

Snehadhara Foundation

Annual Report

2015-16



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ABOUT



Snehadhara Foundation (SF) is a registered non-profit organization based in Bangalore that works with children and adults who are differently abled, their caregivers and their families. We are the first and only Centre in India that uses **Arts Based Therapy** as the primary methodology to work with children and adults with disabilities and special needs.

SF aims to bridge developmental deficits in education and inclusion. Our approach to this is two-fold. We create opportunities for learning for children with special needs and enable additional possibilities to achieve independence and empowerment.

VISION

To create a self-sustainable community model for independent survival of children and adults with disabilities.

MISSION

To connect to children and adults with cross disabilities using Arts Based Therapy.

HIGHLIGHTS 2015-2016



In 2015- 2016 we worked with 225 children through direct and weekly interventions, with 5000 children through indirect Interventions in schools and other receptive environments, about 100 parents and caregivers through workshops and sessions, and another 100 teachers through trainings and workshops.

The following pages reveal all the stories of this year.

DIRECT CARE



The Direct Care space of Snehadhara is our social lab, where we work with the children using Arts Based Therapy (ABT). This space aspires to be a model for special populations which addresses life goals, academic interventions, and where possible, learning experiences to meet vocational goals, livelihood and long term care giving. Through various programs we work with children across disabilities and across age groups.

This year the endeavour was to enable us to tread the path from the familiar to the unfamiliar, with the intent that the learning permeates to everyone in a variety of spaces within and outside Snehadhara.

UHURU PROGRAM



The Uhuru program consisted of sessions at the centre that were focussed on learning and therapeutic goals, and a process which assisted in achieving these goals even outside the centre. Our attempts towards this have been visible in Decathlon, at Aarohi and lately through the Ishanya program.

The goal for our children at the centre through the week long program Uhuru has been delivered in two formats: One-on-one sessions in the mornings and Group sessions in the afternoons. The one-on-one sessions focussed on the very specific requirements of each child. These are in the areas of motor, sensory, cognitive, physical education, daily living skills, social awareness, communication and academics. For the group sessions, the children were divided into 5 groups. The intent for the groups was as follows:

Gross, Fine, Oral Motor Skills, Attention and Activities of Daily Living (ADL)
Communication – Speech & Language, Group Interaction, Attention, Sports
Cognition, Academics, Narrative Capabilities, Group Interaction and Attention System.
Cooking, Gardening, Sports, Physical Education, ADL, Social Awareness, Sex Education,
Cognition, Academics, Mindfulness and offering spaces of Inclusive Learning.

The team at Snehadhara this year has welcomed facilitators from varied backgrounds each of who bring in their expertise of working with children. This year too we have had interns from across who have been a part of the real time operations at the organisation.

The journey from near to far has progressed, with the children, in their responses to external facilitators.

Visual arts have played an important role in the sensory and fine motor stimulation at Snehadhara this year. Now the stress is on focussed creative activities and collective working not just experiential in nature so there is a larger exposure to art and craft with varied materials like aluminium foil, feathers, coffee beans, textured paper, sequins etc. This is enabled by guest faculty and parent Vani Joshi, once a week for older children.

Theatre and storytelling are an integral part of Snehadhara - looking at attention, narrative capability, communication, speech and language and have been supported by Indra during the preparation for the Animal Farm theatre production as well as weekly sessions with some of the children.

The weekly Yoga sessions, conducted by Mr Ramamurthy, with the older boys enabled our children to explore the physical realm in a different way and remarkably respond positively to faculty from outside.

Chetan is another facilitator who supported the overnights group on Fridays. He brought with him a unique blend of playfulness, attentiveness to their needs and the ability to understand the space and its requirements.

And then there were the external spaces which the children frequented in the quest for wider experiences.

Here is a video 'Uhuru @Direct Care'



DECATHLON

Sport and outdoor activities are an integral part of the curriculum at Snehadhara. Games and play, exercise, cycling, running, football skills, all these are an exciting part of regular weekly outdoor activities. This year, as a new initiative, a few children visited Decathlon once a week, for a specific sport – basketball, where they were oriented to warm up exercises and the skills essential to the game.

ISHANYA CO-LOCATION

SF collaborated with Ishanya for a pilot program on 'technology assisted intervention' for children with special needs. The pilot program was planned for 3 months where three of our children attended the sessions as a part of their integrated week long program. The objective of this collaboration was to create a child centric equal stake holder model which brings together co-location of organisations to share resources and expertise.

AAROHI

A major milestone for three of our children was the visit to Aarohi where independent living and participation in the community was another learning of sorts for us. At Aarohi, they believe 'A Child decides what, how, when, with whom & how well he/she wants to learn. We do not follow any philosophy, we follow the child.' We saw this in action for three days and it was fascinating to see how the space evolves. And our children once again adapted and adjusted and even contributed to the community spending 2 nights away from familiarity and patterns they were accustomed to. An immense learning for all of us.

