



Snehadhara Foundation

# Internship Report

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# My Journey with Snehadhara Foundation

I took up this internship at Snehadhara Foundation because I was in awe of the work being done here. Having interacted with neurodivergent individuals for some time, I found the concept of Arts Practices for Inclusion to be highly intriguing and was eager to learn more about the innovative work being done. During my internship, I had the privilege of meeting exceptionally talented facilitators and some truly wonderful children.

I spent time both at the city office and the main campus, observing, facilitating, and co-facilitating sessions with many children. Each of these experiences was enriching and educational.

Maintaining a logbook as an intern proved invaluable, as it helped me reflect on the sessions and discuss them further with the facilitators, enhancing my understanding of session plans and their execution.





## Roles and Responsibilities as an Intern



During my time as an intern at Snehadhara Foundation, I engaged in a variety of roles and responsibilities. I observed sessions conducted by other facilitators, which provided valuable insights into different approaches and techniques. On a daily basis, I co-facilitated sessions, and at times, I facilitated sessions independently. Additionally, I had the opportunity to observe and participate in sessions at an old age home and government schools. I was responsible for documenting the sessions I was involved in, which included maintaining a detailed logbook. This logbook not only captured the details of each session but also included my reflections, such as my learnings and suggestions for improvement.

### About the Sessions I Facilitated and Observed

Before facilitating or co-facilitating each session, I thoroughly read the session plans and clarified any doubts with the facilitators present. Observing the earlier sessions of each child I worked with gave me a valuable understanding of their likes, dislikes, and interest patterns. I found one-on-one sessions to be more manageable than group sessions, as they allowed me to focus my attention on a single child and the specific task at hand. I particularly enjoyed handwork and movement sessions, as it was easier to engage the children's interest. Movement sessions were especially lively with the addition of music and enthusiastic participation. Handwork or artwork sessions ran smoothly when I demonstrated genuine interest in the task, which in turn inspired the children to follow my lead. In group sessions, I primarily observed or co-facilitated by partnering with one of the children, focusing on their journey towards the session's goals. I also paid special attention to specific children for whom I wrote performance documentation.



## How I Know the Children Learned Something

To illustrate how I assessed the children's learning, I'll provide an example involving Arvind. During a series of sessions where we worked on a stitching project, I was particularly eager to engage in handwork, a skill I am passionate about. Initially, Arvind showed little interest in the task. The presence of multiple people might have contributed to his distraction. However, he occasionally attempted the stitching when he observed how others approached it. By the end of the first session, Arvind had improved his technique in pushing the needle through one hole and pulling it out with his other hand, following my instructions. I repeatedly emphasized the term "stitching" to reinforce the concept.

In the second session, as soon as Arvind saw the materials and heard the word "stitching," he instinctively began mimicking the stitching motion with his hands. Although he initially took some time to adjust to the task, he soon began to exceed my instructions by using only one hand to push and pull the needle, mirroring my own method without any prompting. He even attempted to stitch in a straight line, an advanced skill I had not explicitly asked him to practice, demonstrating his grasp of the technique.

Another notable example comes from observing two government school sessions led by different facilitators. In the first session, the facilitator repeatedly explained the functions of different types of teeth, such as incisors for cutting and canines for tearing. While I initially thought the children might only memorize these functions, I was impressed when, in a subsequent session with a different facilitator, the children spontaneously provided additional examples. They mentioned that incisors help eat apples and canines help eat chicken, reflecting their understanding and ability to apply the information in diverse contexts.






## Example of Personal Growth





One of the most significant areas of personal growth during this internship was the learning I gained from the facilitators' approach of minimal direct instruction. Instead of providing specific training, I was encouraged to observe sessions, gradually co-facilitate, and eventually lead sessions on my own. This step-by-step process, devoid of direct guidance, proved to be more enriching than any formal class or course. It taught me how to observe sessions effectively, identify key points to note, and understand the unique needs of each child. Additionally, my perspective on documentation changed significantly. Previously, I considered documentation to be a largely pointless task, but through this internship, I learned its value. Reviewing documentation from previous sessions provided me with insights into behavior patterns and session rules, which was instrumental in preparing for my own sessions.

Most importantly, I developed patience, especially when working with children who were reluctant to engage or preferred exploring their environment over participating in the session. I discovered that the best way to engage a child is to show genuine interest in the task myself, demonstrating that enthusiasm and patience are crucial in fostering their involvement.




## How My Understanding of the Special Needs Population Evolved



While I had been working with the special needs population for some time, this internship provided me with the opportunity to engage with a broader range of age groups, which deepened my understanding significantly. One of the key insights I gained was that age and capabilities do not always correlate, especially within the neurodivergent population. I learned that each child progresses at their own pace and in their own unique manner, which can be quite distinct from conventional developmental expectations.

A particularly impactful moment for me was a conversation among the facilitators about an outdoor session. Although all the children were actively participating by kicking the ball far, bringing it back, and engaging interactively with the facilitators, the most significant achievement of the day was a child who voluntarily stood up from his wheelchair and used his crutches to push the football back and forth. This act, though perhaps less noticeable in a conventional sense, was a profound demonstration of personal progress and determination, illustrating how each child's journey is defined by their own milestones rather than by a standardized measure of ability.

this experience reinforced my understanding that progress and achievement in the special needs population are deeply individualistic and should be recognized and celebrated in their own right.





