

Skills Assessment Report of the Volunteer Teachers of ASNN

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Funded by:
SPICE

PALTRA

Facilitated by:

- **Introduction**

ASNN has been engaged in serving the differently abled persons in the selected schools in **Ampara district** for the last seven years. Upon the enrollment of the differently abled persons to the schools ASNN will initiate the service jointly with the school management. ASNN identifies the differently abled persons in government schools and categorize them according to their age. The selected students are imparted class room education. The teachers trained by ASNN are being employed to teach these students. According to the information provided by ASNN the service is being implemented in **13 village schools**.

PALTRA conducted the initial self assessment of ASNN. PALTRA is one of the partners in the capacity building program funded by **SPICE**. The identified organizational development goals were: identifying the capacity development needs of the **volunteer teachers**, develop a capacity building program in order to make the services of the teachers permanent and identifying strategies to develop network with the government and the partners.

Accordingly needs / skills assessment was conducted by PALTRA from 23rd to 25th May. Thirty teachers who have been engaged in teaching through ASNN participated in the assessment. The report of the needs assessment was prepared by ASNN based on the information gathered from the structured interviews with the **30 teachers** using the questionnaire.

The objectives of the assessment are: assessing the skills and knowledge of the volunteer teachers, identifying the impediments in making the volunteer teachers permanent in their posts and knowing their qualifications, identifying further sectoral trainings and educational opportunities for the teachers to excel in their profession and making recommendations based on the identified facts and information.

- **The purpose of the Assessment**

- **Key objective**

Identifying the strategies to make the volunteer teachers permanent in their posts. This includes: initiating the skill assessment of the volunteer teachers, submitting recommendations to develop a skill development plan and creating network with the government and the partners.

- **Specific objective**

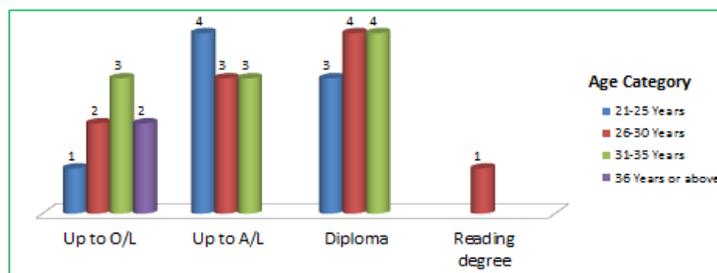
- Skills / needs assessment of the volunteer teachers of ASNN and developing a report with recommendations.
- Identifying the problems faced by the volunteer teachers and identifying the strategies to sustain the service and participation of the teachers.
- Submitting necessary recommendations to develop a capacity building plan based on the needs assessment

The results of the assessment

- **Age based analysis**

Framework 1: The age of the teachers

Analysis: Distribution according to educational qualifications and age



- 8 teachers have GCE O/L as their highest educational qualification.
- Out of them 5 teachers are at the age of 31 years or above.
- Both these could be limiting factors if they are expecting government teaching appointments.

In terms of age, 30% of the teachers are between the ages of 21 – 25, 30% of the teachers are between the ages of 26 -30, 33% of the teachers are between the ages of 31 – 35 and 7% of the teachers are above the age of 36.

In order to become a government teacher, a person's age should be between 18 and 35 according to the Teacher Service circular. Thus 7% of the teachers who are above the age of 36 will not be qualified to become government appointed teachers. They may be absorbed into the teachers' service by issuing a special circular.

The teachers who are between the ages of 31 and 35 are likely to be absorbed in to the service once they fulfill the necessary requirement. The said age group teachers currently obtain educational qualifications. Once they obtained the necessary qualifications they would pass the above age limit. Thus the age limit is a barrier to absorb them in to the teachers' service. However if a special circular is introduced the barrier could be removed.

As far as the age limit of 20 – 25 and 26 – 30 are concerned, they are likely to be absorbed in to the service if they fulfill the necessary requirement. Nevertheless their current educational status will decide this. Because in educational institutions like teachers training colleges, the age limit for admission is 25. Therefore those who are in the age limit of 26 – 30 face a barrier to apply for teachers' appointment in government teachers training institutions. However, proper consultations and initiatives will remove this barrier. The others may decide to apply based on their educational qualifications.

