

From Sparsha Trust Annual Report for years 2017-18

Child Care projects/programmes

B.1. Shikshana Mitra 1 (Friend of Education), Sanjeevini Nagar, Bangalore

Started in 2010-2011, Shikshana Mitra is a residential centre initiated to reach out to young children who are deprived of education opportunities due to their family's poverty, neglect or migrating patterns. Shikshana Mitra 1 is being managed by Rupa Mahajan with the support of Sterling Apartment, Beary's Apartment, and other local residents. Run by individuals and local residents, model centre, Sparsha Trust is playing a supportive role in the Centre. Reaching out children from 6 to 14 years old, the Centre is in Sanjeevini Nagar, near Kodigehalli, Sahakara Nagar, Bangalore North. 80% of the present 35 children in the Centre are girls. Shikshana Mitra 1 (**Friend of education**) ensures that the most important years of the children are spent in a meaningful and safe manner. At the Centre, they are given proper nutritious food, personal hygiene items, bridge classes, mainstreaming in school, opportunity to play and relax and celebrate functions and events. Children can stay here upto 8th Standard after which they can be rehabilitated at any Government hostel or Nisarga Grama. Depending upon the case, the children are supported in higher education opportunities or rehabilitated back in their homes. During this year, the following activities took place:

- 15 children have gone back to their homes of which 6 are boys and 9 are girls.
- 1 boy was rehabilitated to Sparsha Trust's Nisarga Grama
- 4 children were new admissions to the Centre – 2 girls and 2 boys
- 50 supporters celebrated their birthdays at our centre.
- 150 people sponsored dinner and lunch to the children.
- Children of Shikshana Mitra 1 have given more than 20 performances in events organized by companies and the Government.
- The children have done very well in sports, arts and crafts. 3-4 children are regularly attending tennis practice, while 15 children are training in Bharatnatyam.
- More than 15 children participated in inter-school competition and won prizes at different events
- The children participated in various learning sessions, exposure trips and recreational activities and also participated in cultural performances. The events included Summer Camp, exposure trip to Beluru, Halebid, Sravanabelagola, Murudeshwara and Dharmasthala. The children also performed at Radio Akashvani, inauguration function of a company FAI, PES College, Infinity Company, Bal Bhavan, Vidhana Soudha and Cubbon park (Dollu Kunita). The children were also part of the annual Joy of learning and participated in several

- other cultural and sports events. They participated in various cultural and sports events organized at the School and Cluster level as well the one by Nakshatra Foundation. Children performed Kathak at Ravindra Kalakshetra and other dances at Dr. Ambedkar Bhawan. Mr Gaurav took the children to Indian Science Institute where the children witnessed various science experiments.
- Apart from this, the Canadian International School sponsored an exposure trip to Ooty and Bandipur. The children of the centre were also taken to a dental health check up at Nisarga Grama on 24th July, 2018. The children have done very well in their exams.

B.2. Shikshana Mitra 2 (Friend of education), Mestripalya, Bangalore

Started in 2010-2011, Shikshana Mitra 2 is a residential Centre that was initially housing about 40-50 children aged between 6 years to 16 years. Located in Mestripalya behind Manyata Tech Park, near Nagawara, Hegde Nagar, the children in this Centre come from families who migrate often from their native to the city, living a life of struggle amidst housing and financial insecurities. At the time, Department of Education was supporting the Centre. After their support stopped in 2014, Sparsha Trust rehabilitated some of the children in Government hostels and Nisarga Grama.

At that time, Ms. Vanamala Kiran, an individual who was volunteering with Sparsha for two years came in to take care of all needs of the centre with the support of Lodge Sainic. At present, there are 14 children in Shikshana Mitra 2 and what makes it unique is that it is a model centre managed primarily by its resident children. While Sparsha Trust is providing accommodation facility, Vanamala Kiran takes care of the food, clothing, educational needs and the health care of the children. The important aspect is that the children have understood key values such as being self-reliant, balancing work and study schedules, importance of time and work management. Many of the children earn by milk and newspaper distribution, take care of the hygiene and tidiness of the centre. At the same time, they do all these work willingly and without any compromise on their studies, as there is a tuition teacher to help them cope with their home work and their exams.

One boy from Shikshana Mitra 2, Kumar has been selected to Rishi Valley school in Kanakpura for free residential international education.

B.3. Makkala Mitra 1 and Makkala Mitra 2

Makkala Mitra 1 is located in Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Mysore Road, Bangalore, while Makkala Mitra 2, is located in Hoskote. Both the Centres were started in 2011. These Centres are residential open shelter which caters 24 hours to children who need care, protection and development opportunities. The programme is funded by Department of Women and Child Welfare, Government of Karnataka.

In these centres, children have the option of either staying in the Centre or coming in the morning and leaving at night. Facilities such as food, bridge education, school enrollment, health care,

sports and games are provided to the children aged between 6 to 18 years. These Centres brings great relief to parents as their children are safe and taken care of in a proper manner in their absence. Their own work schedule and family circumstances lead to neglect of the children. Children of single parent family or without parents have a shelter to stay in, and are taken care of, with attention and care.

Overall, through the contact points(which are day care centres) located in the area, Makkala Mitra 1 and Makkala Mitra 2 usually have 25 to 30 children each, who come in to the Shelter on a daily basis. After children reach above 16 years, they are referred to youth vocational skill training centres. The Centres work closely with CWC (Child Welfare Committee) and Government Departments.

