

# Rehabilitation Programmes

*“One must continuously work. It is activity that confers authority. A doctor gains happiness in proportion to the work he puts in. The genuine doctor is one who delights in work.”*

–Sri Sathya Sai Baba, January 23, 1994

People suffer from sequelae of illnesses and conditions that can be agonising and interfere with daily life even after they have gone through treatment processes. It is during this difficult phase of their life that they require specialised care that addresses their physical, psychological, and social well-being. In addition to medical care, these patients require empathy, love, and moral support to make them aware of their inherent potential and to rejuvenate their energy. By achieving this through the rehabilitation process, they will be capable of facing daily challenges and reconnecting with their life. It is the wish of Sri Sathya Sai Baba that healthcare should be universal, evidence based, and not only cure the disease, but also heal the body, mind, and spirit. Above all, it should be administered with love.

For millions of people worldwide, basic medical care is difficult to obtain. Therefore in such conditions, it is not easy to seek specialty care, such as rehabilitation treatments. Nevertheless, with empathy and love, Sri Sathya Sai Organisations worldwide have participated in rehabilitation programmes in countries such as India, Sri Lanka, the USA, Zambia, South America, Kuwait, and many others. Some groups created new programmes, whereas others participated in already established rehabilitation programmes that served a variety of health problems. One rehabilitation centre provided appropriate educational programmes to children with special needs, whereas another helped homeless and orphaned children stay away from the path to delinquency. In another rehabilitation programme, volunteers helped prison inmates learn to control their emotions and impulsive behaviour. Social support was also provided to the families of patients suffering from AIDS; it served as a reminder that disease and illness do not affect solely the patient but also the family. Expressing our care and concern while working with these patients reminds us that all those who are physically, mentally, and situationally disabled are not completely disabled; they can become functional if provided with the opportunity. Below are brief summaries of several rehabilitation programmes organised by Sri Sathya Sai Organisations all over the world.

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## North America

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### USA

**Kentucky** On July 6, 2008, Sathya Sai volunteers from the Sri Sathya Sai Baba Centre in Louisville, Kentucky assisted the American Council of the Blind (ACB) during their annual conference in Louisville. Following the instructions given by the coordinator for the ACB Chapter in Louisville (who is also visually impaired) the volunteers were to introduce themselves, and extend the left arm for the visually impaired individual to hold, and then walk normally. Most of the volunteers were involved in providing assistance with the registration, escorting the attendees to the lecture or exhibition halls. Some were involved in helping them find their rooms. The highlight of this conference was the fact that nearly 2,000 visually impaired attendees from every corner of the country including Hawaii were present. Approximately, a thousand seeing eye-dogs were also a part of this gathering. A remarkable observation was the absence of any barking from these seeing eye-dogs. The resilience, fortitude, and most of all a sense of humour displayed by all attendees were remarkable. Many of them were meeting each other after several years, and it was fascinating to see how they recognised each other from their voices. Indeed, there were a number of very interesting incidents that took place when the volunteers interacted with them. The volunteers thanked Sri Sathya Sai Baba for this unique service opportunity.



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## Central America

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### Costa Rica

Sathya Sai volunteers lovingly tutor mentally challenged children. Currently, there are two service groups: one group helps disabled children in a shelter, and the other helps people living with AIDS.

### El Salvador

A home has been established that provides free living space for 20 disabled men in wheelchairs. Workshops are conducted so that they can have an independent livelihood.

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## South America

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### Colombia

For the past five years, the Laureles Sathya Sai Centre in Medellin has been working with children who are homeless and are addicted to drugs on the street. There are 29 children in the programme at present, and about 18 Sathya Sai volunteers participate. Some of the volunteers teach, while others prepare and serve meals for the children. They also provide education in human values (EHV) instruction once a week, and through constant interactions share Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Love with the children. Many of these children have been motivated to return to school to study. This has resulted in their remarkable transformation from high-risk social delinquents to loving, responsible individuals.

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## Europe

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### Greece

On June 8, 2004, the Pindarou Sathya Sai Centre organised a celebration at the Institute for Chronic Illness of the Young, in Skaramanga. For the past 10 years, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Greece has been organising an annual spring celebration at the Institution for Chronic Illnesses in Agia Barbara, in the Aigaleo area of Athens. A team of volunteers

regularly visits the elderly in nursing homes, spreading love and cheer.

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## Africa

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### Botswana

On July 31, 2004, in connection with Global Handicapped Day, Sathya Sai volunteers visited the Pudulogong Rehabilitation Centre for Blind Students at Mochudi, a town near Gaborone. The Centre donated two Braille machines and one copy of screen-reading software for the use of blind students. The Centre had earlier donated six Braille machines and one binder to this rehabilitation centre.