[Here](#) is a video 'The Great Outdoor Experience @Direct Care'

OUR SMALL STEP TOWARDS INCLUSION - TRAVELLING WITH STORIES



As a part of Teacher's Day celebration and International Literacy Day we signed-up with Pratham One Day Story campaign to take a story to different places and reach out to at least 1000 children and adults. We began this journey with visiting the apartment communities of some of our children and taking the story to government schools, old age homes, orphanages, organisations working with children at high risk.

'A boy and his drum' took a journey quite its own into the realm of drama, songs, drum beats; each aspect infusing fresh energy that did not let the tale get stale for the audience and especially the storytellers who reinvented with each telling. Each narration provided it distinct flavours imbibed from the storyteller, the listeners, the ambience of the space and the experience of repetition that deepened its essence.

The story session at Hulimavu brought out the child in each one of us. At SJR Luxuria the story started late in the evening, followed by a drum circle. The rains could not stop the children and their cheer. We were at Snehadhaan, Mantri Residency and Shiva Bala Yogi Old Age home. The children of Mantri Residency and the senior citizens group of the apartment complex joined us through the session. At Shiva Bala Yogi Old age ashram, we heard stories that each one shared as the boy told his story of the drum.

The children at Sunbeam, Child Fund Association brought the story to life with their songs and claps. At Meenakshi Residency, the story was created by the children. The children decided the script using the props that were laid out. Finally, here Rahul gets the drum.

An evening by the lake brought the story to life while culminating the event. Songs, movements, instruments, with the perfect backdrop of the lake had the boy 'Keshavraju Thippaswamy and the Drum'.

The story travelled to many places, went through its own journey. Each group brought out their best and added to the narrative. Not only were we connected to each other, to the story and its characters but mainly to our own core, our own patterns that were revealed to us in the universal message conveyed by the story.

OOTA THOTA



Snehadhara's flagship project, the Oota-Thota Program brings the classroom into the kitchen. Using the kitchen as a facilitated space, the program looks at building awareness, social skills and a prospective livelihood option for children with special needs.

One of the highlights of this program was to explore possibilities for employment with established cafes/restaurants which in turn can help look at setting up a small cafeteria or bakery that can be run and managed independently by the children in the long run. The program was mainly being run for children from other spaces than Snehadhara.

Sessions were held at the premises of Snehadhara primarily. However our relationship with food also entered a new arena of skills associated with outdoor spaces.

We conducted a few at other locations such as plant nurseries, supermarkets, restaurants/cafes. So whether it was the experience of a tuck shop selling pani-puri at the centre during summer school or eating out at Kai Ruchi, our neighbourhood eatery, the intent of stepping out of the comfort zone and interacting with the world outside was clear. The social exchange of creating and the empowerment of being able to sell it had its own value. The ability to be a part of the external world with all its social constructs and yet hold our own too was invaluable in its own way.

As a part of this initiative we encouraged experiences of outdoor spaces, beyond homes and learning centres, and created opportunities for the children.



The group also started going to **Beach Hut**, JP Nagar for a few hours each Tuesday. It is a cafe near the centre where the children began by helping out initially with simple table setting, chopping of vegetables and just being comfortable in an external environment. How the dynamics changed for them and they established their unique relationship with the staff and the space is magical and explicit in the video attached here.

[Here](#) is a video of what we did this year in **Oota Thota**.

PIPILIKA



The focus for us this year across our Pipilika program has also been to explore the methodology of working with the arts in manifold ways in diverse spaces. The program had three main parts, the overnight experience, the sessions at the centre and the outdoor visits. The overnighters at the centre were designed to allow each child to exhibit independence in taking care of their belongings, self care needs of eating and dressing, setting up their bedding, packing/unpacking etc. The sessions at the centre have been focused on the following:

Art: To address group interaction, creative expression, cognition and fine motor skills, visual art sessions such as collage making, Mandala, festival decorations, puppet making, Zen painting, making cards, modelling with clay etc. have taken place along with activities such as cooking, pottery, drumming etc.

Storytelling: Was used as a means to help the group connect to each other through stories that they either told to each other or developed as a group. Stories were used to convey messages and mind mapping to make associations and enhance creative thinking.

Movement for body awareness: Movement and exercise was inevitably a part of each session. Movement was also used as a means to bring about body awareness. A few sessions on expressing emotions and maintaining personal space were conducted using drama and theatre as a medium of communication.

Animal Farm play: A very significant experience for the children this year was the exposure to theatre techniques at the centre and then the presentation of the play at Ranga Shankara. The intent was to see how they receive the practices on a regular basis, how they respond to the rigor of a production and how they carry themselves in a social setting.

Outdoor visits: Many outdoor visits were planned when the children stayed over with us on Fridays to expose them to unfamiliar space and situations as a group, adjust to environments that are new and increase independence in managing oneself especially when staying away from home or the centre. We visited many places as a group from parks, temples, overnight houses visits (Kengeri) to one out of town overnighter (Wedding in Mandya).

Gunina Farms The inclusion of the experiential learning space at Gunina Farms was aimed at addressing our overarching goal of reaching out beyond the home and centre. As we set out on a new journey at Gunina Farms, it was an auspicious moment for us to have Gheshela Ngawang Jangchup spend time talking to the team and showering us with wishes and prayers.



