

Danish collaborative project to raise awareness about autism in Nepal

In Nepal, autism awareness among the population is increasing as a result of a co-operative project between autism organisations in Denmark and Nepal.

The 'Autism Awareness in Nepal' project is an initiative of the Danish Autism Society and AutismCare Nepal. The project aims to raise awareness of autism among parents, professionals and the public in Nepal.

Autism awareness in Nepal

In Nepal, autism awareness is a new phenomenon. The government does not recognise the needs of people with autism and there is no public support for them and their families. Knowledge about autism among parents, teachers, professionals, and the public is practically non-existent.

Currently, AutismCare Nepal is the only organisation in the country which raises awareness about autism. Based in the capital city, Kathmandu, it was founded in 2008 by a doctor who recognised that his son had symptoms of autism after reading an international medical journal. After his son was diagnosed in India, he founded AutismCare Nepal as well as a school which provides education for eight children with autism.

Making autism visible through the media

The 'Autism Awareness in Nepal' project organises media campaigns and events, including radio and television advertisements and articles for print media to raise awareness of autism among the population.

As part of the project's activities, AutismCare Nepal filmed a television advertisement to help parents of children with autism identify early signs of the condition. The advertisement has been broadcasted by Nepalese media in Nepali and five major regional languages including Maithili, Tamang, Newari, Tharu and Gurung.



Awareness-raising activities across Nepal

The project has also distributed information in schools and organised other awareness-raising activities such as street theatre performances. Street theatre performances have been carried out across the country in the districts of Damauli, Kaski, Syangja, Palp and Rupandehi. During the events, information materials about autism have been distributed among the audience.

These events provide parents who believe their children might have autism, but have not yet been diagnosed, an opportunity to learn about autism and discuss their concerns and experiences. Since the project has started, the number of parents who believe their children might have autism and want to learn more about it is increasing, and so is the membership of AutismCare Nepal.

Denmark and Nepal partnership

The two-year project will be completed in December 2014. It is funded by Danish disability organisations with government funding to assist people with disabilities in other countries. The Danish Autism Society plays a monitoring role in the project. It also shares knowledge in the field of diagnosis, intervention, and autism and ageing among parents of children with autism in Nepal.

The organisation's staff are also learning from their experiences with the Nepalese organisation, including gaining insight into autism symptoms present among those who have not benefited from receiving any form of therapy. Currently, both organisations are exploring future collaborations to continue improving the quality of life of people with autism in Nepal.

Images: The project carrying out education and awareness-raising activities in Nepal.