## What Was Easy for Me



I discovered that I felt most at ease during one-on-one sessions where I could concentrate on an individual child and the specific task at hand. This setting allowed me to tailor my approach to each child's needs and preferences, fostering a more personalized and effective interaction. Additionally, I found it more comfortable to work in environments where I could communicate in English, given that I do not speak Kannada. This language preference helped me engage more effectively with both the children and my colleagues.

I also found it easier to connect with children who interacted with me, whether verbally or non-verbally, and who had become familiar with me through observing sessions and casual interactions outside of structured activities. This familiarity often led to smoother and more productive sessions.

Moreover, I particularly enjoyed sessions involving outdoor activities or art-based projects. These types of sessions felt more engaging and enjoyable compared to those that required extensive speaking and listening. The hands-on, creative nature of art and outdoor activities allowed me to connect with the children more dynamically and facilitate their participation in a more stimulating and interactive manner.



## What Was Challenging



I faced several challenges during my internship, particularly when sessions were conducted in Kannada. Although I could generally understand the activities taking place, my limited proficiency in Kannada significantly restricted my ability to contribute meaningfully. This language barrier was most evident during government school sessions when children would ask me questions, and I struggled to respond in a way they could comprehend. Despite my strong desire to communicate and build rapport with them, the language gap often left me feeling ineffective and frustrated.

Another challenge occurred with children who were resistant to my presence or interactions. I found myself at a loss when faced with such situations, unsure of how to proceed effectively. For instance, there was a session where a child became upset because they could not access the materials they wanted. This frustration led to the child refusing to participate and crying throughout the session. Despite my attempts to offer alternative materials and engage the child, I struggled to make progress.

Fortunately, a facilitator stepped in and successfully redirected the child to another activity they enjoyed, which alleviated the situation.

These experiences highlighted areas where I need to improve, such as developing strategies for overcoming language barriers and finding ways to manage and engage with children who are initially resistant or distressed.





Throughout my internship at Snehadhara Foundation, I developed a range of essential skills that have enriched my professional capabilities. My experience in facilitation and co-facilitation allowed me to refine my approach to engaging children and managing activities effectively.

Maintaining a detailed logbook sharpened my observational skills and documentation techniques, which are crucial for tracking progress and understanding behavior patterns.

Working with neurodivergent individuals cultivated my patience and empathy, particularly in one-on-one settings and with children who were initially resistant.

## Skills I Built



I learned to be adaptable, adjusting my communication and facilitation strategies based on individual needs, whether interacting with children or collaborating with facilitators.

Despite facing language barriers, I improved my communication skills and developed strategies to bridge gaps in understanding. Designing and leading creative, hands-on activities, such as art projects and outdoor sessions, enhanced my ability to create engaging and interactive environments that fostered active participation.

I also honed my problem-solving abilities by developing strategies to manage resistance and distress, finding effective ways to engage children who were struggling. Regular reflective practice enabled me to integrate my learning, recognize areas for improvement, and apply insights to future interactions. Moreover, working with a diverse range of age groups deepened my understanding of the unique needs and progress of neurodivergent individuals, further informing my approach and enhancing my overall effectiveness.

## My Learnings from the Internship

During my internship at Snehadhara Foundation, I gained a wealth of insights and skills that have profoundly influenced my approach to working with neurodivergent individuals. One of the most valuable lessons was the power of observational learning. By closely watching experienced facilitators and reflecting on their techniques, I learned that absorbing knowledge through observation and practice can be more impactful than direct instruction alone. This method allowed me to internalize various strategies in a natural and effective manner.


I also came to appreciate the critical role of thorough documentation. Initially, I underestimated its importance, but maintaining a detailed logbook proved essential for tracking progress, reflecting on sessions, and preparing for future activities. The logbook provided a comprehensive view of each session, revealing behavior patterns and offering insights that significantly enhanced my facilitation skills.

Patience and genuine enthusiasm emerged as crucial factors in engaging children effectively. I discovered that children respond more positively when they sense that facilitators are truly passionate about the activity. Demonstrating this enthusiasm not only fostered better participation but also helped in building stronger connections with the children.

Adaptability in communication was another key learning point. Whether working individually with a child or in a group setting, tailoring my approach based on each child's needs and the context proved vital for successful interactions. This flexibility enabled me to connect more effectively and facilitate more engaging sessions.







An important realization was that progress among children is highly individualistic. Each child advances at their own pace, and achievements should be celebrated based on personal milestones rather than conventional benchmarks. This perspective reinforced the importance of recognizing and valuing each child's unique journey.

The challenge of working in Kannada highlighted the need to address language barriers. Effective communication is crucial for building rapport and facilitating sessions, and finding ways to bridge language gaps is essential for success. This experience taught me the importance of developing strategies to overcome communication challenges.

Managing resistance and distress in children was another significant learning experience. I learned the importance of being flexible and finding alternative strategies to engage children who may initially resist or become upset. This skill is crucial for maintaining a positive and productive session environment. I found creative and hands-on activities, such as art projects and outdoor sessions, to be particularly effective in engaging children. These activities allowed for more dynamic interactions and created a stimulating environment that facilitated better participation.

Observing skilled facilitators provided a valuable model for my own practice. Their ability to adapt, empathize, and encourage children was inspiring and highlighted the importance of their roles in guiding and supporting children. Overall, this internship was a transformative experience that significantly enhanced my understanding of working with neurodivergent individuals and facilitated considerable personal and professional growth.

Thank You SF  
Team for the  
lovely  
experience <3