5K RUN



Freedom to us has always been breaking free of our biases, our prejudices and celebrating our differences. Freedom to us has meant creating a society in which we nurture each other and take steps together. This Independence day the special children of Snehadhara were a part of the 5K Bannerghatta Run organised by Snap Fitness and Decathlon. The idea of participating in this was to work on the stamina of our children to adapt to change, be amidst people and help them and us to step out of the comfort zone. The kids surprised us as always.

ANIMAL FARM - A MILESTONE FOR OUR CHILDREN



A new stage performance of George Orwell's "Animal Farm" by Centre for Film and Drama (CFD) in collaboration with Snehadhara Foundation was performed at Ranga Shankara, Bangalore on 21st & 22nd October 2015. The 18 member cast of the play included special needs children from Snehadhara, a few children from other schools and a cast of theatre artistes and adults from various walks of life. The production offered the children an opportunity to explore their interests in theatre, music and dance and to be an integral element of the production. It was also a unique experience for the cast to share stage space with the children. It was a long journey to the final presentation, one that included months of pre prep in the form of weekly theatre classes. On the day of the performance, it was commendable how the children could bear the interminable wait in the wings, they showed no sense of ego or pride, were focussed on the performance to motivate and enhance their final presentation, they stayed immersed in their own selves - yet were an integral part of the whole montage.

VINATI

‘Vinati’, which means to seek/request, is the research unit at Snehadhara Foundation. Through this we examine and question our current practices, understand and build new methodologies in art based therapy, improvise content and set best practices. There was one research project that was conducted at the centre this year.

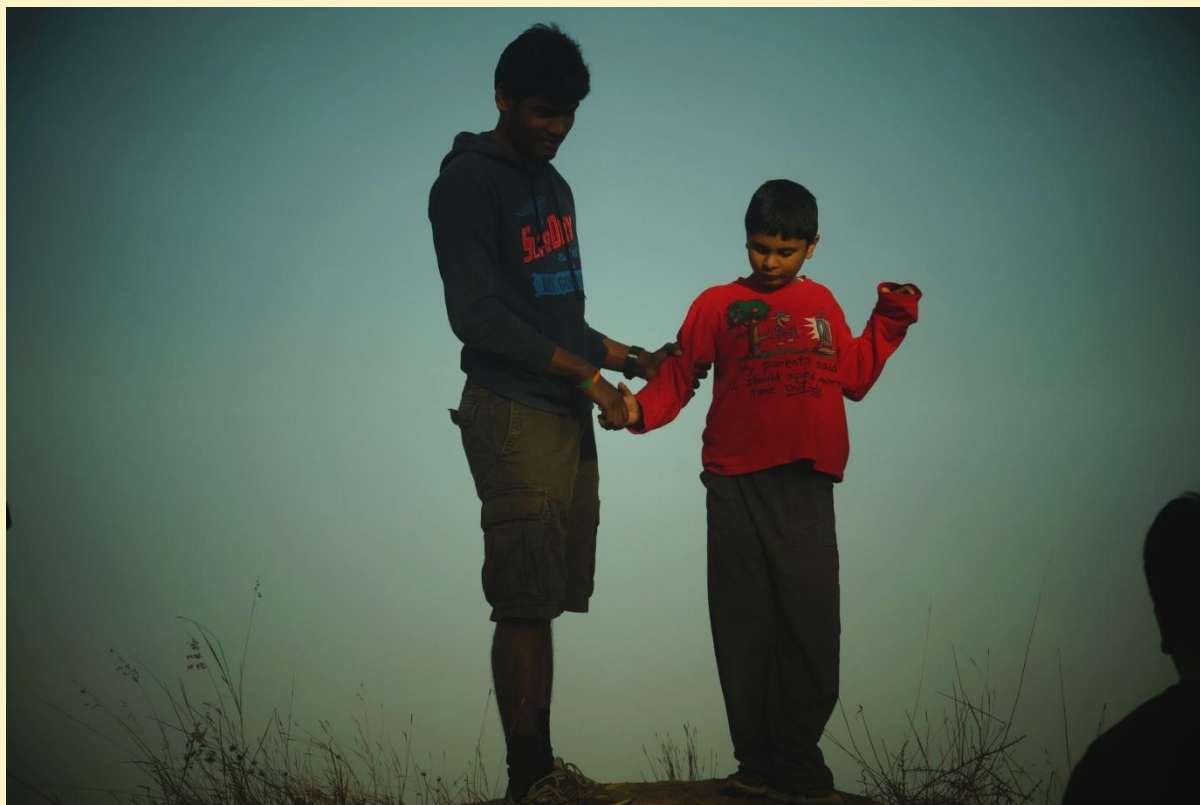
Tiny Steps was a study undertaken by Manikamba DJ (Manasa) of **Arts Based Therapy (ABT)** as an educational tool Snehadhara used for working with children with special needs.

ABT includes music, drama, visual arts, play, movement, dance and music for therapy.