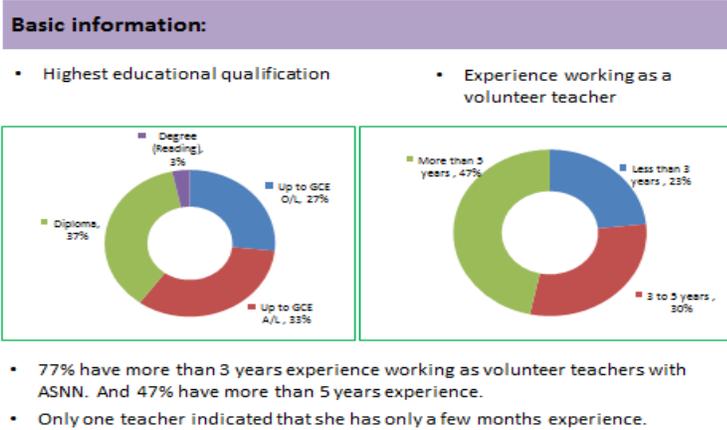
The analysis of their educational qualification is given below:

- **Educational qualification**

As mentioned in the framework 2,27% of the volunteer teachers have completed GCE ordinary level. Of them 75% (6 teachers) are of the age of 31 or above the age of 31 (please see framework 1). 33% of the teachers have completed GCE advance level. 37% of the teachers have completed diploma course. One teacher follows Bachelor of Arts in the Open University.

27% of the volunteer teachers have to develop their educational qualifications from GCE ordinary level given the minimum requirement stipulated in the government teachers' circulars. Their age limit is also a barrier to the intake.

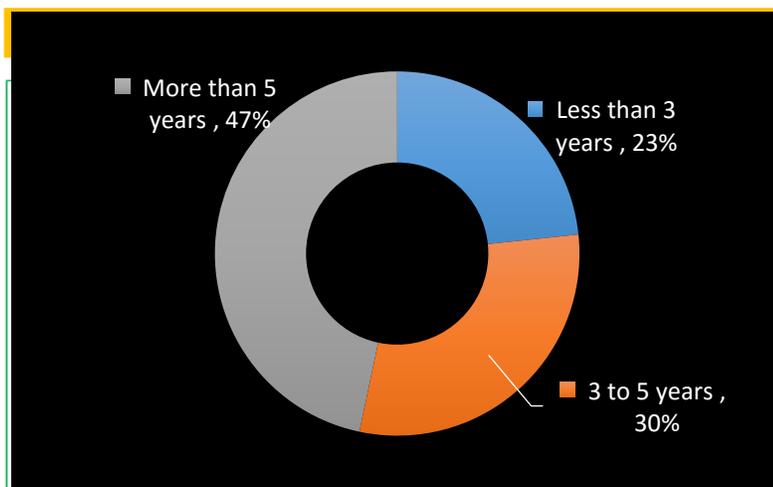
Framework 2: Educational qualifications of the teachers



Those who have GCE advanced level educational qualifications and those who have got diploma certificate are likely to be appointed to the teacher service if they develop their qualifications and fulfill the age limit. Based on this framework, 22 volunteer teachers have the possibility of being appointed. When special applications are sent by the principal through the zonal educational officials the teachers shall be appointed provided the necessary requirement such as age and experiences are fulfilled.

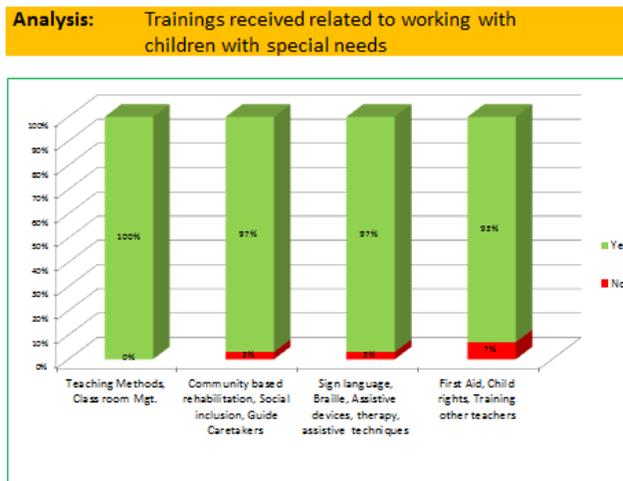
- **Volunteer teacher Service Experience**

Framework3:Teacher service Experience



23% of the teachers have less than three years of experience and 77% of the teachers have more than three years of experience. If they were absorbed into the service based on any special circular, we could assume that those who have more than three years of experience have more possibility of being appointed

- **The trainings received by the teachers**
- **Framework4: The trainings received by the teachers**



90% of the teachers have received training on the followings: working with children who have special needs, teaching methods, class room management, community based rehabilitation, community integration, maintenance, sign language, brail language, aiding equipment, techniques to assist therapies, first aid and children rights.

