We found kindred spirits in SIA, who were very interested in the ELO idea, and who have provided a full training programme for CETs, which has, in turn, led to a Grassroots Education Workers Manual. SIA subsequently worked on an ELO-funded comparative study of classroom education practices in different states throughout India, which was published towards the end of 2011⁶. The study was launched during a two-day national symposium attended by the Karnataka Education Secretary and the National Trusts Act Chair. One immediate outcome of the study has been that SIA's raised profile contributed to their being asked to submit a draft of an education policy for children with special needs for the state government, and they have joined a new inclusive education cell at Karnataka state level.

The second challenge has been met through collaboration with the Dhvani Educational Resource Centre⁷, members of the Karnataka Education Network, who specialise in developing and making materials to enhance the State curriculum, providing an enriched experience for teachers and pupils alike. Dhvani, aware of the need for their materials to be inclusive but lacking the technical knowledge to make that possible, have benefited from MI's disability expertise while ELO has made use of Dhvani materials for three years. As the Karnataka state curriculum (in common with that of many other Indian states) is based on monthly lesson plans, Dhvani produce their materials monthly and then send them to all subscribers. ELO had two Education Co-ordinators (one for each hobli⁸) who travelled to Bangalore from Chamrajnagar one day every month to work with Dhvani to find the best way to maximise the materials' utility. Upon their return to Chamrajnagar, they held training session with CETs to transfer those skills and knowledge, and ELO staff worked to make the materials accessible for children with all types of disability.

The availability – or otherwise – of teaching and learning materials (TLMs) appropriate to the needs of disabled children was another central area. In addition to the CECs, the project also established a model Inclusive Education Resource Centre (IERC) in its last year. This is a "bank" of TLMs, games, toys etc. available for loan to schools, CECs, parents and children in the local villages. It contains materials appropriate for the needs of children with every type of disability, and all of the materials have been hand made by members of the project team (mainly the special educator and the rehabilitation therapy assistants) from locally available materials. This IERC will continue to function indefinitely and is in continuous demand.

⁴ Anganwadi – preschool; ELO has worked also to foster inclusive anganwadis and supported their health and immunisation efforts.

⁵ <http://sevainaction.org/>

⁶ *Understanding Inclusive Practices in Schools*, Ed. Banerjee, R. *et al*, Seva-in-Action, 2011

⁷ <http://www.dhwanitrust.org/en/index.html>

⁸ A collection of Gram Panchayats (often around 8) – an administrative unit

In addition, the Education Co-ordinators did the same with teachers from 40 primary schools in the programme area. In 2008, the government of Karnataka imposed a moratorium on NGO teacher training, believing its own training programme to be more than sufficient, and, in any event, the mood among teachers was that they were over-burdened with training requirements. So much has ELO inspired local teachers that they voluntarily sacrificed their “second Saturday” (government schools open on alternate Saturdays) to attend ELO training in the use of Dhvani materials. Too often, inclusive education initiatives regard teachers as part of the problem and not part of the solution; with its “whole community” approach, ELO has sought to determine what teachers need and try to provide it.

Rehabilitation: a continuing need

We argue that the perceived dichotomy between service provision and rights (such as the right to education) is in fact spurious. We find no contradiction in working with disabled people and their organisations to protect and promote their rights while *simultaneously* supporting the rehabilitation services that many disabled people need in order practically to demand and enjoy those rights. A simple example is that a village primary school may be implementing a perfect and adequately resourced model of inclusive education but that would be of no help to a child without the aid or appliance she/he needs to get to that school.

As stated above, MI's expertise lies in the area of mobility impairments. ELO's guiding principle is that no child shall be left behind and so productive relationships were formed with a wide range of organisations to bring in other specialist skills, such as the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing and the National Association of the Blind. We mention here definitions of disability: children classified in India as “slow learners” are often not regarded as part of the disabled population there. ELO includes children with learning disabilities as a matter of course.

It hardly needs to be stated that aids and appliances will wear out and that children's needs will change as they grow. In line with ELO's mission to encourage local ownership, reliance for service provision on MI's Bangalore headquarters has gradually diminished as local capacity has grown. MI runs training courses accredited by the Rehabilitation Council of India and the International Society of Prosthetists and Orthotists in orthotics, prosthetics and rehabilitation therapy, and ELO has sponsored a cadre of 16 trainees from Chamrajnagar to attend these courses – indeed, Chamrajnagar trainees have achieved the top passing out marks in their respective classes. These are young people dedicated to serving the continuing rehabilitation needs of their communities, and ELO has provided the resources and materials to enable them to do that, including setting up a mobile mini workshop.

There are some children whose disabilities preclude school attendance. The SSA document makes provision for these children through resources for home based education but the system hitherto in Chamrajnagar has not been a success. The main reasons for this are that the resource people/home based educators are not well motivated and, by their own judgment, under-trained for the responsibilities they are required to undertake. The schedule for home visits was rarely adhered to and it was known for SSA resource people to pressurise parents into signing a form to confirm attendance when in fact they had done no work with the child.

In association with the Taluk SSA office, ELO staff have assisted with and supplemented training which has improved the situation hugely. In focusing on activities for daily living (such as washing and dressing) for profoundly disabled children, these workers fulfil their duties with enthusiasm and two became CETs.