The group that was chosen for the ABT intervention was within the age group of 6 years to 11 years. The heterogeneous group had one child with Autism, two with Cerebral Palsy, one child with Microcephaly and one with mental retardation. The goals identified for the group were Attention, Fine Motor and Gross Motor skills. The intervention period of the group was 36 ABT sessions from June 2015 to September 2015.

The overall results for the whole group indicate immense change in the area of Attention - even more than in the Fine and Gross motor skills. There were some noticeable changes in the areas of Routine Interaction at Home and Communication according to the parents. Overall ABT intervention has helped in bringing about positive changes in the area of Attention.

TUKIO



“When children come in contact with nature, they reveal their strength.”- Maria Montessori

At Snehadhara, our efforts have always been towards looking at learning through the lens of experience and exploration. Also, assumptions about the physical capabilities of the disabled are widely off mark and we believe if given a challenging receptive environment they could achieve increased developmental milestones.

This is a space that is being widely explored in the West, with Adventure Therapy being an increasingly accepted psychotherapeutic method that is used in rehabilitation, growth and development of people with difficulties and special needs.

Taking this ahead, we piloted a three month long program with 6 children from Jan – March. We partnered with Outlife Learning and Development, Hyderabad for this project.

Objectives of the program:

- To look at inclusive adaptive learnings in outdoor settings.
- To experience nature based learning and interaction in group settings with external facilitators.
- To help kids discover the natural and outer world through all their senses and develop an inner courage.
- To build self-awareness through challenge and trust.
- To expose children to break away from day-to-day living, while exploring the outdoors in an exciting, supportive and safe environment.

The activities were conducted under supervision of trained outdoor educators from [Outlife](#) supported by a facilitator from Snehadhara. A fun, safe and accepting environment, specifically designed to provide the kids with a variety of methods and tools to help them interact with their own selves, others and the environment. The field activities involved - Low and High challenge course elements, Balance and movement outdoor play activities for motor skill development and motivation, Cooperative outdoor play activities to develop social skills, Nature activities to discover the natural world, overnight camping under supervision and Star Gazing and Bonfire.

We also opened one session to our parent moms. Four of our intrepid mothers took up the gauntlet to step out of their comfort zone, let go of their inhibitions and fears and explore their relationship with ropes and gravity and balance. They inspired themselves, each other and ventured a little into the world that their children inhabit every weekend at Tukio. Please see the video link [Phenomenal Women](#).



EXPANDING OUR UNIVERSE

SELF WORK



To a team that lives it by the moment, it is always humbling to walk the path together and partake of a journey where we meet 'ourselves', learn more about our place in the work space and enhance our knowledge and skills. The following are some of the team training sessions and workshops.

First aid training In keeping with our endeavour of safety for our children, we had an in house session on basic first aid for the facilitators as well as the support staff. Some of the areas addressed were choking, sprains, insect bites, seizures, fainting, minor cuts and wounds etc. The first aid box was revamped keeping the requirements in mind. The home remedies were looked at with common sense and caution framing the dos and don'ts.

Wednesday session We continue the effort of connecting with ourselves and with the team through our in house sessions on Wednesdays that are supported by each facilitator one by one. We bring the richness of our personal flavours, beliefs, talents, abilities and share them in a space that provides individual and collective strengths to our endeavours. The sessions have made us aware of ourselves through the exploration of our physical, mental, spiritual sides through activities that range from yoga, mudras, meditative practices, poetry circles, visual and sensory artistic expressions to playful games and fun filled frolic.

GCSS The Global Congress of Spiritual Scientists (GCSS) is a unique platform created to bring together several New Age Spiritual Masters and Scientists of the world to share their spiritual perspectives, research work and experiences. Four facilitators from Snehadhara attended a workshop at Pyramid Valley on Art Healing, Art Joy and Art Liberation by Cynthia Gonzalez who has led art therapy workshops and training for the last 30 years internationally. It was an opportunity to play spontaneously with colour, texture and form while observing the progressive emergence of one's deepest truth and nature.

Experiential Education conclave at Magic Bus The conclave presented some eminent Indian, American and European Experts from the field of experiential education, with an intention to expose each participant to some of the best ideologies and methodologies in EE. This year was an opportunity to connect with experiential education practitioners from all over the country and experts from around the world to enhance one's understanding of the principles of experiential education and its applications, learn valuable new strategies and skills to integrate into your work, and in so doing, grow and succeed professionally while continuing to make a difference in the lives of others.

impART



We, at Snehadhara, believe that each child requires meaningful and holistic learning spaces which are co-created by all those who engage with them. With this objective in mind, Snehadhara Foundation set up impART, an initiative that looks at capacity building, training and social inclusiveness, driven by the methodology of the Arts. We have been engaging with various government schools and organisations working with children and schools. This initiative feeds into our long-term goal of creating a truly inclusive society. The following are some of our initiatives.

APSA



The Association for Promoting Social Action or APSA is a rights-based, child-centred, community development organization working in Bangalore and Hyderabad since 1981 towards empowerment of the urban poor, especially with children in distress.

