

P37 Autism public health education initiative (launch of a novel) aimed at parents, educators and peers in a developing country.

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BACKGROUND

Supportive peers, educators and parents make a significant difference to the quality of life of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In our setting, even though the education policy is inclusion, an ASD diagnosis may lead to non-acceptance into mainstream schools. Children with ASD are oftentimes bullied and targeted by their peers rather than being supported. Resource constraints also result in children with ASD receiving inadequate support in school.

Where resources are constrained, educating peers and teachers would impact the quality of the school experience for children with ASD by changing perspective and attitudes.

Storytelling is an age old tradition to teach ideals and values. This project aimed at educating through telling a story about a boy with autism.

OBJECTIVE

We aim to describe a public/Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) partnership project to launch a novel about a boy with autism.

METHOD

In November 2018, a community paediatric service, an autism support group and another local NGO partnered to launch a fictional novel about a boy with autism.

The novel was written by a community paediatric consultant to describe the features of autism through the life course and to take the reader on a journey through the challenges faced by the family through three perspectives: the boy, his sister and his mother. Book publication was funded by the local NGO. The launch was hosted by the autism support group. The book was endorsed by a famous local artiste, a local university lecturer in child health and a professor from a research institute for autism in the USA.

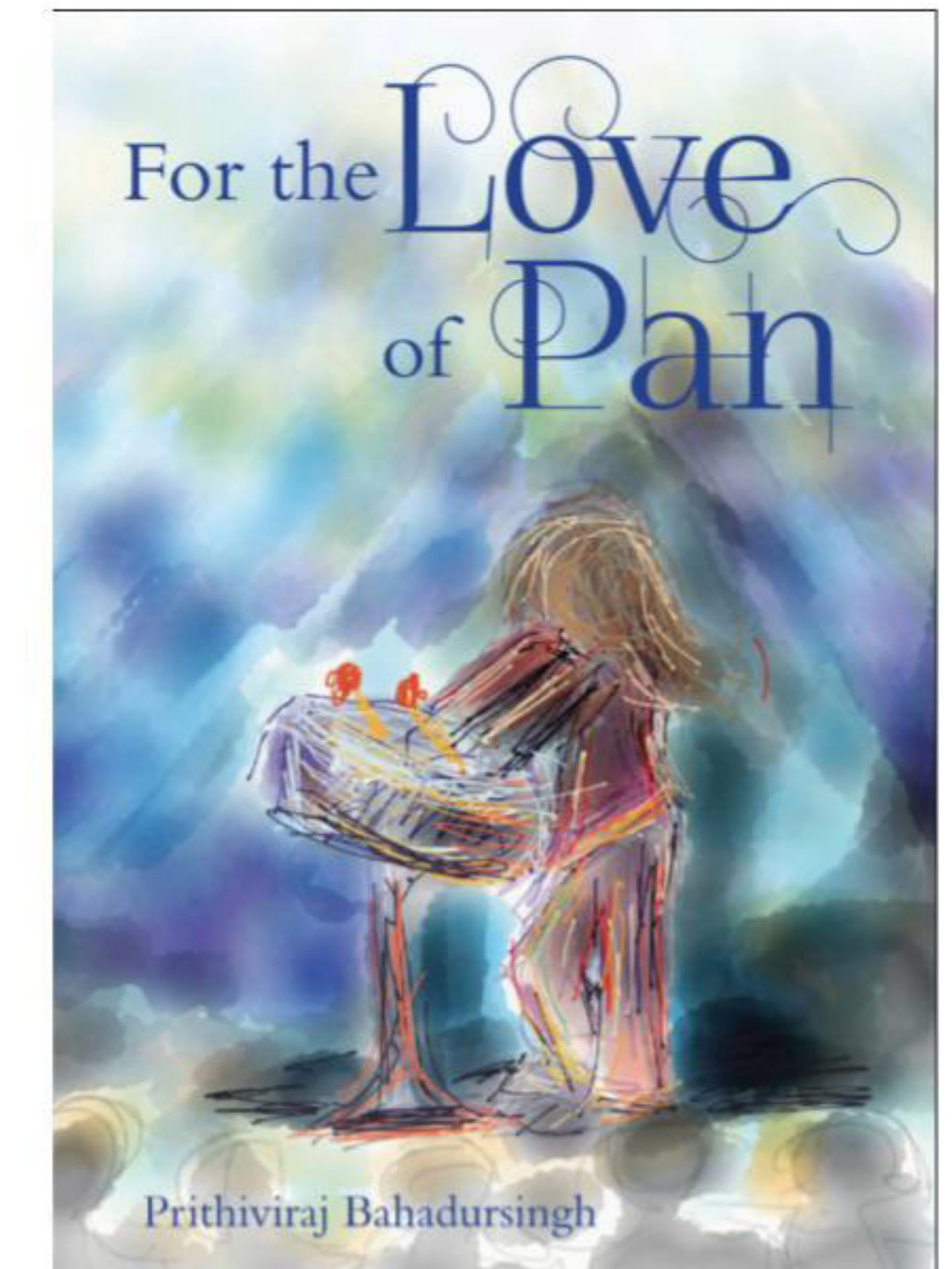
The second phase of the project sought sponsors to donate books to schools

nationwide. All profits from the book launch were to be utilised for projects for children with special needs.

RESULTS

The book launch was attended by the Director of Health for the region and the Minister of Health recognising the event as a public health education initiative. Parents, educators, health professionals and NGOs all attended. The book review was done by a paediatric trainee and mother of a child with ASD. Book readings were done by children with ASD.

The second phase saw local banks, NGOS and individuals giving donations resulting in two hundred and forty books being donated to schools. Profits from the book partially funded an adolescent ASD training for psychologists, social workers, teachers



and medical professionals, social workers, teachers and medical professionals from a range of public services including, regional health authorities, student support services, national family services, child protection services and autism NGOs in November 2019. The committee is currently advocating for the book to be placed on the schools' literature curriculum.

CONCLUSION

This public/NGO partnership project is an autism public health education initiative aimed at promoting awareness and understanding amongst peers, educators and parents. In resource constrained countries, this type of project can improve awareness as well as generate funding for projects aimed at improving quality of life.

