

Internship Report

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Background

- My name is Abhishek Pisharody, and I am a graduate student of Development Studies at Azim Premji University, Bangalore
- I came into the internship with high expectations, while also not knowing what exactly to expect.
- Prior to this internship, I had done my undergraduate studies in Literature, History, and Philosophy, worked as a Fellow in Teach For India, and worked as a research intern at the Takshashila Institution.
- While I did have previous experience working with children (from Teach For India), I had never worked with children with disabilities before.
- I was slightly nervous about the demanding nature of the internship, both psychologically and physically.
- I tried my best to approach the internship with an open mind, and was looking forward to learning more about the sector and nature of the work.

Events

- For the first few days of my internship, I helped out with the Guinean Ensemble logistics and media management.
- I loved the performances, specifically the power of music to bring together people of all ages and levels of ability to share in common joy and wonder.
- There were both people from the old age home as well as very young children present, as well as their parents and relatives.
- The events also let me connect with colleagues at Snehadhara for the first time.
- I learned many skills, including how to take photos per organization expectations, what it takes to put on an event, etc. I familiarized myself with all the backend logistics required to put on an event like this for stakeholders.



The Guinean Ensemble performance was a blast! Headed by Master Fakoly, it was an honor and privilege to watch a master and his talented team enthrall the crowds with the Djembe

Old Age Home

- Part of my direct care exposure included visits to the Omashram Trust Old Age Home
- As part of the work, I got to co-facilitate some of these direct beneficiary sessions.
- I particularly enjoyed the sessions involving percussion instruments, as the stakeholders got really invested in those.
- I got to learn a lot from the facilitators including Sindhu, Satish, and Darvi. I loved how well they got along with the stakeholders, and conducted themselves really well.
- I learned how to conduct direct beneficiary sessions better, and could feel my co-facilitation skills get better through the experience. Specifically, after one observation that provided feedback.
- In the future, I would like to maybe independently facilitate one of these sessions. .



The Direct Care Sessions at Omashram Trust were my first experience serving the elderly. I enjoyed getting to build a rapport with and co-facilitating sessions for the senior citizens.

Direct Work with Children

I got to meet all the children Snehadhara works with and began building a rapport with most of them.

- Much of the work challenged me physically and psychologically, but I pushed through and enjoyed it nonetheless.
- I learned a lot through the five weeks I did this, such as how to gauge whether the children are learning or understanding what we're saying, how to manage breakdowns in behaviour, the specific quirks of each child etc.
- I was really good at documenting the sessions, and got better at it through the course of my internship.
- By the last two weeks, I had also begun to facilitate my own sessions, which was challenging but a great learning experience.
- I learned how to facilitate arts-based sessions despite not being great at art.



The majority of my internship was direct work with children, involving observation, co-facilitation, facilitation and documentation of direct beneficiary sessions with the children Snehadhara serves

Campus

I was on Snehadhara's campus for one and a half weeks out of my internship.

- Being on campus was an enriching experience, and I really enjoyed being a part of the community.
- The campus was a great space to build bonds with colleagues and children, as we would live, eat, and sleep together as a team.
- I built a great rapport with Kavan, Krishna, and Rohan, although I could not fully understand Karthik, Sujatha, and Ahira.
- The sessions were different compared to the city ones, but a lot of fun! I particularly enjoyed the 'community work' sessions, where all of us would get together for community activities like cooking, gardening, etc.
- I would have liked to have been on campus more, and would love to visit in the future.



Being at Snehadhara's campus was a great immersion experience and whirlwind tour in what it takes to build and run an inclusive and empowering residential educational programme for children with disabilities.

Diya Foundation

On June 14'th, I had the opportunity to join the teach for the Diya Foundation outreach session.

- This vocational training centre challenged my preconceived notions of what special children could do.
- I was absolutely astounded at the degree of independence of many of these students, as they co-managed the entire space, and many of them were preparing to join companies.
- It got me thinking about the power of arts-based sessions and vocational training combined to aid in a child's holistic development.
- The Diya Foundation seemed to also have a very different pedagogy than the Snehadhara Foundation.
- I would have loved to attend more sessions here, as Snehadhara conducts its trainings and outreach.



Working with the Diya Foundation was great exposure, as they served a similar but distinct group of stakeholders with a different vision of personal development.

The Last Week

For my last week, I spent it at the city office, where the campus and city children would all arrive together, even as most of the team was busy with the API contact sessions.

- I co-facilitated many sessions, and even independently facilitated a few group sessions.
- I feel like I was really able to connect with many of these children around this time, especially Karthik, Shresth, and Aravind.
- I received great feedback about my facilitation of one the sessions from Priya, which was really nice!
- Additionally, I was pleased at the way my 'crocodile salad' session went, as I was quite nervous, but learned to trust in my abilities as a facilitator.
- It was a memorable week for both students and us, and the memories continue to adorn the walls of the city office :)



My last week at Snehadhara was incredibly fun and packed with learning, as I got to facilitate a lot of group sessions, and co-manage the unique group of campus and city children combined.

Reflections

- After concluding my internship at Snehadhara, I feel many of my preconceived notions have been challenged and changed by the experience.
- I was always a strong believer in diagnosis, clinical psychology, CBT, and other positivist approaches to helping children with special needs.
- My work here at Snehadhara, facilitating arts-based sessions and bearing witness to its unique approach and pedagogy made me reconsider and re-examine many of these views.
- I recall one conversation with Yashaswini about the problematic aspects of establishment views and approaches and their role in creating exclusion.
- I also saw how well some of these arts based sessions worked in connecting with the children and getting them to express themselves.
- I really enjoyed working with the team at Snehadhara - to work alongside such passionate people really gave me a lot of strength in continuing with the work even when things got hard.
- There are some things I would have liked to have done differently - such as facilitate with more energy, play a more active role when co-facilitating, and spending more time on campus, being a part of the community there.
- It would be remiss of me not to mention the one API session I attended, which was a whale of a time and taught me about skills I didnt even know I possessed. I would have loved to have attended more.
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**Thank you to everyone at Snehadhara
for a wonderful internship!**