We have begun an engagement with APSA, through APSA's plan of spreading the powerful message of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls using movement and dance as a medium. Who better to convey this message than girls who have themselves come out of situations of violence and trafficking? The underlying purpose of this initial engagement is also to empower the girls from distressed and conflict situations and to spread a message of inclusivity and integration of these girls and women into mainstream society. Snehadhara has been engaging with the girls, using the arts as a medium to address their therapeutic goals. While, this goes towards preparing them to be able to perform and engage people in public, it also addresses the longer term goals of building self-confidence, positive body image, and body language and so on.

With the larger purpose in mind, an awareness campaign was conducted in Jayanagar Shopping Complex in Bangalore on the 15th of December. The purpose of the programme was to create awareness on Human Rights and more specifically about ending violence against women and children, highlighting the fact that 1 in 8 girls goes missing in this country. The girls we worked with showed courage and confidence, despite being in an unfamiliar situation and pulled off the dances with great aplomb.

KAMALA NIKETAN



One of our year long projects for 2016-2017 is with the teachers at Kamala Niketan, Trichy.

Kamala Niketan began with the foundation of 'TINY TOTS' in 1991 and had a mere 30 students in its first batch. Through commitment and perseverance of the faculty with support from parents and students KNMS has now grown and developed into a school with 3000+ students and 180 teachers.

The intent of our association with KNMS, Trichy is to introduce the group to integrate the Arts into teaching methodologies and therapeutic environments within classroom settings. The attempt is to create an interdisciplinary approach comprising of practical, artistic and conceptual elements in the existing learning protocols.

It has been interesting to facilitate sessions for the teachers of the primary school. Each of these engagements contributes to refining the content and also gives all of us a chance collect data of how learning takes place in our environments.

CHRIST UNIVERSITY



Christ University, a premier educational institution, is an academic fraternity of individuals dedicated to the motto of excellence and service. It strives to reach out to the star of perfection through an earnest academic pursuit for excellence and the efforts blossom into 'service' through creative and empathetic involvement in the society to transform it.

The certificate course "Psycho-Social Well-Being Using Multi-Arts and Play" was offered along with Headstreams to the first year Master's students of psychology counselling. The group of 28 explored various art forms along with understanding tools and techniques that could be used in working with people across special needs group.

The certificate course aims to introduce multi-arts and play as aids to reconnect with oneself and the world we live in. The objectives of the course were:

- To understand the value of play in human life and become proficient in using it in various settings
- To comprehend the theory and practice of various forms of art and how these can aid healing
- To expand one's own consciousness through realizing capabilities of self and exploring a realm of learning possibilities

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND RESEARCH (IIPR)



IIPR is a premier educational institution in Bangalore that offers postgraduate and undergraduate courses with Psychology as one of the subjects. The institute is affiliated to Bangalore University, one of the oldest and largest universities in India accredited with Grade 'A' by National Assessment and Accreditation Board (NAAC).

The certificate course was offered to first year Psychology students along with Headstreams. These sessions would be conducted using artistic tools such as Theatre and Drama, Stories-sharing and creating, Puppetry and role-plays, Directive and Non-Directive Play, Voice and Rhythm, Dance and Movement. In the process of doing the certificate course, we envision a crucial personal process that will take place within the students themselves. This is the process of discovering hidden biases and strengths that may hinder or help in one's own growth in capabilities and enablement. Thus we see the course itself as a learning space to enable other learning spaces.

ARIVU DISHA



Arivu Disha is a two pronged program to improve learning outcomes & career prospects of school children in Karnataka by Headstreams. The vision of the program is to create a world where children have opportunities to realize their potential to live a positive, confident, purposeful and socially enriching life.

Along with being on the design team for the content, we also undertook training 15 facilitators from various parts of Karnataka on classroom skills, facilitation and the use of creative interventions in classroom settings.

The trainings were conducted before the sessions rolled out in the schools. Post the first phase, we worked on challenges that emerged in the field and trained them on artistic tools that would aid facilitation.

SCAN-SPECIAL CHILD ASSISTANCE NETWORK



A workshop on Arts Based Therapy was conducted at Chennai for special needs educators/caregivers and parents of special needs children. Each parent in the workshop was themselves an institution in oneself. This group has got together to create and expand possibilities for the many children. We need more groups of this sort to come together and look at creating opportunities of learning and care. Indeed a pleasure to be with a group that today can lead the road for many that can get together and start action on things that the children need. This will give empowerment another meaning.

NIEPMD



Workshops were held at the NIEPMD (National Institute of Empowerment of Persons with Multiple disabilities), Chennai working with the 1st year and 2nd year D.Ed in Special Education students. RCI specifies 'Music and Movement Therapy' as one of the alternative therapies for ASD under Unit V: Medical Intervention & Alternative Therapies of paper 9. A small attempt to influence and get the young minds to look at special education differently. One of the classroom sessions brought to life the brain and its parts with facilitation by Ravi Srinivasan. The session was a mix of theory and interesting artistic expression to understand the same.