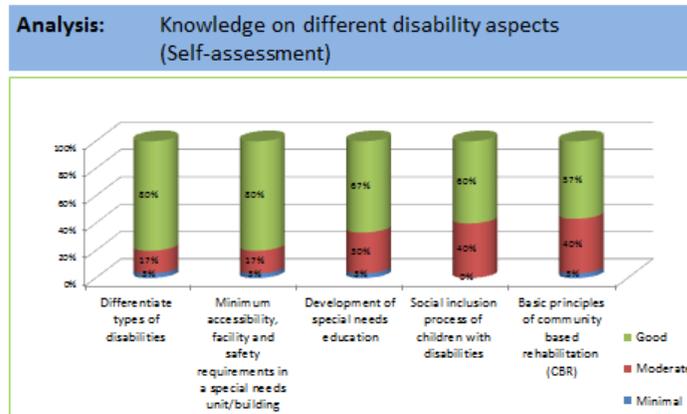
It is clear from the above that the teachers have gained good qualifications to function as teachers from the trainings.

One volunteer teacher joined the service recently. He obtained training in teaching method and class room management. He could not participate in the other trainings. It is better to train him on the other aspects.

The above training was given by ASNN in order to develop the knowledge, skills and attitude of the volunteer teachers to enable them to serve better.

- **Self-Assessment: Differently abled persons**

Framework 5: Knowledge about differently abled persons



- Most of the teachers are confident of their knowledge on different aspects of disability.
- Any refresher training could consider focusing more on social inclusion & community based rehabilitation in order to consolidate the knowledge.

More than 80% of the volunteer teachers have the knowledge to identify differently abled persons. 3% of the teachers said that the knowledge about differently abled persons should be developed.

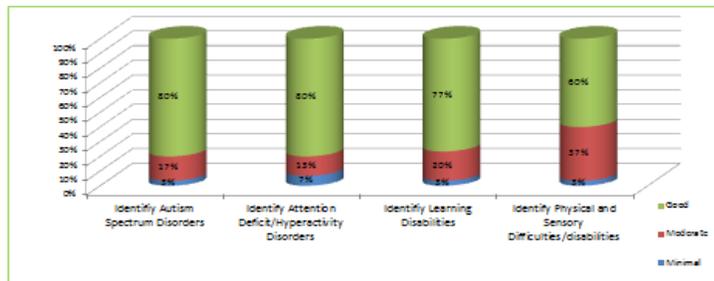
One teacher lacks skills in this regard according to the assessment. This is because he joined the service two months ago.

When other trainings are arranged, there is a need to consider the inclusion of community integration of differently abled persons and community rehabilitation. The knowledge about these aspects is very low.

- **Self Assessment: Analyzing and organizing the special needs of the differently abled persons.**

Framework 6: Analyzing and organizing the special needs of the differently abled persons

Analysis: Ability (skills) to identify educational needs of children with disabilities (Self-assessment)



- Considering overall responses more than 60% of teachers have indicated that they are confident in identifying special educational needs of children with disabilities.
- It may require refresher trainings to further consolidate their skills.

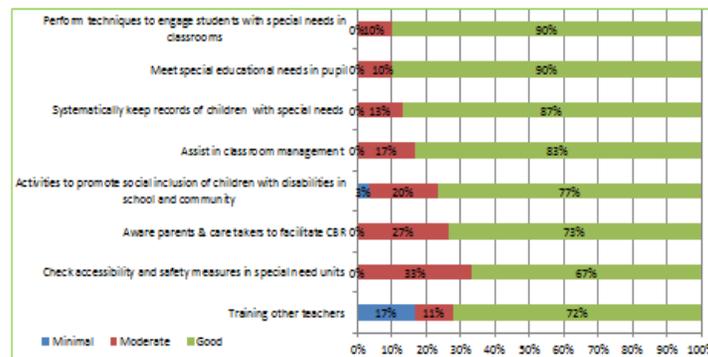
According to the responses given, 60% of the respondents said they had the knowledge to analyze the needs of the differently abled students. One person lacks this knowledge. He said that special trainings were needed.

The knowledge about the special needs of the differently abled persons shall be strengthened further trainings.

- **Self Assessment – Teaching and working with children with special needs**

Framework7:Teaching and working with children with special needs

Analysis: Ability (skills) to teach and work with children with disabilities (Self-assessment)



- Considering overall responses more than 70% of the teachers have expressed that they are confident in teaching and working with children with disabilities.
- Skills related to social inclusion and CBR are some of the areas that could be considered if organizing any refresher trainings.

According to the responses given, 70% of the respondents excel in teaching and working with children with special needs. There is a need to conduct trainings on community integration and community based awareness.

