

Training Program for Teachers

Teachers assigned to class rooms for children with disabilities in the Bandarawela district have found that they lack sufficient skills, training, resources and equipment to meet the special needs of the children they care for and have requested our assistance in this regard. Consultant Paediatrician Dr Kumuduni Cooray also strongly feels that these short comings need to be addressed relatively soon.

In response to this request, we are extremely fortunate to have secured the services of Ms Gabriella Vascotto, Course Coordinator, Autism Teaching Institute, Western Autistic School, Laverton, Victoria, Australia who will visit Bandarawela, Sri Lanka in early October and spend about three weeks with the project team, schools and medical team with the aim of providing hands-on training to the teachers in the special needs units in schools in the Bandarawela District of education. Ms Vascotto is an early childhood educator, a Bachelor in special education and a specialist in early childhood development. She has 25 years' experience as a teacher of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and other special needs. She has also presented at state, national and Asia Pacific Autism conferences.

Our special thanks to Ms Valerie Gill, Principal Western Autistic School, Laverton, Victoria and our close friends and supporters of this program who helped us secure the services of Ms Vascotto.

Program Objectives:

- To provide the teachers with the necessary skills and training so that the impact of their specialised interaction with the children with disabilities will greatly improve the children's social, physical, and vocational aspects, giving them vastly improved independence.
- To enable Dr Kumudini Cooray, Consultant Paediatrician at the Bandarawela base hospital and her team (who have been most generous with their assistance) to work with Ms Vascotto to identify and provide further facilities to these children and their families by identifying their special needs, health requirements, and specialised training to prepare them for a more independent future.

Training Program:

(Designed by Dr Cooray for Ms Vascotto)

Day 1:

Introduction of the program to the teachers, with the following aims;

- a. How to identify learning, hearing, vision and behavioural problems in a child with special needs;
- b. How to develop an individualised program for each child;
- c. How to develop skills in a child with special needs.

Days 2 to 4:

School based program at St. Josephs College -

- Assessment of the children
- Helping design individual programs/ goals
- Train teachers on strategies to develop reading, writing , and other communication skills

Day 5 to 7

Above program at Dharmashoka Vidyalaya

Days 8 to 10

Above program at Sir Razeek Fareed, college

Day 11

Awareness program for the parents

Role of parents in caring for a child with special needs