HRIDAKASHA



Hridakasha - In Association with Mirra Foundation, Chennai, flagged off an intervention that brought together teachers and educators from various organisations - Sankalp, Tattva Foundation, HLC, Prashanthi (Coimbatore), APL Global. The certificate course “Enabling peer – peer interaction to create empathetic learning spaces using the Arts” aims to introduce multi-arts forms and demonstrate understanding and specific practice in the area of the arts to facilitate inclusion. The objectives of the course are two-fold – Working on self and equipping oneself to facilitate classroom learnings using creative interventions. We invited the 15 participants and the 5 organisations in taking the next step of creating an inclusive society with us.

HLC



In a time when humans are trying to numerically quantify all the things children know, we must remember that there is more to life than intellect. Children's success in academic and social life depends on a numbers of factors. It is widely held that there are at least 7 dimensions of human greatness required to develop wholly: integrity, intuition, interaction, initiative, inquiry, imagination and identity. This being the premise, our engagement with [HLC is through the 7i initiative](#). In it, children have been engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, morally and soulfully.

AATAPI



We hosted a team of three organisations from Bharuch District, Gujarat. Kalpana Ben, a special educator with Sarva Siksha Abhiyan in Bharuch, Ajit Bhai and Jivi Ben from Viklang Parivartan Sangathan (VPS), and Dinesh, Sanjay and Jyoti from Aatapi Seva Foundation. The purpose of their visit to Snehadhara was to understand how we work using the Arts to achieve learning outcomes and how one could approach inclusion as holistic learning. We facilitated a two day workshop for them to give them a glimpse of what we do, understand the methodologies at a broad level and also be a part of some of our sessions.

ENABLE INDIA



EnAble India is a non-profit organization working since its inception from 1999 towards the economic independence and dignity of persons with disabilities. EnAble India caters to the needs of all kinds of disabilities like visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically disabled, mental retardation, mental illness, Autism ,Profound Disabilities and more across India.

Enable India has started an employability training programme with the candidates under Autism spectrum disorder and other related disorders. The programme aims at making the selected candidates employable so that they are placed with the employers.

The central thrust of Snehadhara's work with EnAble is to use Arts based interventions to create an interdisciplinary approach that integrates practical, artistic and conceptual elements in the existing learning protocols in order to empower adults with disabilities.

The pilot project was designed keeping in mind the possibility of using ABT to address areas of development that include Speech, Sensory Integration, Motor Skills, Cognition and Social Dynamics. In doing so, the attempt is to implement, execute and measure qualitative outcomes of these various processes. Keeping in mind the post placement needs of the participants, the Buddy system approach was attempted in order to accelerate learning between identified pairs of buddies, thereby, creating a platform for peer to peer and socio cognitive learning.

HULIMAVU SCHOOL WITH RIDDHI FOUNDATION



We began a programme association with **Riddhi Foundation**, to focus on using multi-art forms and technology to enrich learning within classrooms for children of Class 6 at the **Hulimavu Government School**, Bangalore.

The objective of our work is:

To draw Content from English and Science textbooks for Class VI and deliver them using multi-art forms. The various artistic tools to be used include: Music - Voice and Rhythm, Dance and movement, Stories - sharing and creating, Visual arts, Theatre and drama, puppetry and role plays.

To create a space for children that would allow them to bring up questions, share feelings, reflect on thoughts, and discuss self-image, events in the world, relationships and biases in a non-threatening creative manner.

To encourage teachers to look at mainstream content artistically.

To create a platform for peer and socio-cognitive learning.

To set up a laboratory - where both online and offline self-direct learning is implemented. Computer-mediated instruction gives us the ability to individualize learning for each student.

TALKS AND PRESENTATIONS



NIEPMD Gitanjali Sarangan presented her research paper titled 'Arts Based Therapy for enabling peer to peer social interaction between neurotypical children and those with special needs', at the National Conference on Models of Best Practices in Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Kottayam, Kerala, January 20-21, 2016, by the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Multiple Disabilities, Chennai in collaboration with Rehabilitation Council of India (New Delhi), Inter University Centre for Disability Studies (IUCDS) and School of Behavioural Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University.

Mentor Conclave We were honoured to be given a space at the [Mentor Conclave](#), Bangalore in December 2015. It was inspiring to be in a room full of school leaders and educators who want to re-define and re-look at education and create engaging and meaningful learning spaces for the children. We are looking forward to engaging with many more schools to look at greater levels of inclusion.

India Inclusion Summit 2015 It was humbling to share space with the many who have got together with the purpose of creating an even and fair playing field for the persons with disabilities. From corporate heads, to people from the government, to organisations in the space of disabilities, to a large family of supporters it [indeed was an evening](#) to remember. Each sharing what they are set out to do for the group only furthers the belief that together we can create. Enable Academy was launched by the Cabinet Minister. Shri Thaawar Chand Gehlot Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment. Hats off to team Enable for clearly enabling inclusion.