ELO: the children

There are 83 primary schools in the ELO area (including a small number of merged primary and secondary schools), with 8,050 pupils of whom 766 are disabled (including children with learning disabilities). Every disabled child has an individual rehabilitation plan but, having experimented with various versions of individual education plans (IEPs), we eventually developed a bespoke format for ELO, and, once again, this is the fruit of collaboration with SIA combined with invaluable inputs from CETs. The CETs were trained to set long and short term (quarterly and monthly) goals for each child based on their strengths and weakness. The goals were then further divided into weekly targets, and the CETs were also given training in adapting the curriculum to allow it to meet the goals. The IEPs are also recorded and linked closely to the ELO database, which has a page for each child.

Education is widely regarded as a pathway out of poverty (*cf.* Millennium Development Goals 1 & 2), which is doubly important for disabled children as it is accepted that there is a reciprocal link between

disability and poverty – in simple terms, poor people are more likely to be disabled and disabled people are more likely to be poor than their non disabled counterparts. As well as utility, ELO contends that education has value in and of itself, but, more than that, the programme promotes childhood free of work and other adult responsibilities – a childhood to be enjoyed.

This is nowhere more true than in ELO's annual summer camps. An idea entirely unheard of in Chamrajnagar prior to ELO, demand for these events is so great that two were run in 2010. In 2009, the camp took the form of a 4-day residential event for 131 children away from home for the first time. 76 children were disabled, there was an exact gender balance and the camp was caste neutral. There were 50 supervising adults, comprising the entire ELO team, some CETs, five government school teachers and a small number of parents. While the camp was subsidised, parents made a financial contribution for their children's attendance to foster a sense of "ownership" (increasingly a feature of ELO as it progressed).

The final year's summer camp was called "Miracle Burst" – its intention was to educate disabled children about myths and superstitions, and particularly about how they are used for profit and to demean disabled people. Due to the intensity of the activity, fewer children than usual participated (20) but, over three days, they were shown the tricks used by shamans and traditional healers, much of which are really what we would call "magic". At the end, children, both disabled and non-disabled, gave demonstrations of their new abilities, for example, walking on broken glass and fire eating (under supervision). They then went back to their villages to pass on this information to their peers, their parents and village adults, whose surprise has been immense. This event was covered in the regional newspaper, the *Deccan Herald*.

Each camp has had a different theme: the 2009 theme was theatre and was led by Mr Maltesh Badigar, a respected Kannada-speaking educational expert with experience of aspects of theatre such as mask making, stage design and performance, and every child had the chance for active involvement in a sketch.

ELO has also been holding *Makkala Sabbas* (children's village meetings) following the format of those for adults, in which children have the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns about the issues that affect them. This is again revolutionary in Chamrajnagar, as in much of rural India, where the idea of child rights is quite new. Ten such meetings have been held with over 1,000 children participating. The programme also set up individual savings accounts for children (190 so far).

The future

The future of ELO will belong to the community. Over the programme's five years, management and responsibility were gradually transferred to SHGs and *maha sanghas*, and they have participated in organisational development training so that they are able to fulfil their duties. One of many examples of this is that, quite early on, SHGs took over the recruitment of and payment of stipends to the CETs, who were then employed by SHGs. Having formed SHGs into *maha sanghas* at the GP level, the remaining step in ELO's last year was to establish a taluk-wide federation – an apex body of village SHGs able to speak and act collectively, named *Chiguru* which in Kannada means a leaf or flower bud. Federation members are democratically elected and will embed at a more strategic level SHGs' core values of dignity and self esteem, solidarity, participation in family and community life (as opposed to "invisibility"), disability rights and entitlements, and livelihood opportunities – capability not disability.

In the 2010 GP elections in Chamrajnagar, ten SHG members were elected and this is another way forward: disabled people and disabled children's parents newly implementing policy (and being accountable to their communities) as well as helping shape it. Of the ten, three were disabled women and one a disabled man, and the remaining six were parents of disabled children.

Due to the process that has evolved in ELO, there has been a paradigm shift in attitudes towards both disability and education in the programme area. Whereas, before ELO, disabled people were largely invisible in their communities and regarded as cases for charity or as a responsibility for their families, disabled people now are part of the fabric of local society, respected for their contributions, and, in many cases, taking the lead in a process of social inversion. And whereas, before ELO, education was seen often as a given and something from which disabled children could glean little benefit, education now is something that arouses passion and commitment, such that local people freely volunteer their time to support ELO. Notably, this includes teachers: we have not chiefly found teachers hostile to disabled children's education or discriminatory; rather, we found teachers feeling helpless in providing meaningful education for disabled children without training and resources.

As regards ELO's continuing resourcing implication, the community already has a number of revenue streams: the auto rickshaw cooperatives mentioned above, interest payable on SHG loans, and greater

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economic security and income among programme stakeholders means that they are increasingly able to contribute towards costs.

The ELO model has largely been adopted in a new programme in the remaining three hoblis of Chamrajnagar Taluk. To make a taluk (block)-wide impact will have great potential for more widespread adoption of the ELO approach, which is an over-arching objective of the programme. The taluk-wide impact will, through the new programme, strengthen *Chiguru*, allowing it to bloom. In this way, the future of IE in Chamrajnagar will be in safe hands: disabled and non disabled citizens together leading a community-wide response to the problem of improving the quality of village government primary school provision for all 8,000 children, while ensuring equality of opportunity to it for all.



The ELO team in Chamrajnagar; photo: Kamala Achu, DDP

Cover photo: Anand S.N., Mobility India

Children and teachers enjoy after school activities at the Heggottara village community education centre, one of 35 such centres set up by the ELO project in Chamrajnagar