Further, skills should be developed to train new teachers.

- **The challenges faced by the volunteer teachers**

challenges	Percentage	Rating
The volunteer teachers are not recognized by the community and the schools	70%	1
Poor salary	50%	2
The volunteer teachers are not respected by other teachers	43%	3
The parents do not show interest in sending children to schools due to lack of transport services.	30%	4
The volunteer teachers do not get assistance from the school equitably (syllabus, books and furniture not given)	27%	5
The teachers are not paid adequate travelling allowances	23%	6
Children with special needs do not get recognition in society and schools (they are not involved in activities)	23%	7
Lack of understanding among parents, teachers and children (parents do not recognize teachers and lack of understanding about caring of children and depression)	20%	8
Awareness raising in community about children with special needs	7%	9
Lack of funding to develop education on special needs	7%	10
Lack of rights compared to other teachers	7%	11
Inability to gain comprehensive knowledge through sign language.	3%	12
Shortage of teachers and increased number of students	3%	13

From the assessment it is evident that the first challenge faced by the volunteer teachers is lack of recognition in the community and in the school. The second challenge is poor salary. Not being recognized by the other teachers and the transport problems faced by the parents are further challenges. As a result the parents do not pay enough attention to their children and do not show interest in sending their children to the school.

20% of the participants held the view that social perception, lack of social awareness and economic status were the main reasons for the above mentioned challenges.

- **Recommendations to overcome the challenges**

Recommendations	Responded by	Rating
Awareness program to society, parents and school teachers (home visits)	47%	1
The status of the volunteer teachers should be upgraded on par with the government teachers	40%	2
The educational qualifications should be enhanced according to the profession	37%	3
Children with special needs should be given opportunities to show their talents at school level	23%	4
Increase the talents of the children with special needs	23%	5
Changing the nature of the profession (government appointment)	13%	6
Create awareness among teachers about rendering service	13%	7
Creating social recognition for the children with special needs	10%	8
The challenges identified are less among the government appointed teachers.	10%	9
Maintaining good relationship with the school	7%	10

Applying special methods to teach ([play activities)	7%	11
Advertisements on TV	3%	12

- **Framework 9: Recommendations to overcome the challenges**

20% of the participants said that the talents of the children should be displayed and awareness about them should be made to overcome the challenges. They further said that the challenges faced by teachers could be overcome by enhancing their qualifications.

10% - 13% of the participants said that social recognition and changing the nature of the job could help to overcome the challenges

The recommendations can be implemented in three stages:

Social Level

- Bringing up the children with special needs to enable them to get social recognition
- Awareness campaign to society, parents and school (home visits once a month)

School Level

- Increase the opportunities to display the talents of the children with special needs at the school level
- Increase awareness at the society level and the school level about the services rendered by the volunteer teachers

Organizational Level

- Enhance the qualifications on par with the government teachers and assist to get the recognition of the government

- **The recommendations**

- **Assistance to develop the educational qualifications to get government appointments**
- Through educational methods
- Diploma course conducted by the National Institute of Education on children with special needs: Initiate discussions to create opportunity for the volunteer teachers to follow the course with their teaching experience. Because there are limitations to the admission to the course and taking necessary measures to enable the volunteer teachers to join the course.
- Degree in Education in children with special needs – Open University: The limitations should be reviewed and consultation should be obtained on how to enable the teachers of ASNN to get admission to the course. Particularly, consultation is needed to accommodate the teachers who have age and experience as barriers.
- Assistance to enhance the educational qualifications of those who have GCE ordinary level qualification.
- **Assistance to obtain government appointments**
- Recommendation to provincial councils and provincial level educational institutions to consider voluntary teacher service and work with them to take steps to absorb the volunteer teachers in to the service.
- Explore the possibility of absorbing the teachers with zonal educational officials
- **Continuous new trainings to enhance skills and knowledge**
- The following areas should be considered:
 - Community Based Rehabilitation - CBR

- Social integration
 - Issues about physiology and cognitive skills
 - Access and behavioral facilities in the area of children with special needs and safety measures
 - Basic training to the current staff (social integration and social level awareness)
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- Holding discussions with school principals and teachers to get assistance to the volunteer teachers. Create opportunities to increase the salary. Mobilize resources. Seek assistance from the old boys. Seek assistance from religious leaders and philanthropists of the area
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- Appreciating the services of the volunteer teachers
 - Identify opportunities to expand the services of the volunteer teachers and explore the possibilities of setting up a community based rehabilitation center.
 - Addressing the issue of lack of recognition through the community based rehabilitation center.
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- Encourage the school administration to incorporate the children with special needs in the school activities.