MEDIA COVERAGE



Learning through song & dance

Snehadhara Foundation uses unconventional methods to educate and encourage social inclusion among special children and adults

ICHANGE

Gitanjali Sarangan started Snehadhara Foundation with a single student in 2012

Vidya Jyengar
@meagroup.com
TWEETS @jyengar_vidya

It's 2 pm on Monday and the 35 children studying at Snehadhara Foundation in JP Nagar are taking a nap. The students, special kids with disorders such as cerebral palsy, autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder have finished their morning session and snacks, and are getting some rest before their afternoon group activities — painting with maida and blowing balloons to improve pronunciation — commence. Just three years ago, the home-turned-school was launched with its first student Sneha (after whom Snehadhara Foundation has been named). Founder Gitanjali Sarangan, who was teaching at a playschool in JP Nagar then, came across Down Syndrome-afflicted Sneha while organising the school's Annual Day programme. It turned out to be a turning point in her life. "At the playschool Sneha got along really with the other children. After she finished, we started looking for a place that would be inclusive. But in the 2,500 schools in the city, not one was ready to include a child with special needs in regular classes. We were told that she wouldn't reach the learning milestones and would have to sit in the resource centres," she says.

Sarangan, a trained classical singer and dancer, who continues to learn Bharatanatyam twice a week, felt that if special kids were going to be "learning in isolation", she might as well go ahead with her project of setting up a school which would cater to special needs through multi-art forms such as music, dance and art. In 2010, she took the Arts Based Therapy course at the World Centre for Creative Learning in Pune. In 2012, she launched the Snehadhara Foundation, a non-profit organisation that works with children and adults who are differently-abled, their caregivers and families.

Today, the eight-room building houses those with special needs between the ages of 5 and 32. Eighty per cent of the students are on medication for ADHD, aggressive behaviour, epilepsy, etc. With 23 teachers, who work with the children eight hours a day, Sarangan says that they've reached a point where they have to reject two applications a day. "Since it's a continuous process and our students are enrolled for a lifetime, we don't have the resources to take in any more," she rues.

At the beginning of each year, the teachers work on a curriculum tailor-made for each child. "For instance, we found that Sneha needed to work on her writing. To get the strokes right, we got her to use a brush dipped in water and paint. After that, she progressed to using paints," she explains. Primarily, their focus is on developing life skills. For instance, their Oota-Thota programme uses the kitchen to build awareness, social skills and a prospective livelihood option. "Making an omelette could mean a daily chore for many of us. Here, it's a multisensory activity that helps many of our children build basic independent functioning skills." To improve fine motor skills, they are taught to string flowers together to make a garland.

Immediately after they are taught a concept, they are made to apply it. A theatre performance, which showed them ways to handle money, was followed by a visit to nearby shops, where they had to implement what they learnt. The idea is for the learning to be more experiential and engaging. "We want them to lead as normal a life as possible, instead of sheltering them," the 38-year-old adds.

Other interesting concepts include the Friday night stayover — to help the children learn to manage themselves independently. Divided into two groups, the students stay over at school every alternate week. "We started with teaching them how to brush their teeth and comb their hair. The exercise is to give both parents and students the confidence that they can be independent," she says.

Sarangan believes that both the Foundation and parents are "equal stakeholders" in the learning process. Which is why, she has identified three students who help with packing and labelling at Good Bread, a one-kilometre walk from the school. At other times, they find themselves going for movies — Chota Bheem, plays at Ranga Shankara, a wedding in Mandya, sleepovers at other children's houses, all of which have helped the kids learn to conduct themselves in social situations.

While the children begin their day at 10.30 am, teachers start an hour earlier, during which they meditate on the terrace to ensure that they are in the "right frame of mind". While they haven't received funding from any corporate firms till now, parents pay whatever they can.

For Sarangan, who takes it one day at a time, the feeling of warmth and the surprises that the children spring up, is what keeps her going.

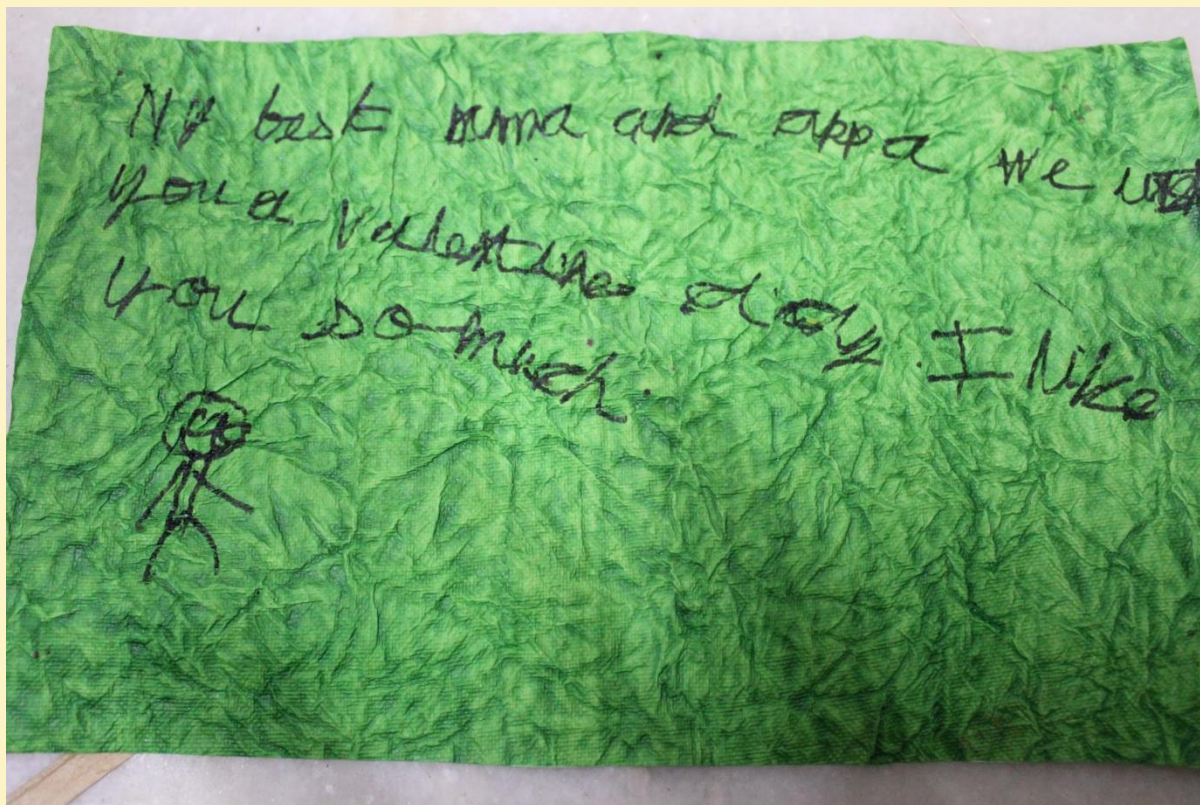
[Learning Through Song And Dance](#) Bangalore Mirror, June 20, 2015

