

Our Services: Special Education

Navajeevana's Special Schools

Navajeevana knows that **only by giving disabled children the education and opportunities they deserve can we hope to achieve our vision of a society where people with disabilities are equal.** We also know that children with disabilities can face discrimination and neglect both within their families and in their communities as well as being excluded from mainstream education. For this reason, very soon after our inception in 1987, we undertook to provide special education for children with disabilities.

From humble beginnings this has now developed into a network of four special schools which provide over 100 children across the Hambantota, Matara and Ratnapura districts with access to education, opportunities, and for many, the chance to enter mainstream education.

Learning journeys to success: the Navajeevana approach

Our approach to special education is based around the premise that every child has a talent or skill, regardless of their disability. We aim to enable children to discover their talents and gain increased independence through providing them with **culturally appropriate education** and by supporting and building the capacity of their parents to contribute to their education and development.

This is achieved through a **child-centred curriculum** which combines formal and informal teaching of free play, music, dancing, letters, words, drawing, handicrafts and much more. In addition, we work alongside parents to develop their children's **self help** skills, such as washing and dressing, and assist them with small scale income generation projects, such as gardening. Finally, we offer children a variety of extracurricular social activities to help children develop their social skills – essential tools for their equal participation in today's society. These include annual sports days, art and drama displays, and celebration of national and religious holidays alongside children from mainstream education.

We work with each child as an individual, and identify opportunities for them to enter mainstream education. For those that do enter mainstream, we provide additional support classes for them in the afternoons at our four schools. For those that cannot enter mainstream, we continue the work at our schools and outside as long as they need us. We call this approach "**learning journeys to success**".

Our four special schools

Our **Tangalla** special school, located at the Navajeevana centre, is our biggest school, currently catering to 28 children. The school conducts morning classes as well as afternoon support classes for those children who have entered mainstream education but need further coaching.

Our special school at Walasgala, the **Rafaella Piva School**, caters for xx children and offers their mothers the opportunity to generate income through cultivation and coir rope making. The school is based near Dikwella and was founded in memory of tsunami victim Rafaella Piva from Italy.

Our **Kolombege-ara** school, near Embilitpitiya is our second largest school, offering education to over 30 children of varying disabilities. Both morning and evening classes are conducted as well as a sewing enterprise for mothers and young girls.

Our special school at **Angunukolapelessa** caters for twenty students and employs two teachers. The school offers access to education for children from some of the remotest and most deprived parts of southern Sri Lanka.

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