

ReSound Mission/SPH Alumni Trip Report

In January of 2015, Pathways to Children, a Minneapolis non-profit, organized a mission trip to Kolkata, India. In collaboration with ReSound, an international hearing aids developer headquartered in Minnesota, the trip included providing sustainable auditory care to young students at the Jan Seva school. The school, which educates young children and their mothers living in extreme poverty, is run by Pathways to Children's partner in Kolkata, The Society of Indian Children's Welfare (SICW). Jan Seva also features a special needs program for children called UDAAN, while operating a preschool for roughly 200 children. Besides primary education, the school provides clinical care for all of its students and their mothers, who also have the opportunity to seek job-training on campus.

Rodger Bakke, ReSound's Regional Sales Manager in Minnesota, generously donated 18 hearing aids for children suffering from profound hearing loss at the school. Bakke coordinated directly with Pathways' founder Grace Strangis to provide the state of the art hearing equipment, along with its necessary modification and maintenance software and hardware on behalf of ReSound.

Upon arriving with the hearing devices in Kolkata, Arnab Bakshi, a ReSound sales manager working in Kolkata, volunteered his time and came to Jan Seva to customize each hearing aid to fit the children's individual needs. The students' audiologic assessments required significant time and expertise. Mr. Bakshi's patience and willingness to donate his effort and skill were immeasurable contributions to the mission's success. Despite the long hours, witnessing many of the children receive the gift of sound for the first time in their lives made the experience truly unforgettable. The emotional impact of the event was especially powerful for the students, teachers, mothers and the mission trip volunteers.

Ranbir Mahato is a six-year old who was brought to Jan Seva during one of the school's bi-monthly disability clinics. At the time, Ranbir was suffering from "significant hearing impairment" and was unable to pronounce his own name. Seeing their son reduced to gesturing and unintelligible sounds, the Mahatos brought Ranbir to Jan Seva desperate to receive guidance on how to provide their son with a better life. Ranbir was promptly enrolled in the UDAAN program and added to the list of potential hearing aid recipients. Upon being fitted with his ear-moulds in January, Ranbir was able to hear



for the first time. His previous disinterest in using speech or language to communicate immediately reversed and he became an eager and attentive student. His customized hearing aids from ReSound have given him a new identity and sense of belonging. Ranbir can now pronounce his name, along with the names of his parents. In addition to becoming aware of this name, Ranbir and his family now have reason to be hopeful of his future.

Sayan Mondal had been attending UDAAN for a year while suffering from what his teachers described as “profound sensory neural hearing loss,” which prevented him from responding to his teachers and making many friends. Attending Jan Seva was often a dismal and frustrating experience for Sayan, who was initially mistaken for being mentally disabled, due to the extent of his hearing impairment. However, the six-year old’s life changed for the better when he was fitted with ReSound hearing aids on January 7th of this year. The shock of hearing his own voice left Sayan beaming and his mother crying tears of joy. The following day, Sayan’s mother apologized for delivering her sleepy son to his teachers after spending the entire night sharing sounds together for the first time. Despite the lack of sleep, Sayan was fully awake from hearing so many new sounds in his classroom. Filled with gratitude, he sought out Grace Strangis to say thank you - and to introduce her to another child who had been mistaken in the same way he had. Grace seized upon Sayan’s cues and had the classmate assessed and fitted for his own pair of ReSound hearing aids as well. Since receiving his generous gift, Sayan’s disposition has improved remarkably and he has been admitted to the Hellen Keller Institute for the Hearing Impaired in Kolkata.

In addition to impacting the students of Jan Seva and their parents, the collaboration between Pathways to Children and ReSound brought tremendous inspiration to the other volunteers on the mission trip. Accompanying Grace to Kolkata was a group of alumni from the University of Minnesota’s School of Public Health. The academic and health care leaders were able to witness the hearing device installations and observe the life-affirming change granted to the students. The mission which included volunteering at Jan Seva, its pediatric and women’s clinics and the UNDAA program, left such an impression on the alumni that Pathways has since forged a new partnership with the School of Public Health to create a graduate student field experience program at Jan Seva which will focus on researching and expanding Pathways to Children’s work in Kolkata.



The strategic partnership between Pathways to Children and ReSound is evidence of the great success that can be achieved when businesses and non-profit organizations work together. In addition to succeeding in the immediate goal of alleviating the hardship created by hearing disability for Jan Seva's students, ReSound has graciously supplied SICW with the infrastructure and technical knowledge needed for future maintenance and modification. SICW and ReSound also hosted educational counseling sessions with the families, who were educated on how hearing impairment affected the different levels and gaps of hearing and also on the appropriate use, care and maintenance of the hearing aids. ReSound also counseled the group on how to incorporate language development and sign language with positive results. Parental involvement and ownership plays a big role in understanding the importance of proper care of this valuable gift, while increasing a sense of responsibility and self-reliance. ReSound's extensive efforts have supplied the students of Jan Seva with an opportunity that otherwise would have been impossible for them to obtain, while ensuring that their gift will have a lasting effect for many years to come.



"The educational counseling sessions will not only help the children, but will make the parents aware how they can motivate their children. We would like to convey our sincere and heartfelt thanks to ReSound for their generous donation to our community based program. Your help has genuinely embodied the name of our NGO's partnership with Pathways to Children, "Jan Seva," meaning "service to mankind". Thank you, thank you ReSound and Pathways to Children."

-Dr. Zarin Dadina
Founder, Member and Chairman Emeritus, SICW

Pathways to Children Foundation

"Empowering children to change their world."

Pathways to Children helps and empowers children in extreme poverty through carefully selected collaborative projects focused on education, healthcare, and volunteerism.

This is accomplished by:

1. Partnering with Non-Government Agencies (NGOs), medical institutions, corporations and schools to adopt projects that focus on childhood education and health care.
2. Introduction of dedicated individuals to Pathways projects and providing opportunities to volunteer "on-site" with the children.
3. Raising sufficient funds to allow Pathways to make meaningful contributions to the projects they support.