



Edition 39

Editor's Desk

Dear friends,

As I compile this edition with an inspiring work of someone with firsthand experience, I think of the quote- *The educated do not share a common body of information, but a common state of mind.*
- *Mason Cooley*

Happy Reading!!

Regards,

Bhavna Botta

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From The Heart

Nayi Disha, *a platform connecting the community .*

Prachi, you are the brain behind Nayi Disha , What made you think of this project

Having a sibling with Down Syndrome, I had witnessed the challenges faced by families. After my successful career in technology, I started volunteering at the centre that my brother attended. What struck me was the fact that even in today's day of information, parents are running pillar to post as my own parents did – 45 years back.

I also realized that there is no existing support mechanism for families and there is a dire need to build a supportive ecosystem for them. The idea of a technology platform to build this ecosystem took shape over conversations that I had with my friend, Sudarshana and Reema.

Thus Nayi Disha was born, with a single-minded agenda of empowering the families and I began to cobble up a band of volunteers.

So what does Nayi Disha do

Nayi Disha platform(www.nayi-disha.org) provides families with information and connects them to an ecosystem of services and other families. The three pillars of service are:

1. Information Resources: A verified knowledge hub which with information on disorders, government schemes, FAQs, learning audios and videos for various developmental disabilities with evidence-based information across life stages. 300+ articles in English
2. National Directory (1140 services in 30 cities): A verified directory of trustworthy service providers from music teacher to neurologist to residential care and early Intervention centers with ability to rate and review providers
3. A strong community of families and providers – both online and offline based on the disability, age-group and location.

You said offline services ,what are these.

The online programs are complemented with offline programs such as

1. Family Events (Outings, cultural events, sports meet)
2. Sakhiyaan - parent support group meets especially geared towards mothers who provide round the clock support.

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3. Parent Empowerment Workshops
 4. Information booths at schools, hospitals, clinics, Govt Organisations
 5. Health camps & Assessment camps

Currently these offline activities are conducted in Hyderabad, and similar activities are now being replicated in Bangalore, Mumbai, and Pune. We are trying to replicate the same model in other cities/towns and build local communities.

Prachi, what is so unique about Nayi Disha.

I think it brings focus on the need to support the caregivers and family members which is currently a missing piece in the disability puzzle and I hope our effort would help establish the need to practice family-centric approach. We are using technology to bridge the information gap and scale our reach to families. The strong community we have created in last 3.5 years where family members regard Nayi Disha as their very own is a validation in itself.

Nayi Disha receives 600-800 daily visitors from different parts of the country and has had a footfall of 89,000 visitors till date. In the words of Jo Chopra, Executive Director of Latika Roy foundation and who is also on the executive board for Nayi Disha - In a short span of time, Nayi Disha itself as a rich source of information and guidance for families of children with developmental disabilities. The team is committed to making the latest research and evidence-based practice available to families as they try to do the best for their kids.

What are your future plans

We have ambitious plans in the coming years including creating a mobile-app to increase reach and making all the information resources available in Hindi. We want the directory to have country-wise reach with a focus on Tier 3 cities and small towns. The goal is to reach a million families and become the one stop digital destination for all the information and support needs of the families.



Technology Corner

SpeechWatch

Originally featured at Access and inclusion through technology
<https://www.closingthegap.com/speechwatch-is-the-worlds-first-stand-alone-aac-speech-device-that-is-worn-on-the-wrist/>

Developed and sold EXCLUSIVELY by Gus Communication Devices, the SpeechWatch is the world's first stand alone AAC/speech "device" that is worn on the wrist and is ideal for children and adults with autism, aphasia (stroke), Parkinson's, or any condition that affects their ability to communicate with friends and family.

The SpeechWatch is a stand alone speech tablet with a 2.2" display that does not require a secondary smart phone or tablet in order to create or edit buttons or pages.

The following items are pre-installed -

1. TalkTablet AAC/Speech app
2. Google premium voices

The SpeechWatch features and specifications are as follows...

- Speak by touching buttons that contain predefined words or phrases
- Add random text to phrases using the embedded on-screen keyboard

* Includes over 30,000+ symbols,

- TalkTablet includes NINE (9) SLP designed starter vocabularies that offer 16 to 48 buttons/page. OR create a new vocabulary of your own design



‘Each grid size (buttons/page) can be increased or decreased at any time to suit your needs

- Transition to literacy with word prediction

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