[School of Thought](#) Mumbai Mirror, June 21, 2015

[Animal Farm Gets A Humane Touch](#) Deccan Chronicle, October 30, 2015

[An All Inclusive Animal Farm, The Hindu](#), Bangalore, October 18, 2015

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Everyone has an inner world – a world filled with one's aspirations and dreams, one's fears and anxieties, which often they may or may not be privy to. Often there is a disconnect between this inner world and the external world we live in, the larger "social" world that we function in. This disconnect could happen for various reasons. Considering that as humans we are social beings, this disconnect impacts the larger socio-cultural fabric as well, leading to several societal problems that we see today. Hence healing the disconnect or fostering ways by which the inner world can be synchronized with the external world becomes imperative both for the health of the individual and of society.

Human beings are social creatures by nature. Humans choose to live in communities, work in groups, develop families and even join sub-groups. Ultimately, we depend on one another in our existence. Thus, connecting with others is something that is naturally a part of who we are and how we live. I truly believe developing relationships is what makes life meaningful and exciting. People are fascinating because they all have different backgrounds, beliefs, values, passions, opinions, ideas, and experiences to share. We all influence one another and we can either ignore that fact or embrace it and truly help one another.

Empathy is the centerpiece of a human-centered design process. There are 2 components to empathy; cognitive and emotional. Cognitive is the recognition or understanding part that drives us to identify another person's thoughts and feelings, emotional is the reaction to someone's thoughts and feelings that drive us to respond appropriately.

Empathy is at the heart of social design. The best social service designers, are much like design thinkers; empathizing, inquiring more, testing ideas and always wondering if a proposed service is truly relevant to the person that uses the service. Empathy permits us to come together and communicate. Empathy requires personal effort. Empathy at the individual level can make real equality possible at the societal level.

Empathy needs to form the basis of emotional literacy in schools, in children, in teachers, in the system at large. This will lay the foundation for more safe and caring classrooms, where children are the “Changers.” They are more competent in understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others (empathy), and are therefore less likely to physically, psychologically & emotionally hurt each other. Empathy educates both the mind and the heart. Let us set out together to implement and practice build an inclusive and celebratory atmosphere that encourages empathy and diversity. Our goals in the classroom should be to model diversity, inclusion, and global citizenship to our students to build kind and empathetic future leaders.

At Snehadhara, we just want to ‘reach out and touch other human beings not just with our hands but with our hearts’ and we do realise how challenging it is yet how beautiful. Andrew Boyd expresses it best when he says-

“Compassion hurts. When you feel connected to everything, you also feel responsible for everything. And you cannot turn away. Your destiny is bound with the destinies of others. You must either learn to carry the Universe or be crushed by it. You must grow strong enough to love the world, yet empty enough to sit down at the same table with its worst horrors.”

Gitanjali Sarangan

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A NOTE TO OUR DONORS



Because of your generosity, children at Snehadhara Foundation continue to benefit from opportunities to learn, adapt, grow and excel. Your sustained support has meant that we have been able to carry on and continue our activities through all of the years.

You are making a huge difference in the lives of individual children and your donations help to provide for our programs, support for our staff, and create an inclusive social environment and much more.

We would like to convey our heartfelt gratitude to you and pray for your extended support, in the months and years to come.



*All of our programs have been possible through the generous support of our friends,
who have and continue to walk this journey with us.
Our [YouTube](#) channel captures a visual version of the journey so far.
It is your trust and love that makes all this work possible. Thank you!*

We depend on the goodwill of donors and friends to sustain our programs. If you wish to donate please visit our website, or email us with the subject line 'Donation'.

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