### Nigeria

Since June 2005, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Nigeria has been running an orphanage called Sri Sathya Sai Seva Orphanage Home in Lagos. The orphanage currently has nine children between 4 and 13 years of age, of whom five are physically challenged. The orphanage home building has been completely renovated, and a weekly meal plan is prepared by consulting a nutritionist. The children are also taken to a nearby physician for regular health checkups. With the help of the efforts of the Sathya Sai Organisation, the physically challenged children who were once unable to ambulate are able to walk today.

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## Middle East

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### Kuwait

Many parents of low and middle incomes find it difficult to educate their children with special needs. In response to this, the Kuwait Sathya Sai Centre opened the School for Special Needs Children as a service project in 1998. The school presently has 18 children and 16 volunteers. Children between the ages of 4 and 16 who have conditions such as Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy, and other learning disabilities are admitted to the school. They are assessed with professional help before admission to decide their level of ability and their requirements and are then placed in different groups. The morning

begins with prayers (and smiles) for these very special children, and the lessons are taught based on a structured curriculum.

Gross motor activities such as running, throwing, catching, and jumping are encouraged in the children through group activities. A range of fine motor activities is also carried out by the children to foster eye-hand coordination and to facilitate the development of small muscles. Skills to enable the children to be more independent are taught through steps like brushing teeth, washing, feeding, toilet training, personal hygiene, grooming, etc. Children are also encouraged to use all their senses—visual, auditory, taste, smell, and touch. They are encouraged to solve simple puzzles, gradually moving on to more complex cognitive skills such as problem solving and logical thinking. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught through conventional methods. Teaching aids such as videos and specially designed computer programmes are used to reinforce what is taught the conventional way. The volunteers teach art and crafts to the children as part of the curriculum and encourage students to perform cultural activities.

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## Asia

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### China

Service is performed by the volunteers and the youth team of Guangzhou at the home for the physically and mentally challenged children twice a month. They carry with them basic necessities like cooking oil, rice, soya sauce, fruits, cakes etc. They also feed the kids and interact with them.

### Sri Lanka

The youth have been involved with the inmates of Ragama Rehabilitation Hospital since the mid-90s and have developed a close relationship with many physically challenged persons, who wish to live normal lives after rehabilitation. This project's significance is that there is limited access for the physically challenged to public places. Youth assist in taking patients to places and events that would be otherwise very challenging for these inmates. The patients are taken on sightseeing tours to see several places and

activities. The youth have also conducted musical shows for the inmates on World Handicap Day.

### Taiwan



Over the past several years Sathya Sai volunteers including Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) children have been engaged in a variety of regular service projects. These include visits to a home for the elderly and a home for physically and developmentally challenged children where 60 seniors and approximately 70 disabled children are served with love and dedication. At the homes for the elderly, these Sathya Sai volunteers often bake cakes to celebrate the birthdays of the residents and hold their hands and feed them cake as if they were their own parents. The senior residents are moved to tears in response to this loving service. Similar scenes occur at the facilities for disabled children in Pali, where the young children cling to the volunteers, refusing to let them go during their visits.

On October 12, 2005 the volunteers of the Sathya Sai Centre in Tienmou visited a home for the elderly and distributed seven modern wheelchairs and a physiotherapy table. Two more wheelchairs were donated at a later date. Volunteers conduct service once a month at either the home for the physically challenged children or at a local home for the elderly.

Much of the work done in China and Taiwan prompted the China Post to remark on November 11, 2005, "Sri Sathya Sai Baba has inspired millions to pursue self-realisation and to serve others. ... It is exhilarating to encounter His message of love and compassion."

## Fiji and New Zealand

### Fiji

The Sathya Sai Organisation in Fiji received a container load of 550 wheelchairs for distribution to people who need one and cannot afford it. The Sathya Sai Organisation assembled the wheelchairs, assessed the application forms for free chairs, and then distributed them to people with amputated legs due to complications of diabetes, children with paraplegia, and victims affected by paralytic strokes.

The wheelchairs were sent by the Free Wheelchair Mission USA, which chose the Sathya Sai Organisation out of all the NGOs for distribution of the wheelchairs in Fiji. The president of the Free Wheelchair Mission, Don Schoendonfer, greatly admired the Sathya Sai Organisation for the volunteers' selfless service in Fiji and said, "You set the standard for the rest of the world to follow. Your attention to detail is truly amazing. It reflects the awesome heart you have to serve the poorest of the poor."

### New Zealand

#### Toys for Rehabilitation to "Kids First Hospital" - Auckland

Patients in paediatric hospitals need toys to play. Some hospitals need specialty therapeutic toys that the staff can use to help in the rehabilitation of children who have been admitted with serious burns. The need was for the supply of new, specialty water toys that could be used in the saline baths that seriously burned young children were placed in to aid the changing of their dressings. The hospital gave a list of required toys to the Sathya Sai Organisation representative which included over 60 specialty toys, with the majority of them to be used in the baths. A date was agreed upon for the first delivery, after which deliveries would be every four months. Thanks to the volunteers' enthusiasm, this service is still carrying on to this day as originally initiated. This programme is still ongoing twice a year.