B.4. Chinnara Thangudhama (Shelter for children), also known as Urban Deprived Centre for Children

Earlier Chinnara Thangudhama was known as Urban Deprived Children Centre which catered to boys and girls aged between 6 to 16 years. Since 2014, when the Government stopped funding, Sparsha Trust began to run this residential Centre only for boys above 14 years under the name of Chinnara Thangudhama with the support of Infinite Computer Solutions and individuals. The boys stay here till they complete their education or get job placement or referred to vocational training colleges. The boys at this shelter home get food, educational materials, support in studying, health care facilities and career counseling. The boys are trained in Dollu Kunita, a folk dance form of Karnataka, Kamsale, veeragathe, and have performed more than 25 performances in the last one year in programmes organized by corproates and the Government both in Bangalore and outside. The boys are able to put a negative past behind them and focus on their present. At present, 25 boys are staying in Chinnara Thangudhama, located in Government school building in Shivaji Nagar.

We needed to shift the Centre from Shivaji Nagar to an alternate place. At present, we have identified a two bedroom house in Tindlu and have relocated the children there. The children have done very well in sports and in academics, especially the 10th Standard children. The children also participated in sports and cultural competitions at the district level.

B.5. Apta Mitra (Friend of those in distress or need)

Since 2012, Sparsha Trust is managing a night shelter known as Apta Mitra (Friend of those in distress or need) for homeless people in urban Bangalore. Located in Ulsoor, and funded by Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagar Palike, Apta Mitra has capacity for 60 persons, located in Ulsoor. The concept behind Apta Mitra is to provide night shelter for those adults living in dire circumstances or in abject poverty for the night. These persons come in to the Centre after evening to rest or sleep and leave in the morning for their respective work.

During 2017-2018, on an average, about 120 urban homeless persons, including a few physically challenged or too ill or old to move used the night shelter. They were provided with dinner, personal hygiene accessories, health care and a safe place to sleep

in. An inmate called Gracy passed away in the shelter home, after which Sparsha Trust notified the hospital and the police. The post mortem revealed a natural death by heart attack. The cremation was taken care of by Sparsha Trust.

A health check up helped to detect diseases and provide medicines accordingly. During this year, 10 persons have been reintegrated with the family.

Staying away from their children or relatives or the absence of a spouse can make the inmates feel depressed and isolated. Sparsha Trust regularly counsels them in order to maintain a positive attitude towards life. Recognizing the importance of recreation in the lives of the elderly staying in Apta Mitra, Sparsha Trust organized an one day trip to Mysore. The break from the routine brought cheer in the lives of the shelter's residents. All the logistics of travel and food were taken care of by Sparsha Trust.

Case study

Keshavan, an inmate at Apta Mitra since two years, is a 55 years old painter. Had it not been for the night shelter, he would not have any proper place to sleep in. As he cannot afford a rented house and the rising cost of Bangalore, Apta Mitra provides the much needed shelter for him. His wife is no more, and he is unable to stay with his married daughters who are too far away. Prior to Apta Mitra, Keshavan would sleep on the streets. Here, he gets food, basic toiletries (soap etc), and a cot to sleep on. He keeps his personal belongings under the cot.

B.6. Mobile Creches

Migrant couples and labourer families work at construction sites whose working conditions have many health and professional hazards. They usually place their children in a semi-constructed room for them to eat, sleep and play. Without any one to look after them, the children spend their time without any proper activity, and often wander off to different locations of the construction, sometimes near the road. As a result, the children are very vulnerable to dangers/accidents, and different forms of abuse and neglect.

Some of the adverse impact include the following:

- Malnourishment among the children due to lack of timely and proper food
- Exposure to negative habits like smoking and drinking
- Danger of sexual abuse
- Misusing children for illegal activities and sending them on errands like getting cigarettes
- Risk of child kidnapping and Trafficking, especially girls
- Violation of Fundamental Rights of the children in terms of access to proper development and education (in the case of drop outs or children not attending school)
- Lack of proper sanitary conditions which affects the adolescent girls

Sparsha Trust has initiated 3 Mobile Crèches - 2 at Mestripalya, behind Manyata Tech Park and 1 at Hommbale Construction, Kommaghatta, near NICE Road. This project is funded by Mobile Creche, New Delhi. Through this project, children who whiled away their time in a semi-constructed room without proper food or meaningful activity are given food and health care. Although they do not attend school, the project enrolls them in an informal educational system thereby ensuring that the children are able to learn different subjects. Depending upon the age group, the children are taught alphabets to basic levels of different subjects.

The children, aged between 0 to 16 years of age, are relatively safe and secure, which is also a relief for their parents. As they become older, it is possible for them to enroll in regular schools as their basic education is being taken care of. The project is in the process of expansion to different areas with the support of corporate support.

Services and facilities provided include:

- Teaching activities – learning the basics of Kannada, English and Hindi
- Involving children in many practical activities like Sports, Crafts, Drawing, Music, Yoga, Dance and Other Cultural Activities
- Providing Nutritious Food Daily (Lunch and Snacks two times a day)
- Proper designated area for the children to relax and sleep
- Taking the children on exposure trips
- Conducting monthly meetings with Parents and Community people
- Regular Medical checkup for Children and Community

During this year, about 500 children benefitted from the project. 60 **students** are ready to go to school as they have been mentored in the basics at various locations.

B.7 Save Me (contact points)

Started in 2016, Save Me are basically contact points that are present four places. (1 at Nayandahalli, 2 at Hoskote, and 1 at Rachenahalli) for the welfare of children of construction workers, and other types of children (rag pickers). During this year, about 150 children have benefitted by getting access to nutrient enriched food, and quarterly health check up. Apart from this, the children have been taken on 2 exposure trips within Bangalore. The parents of the children, who otherwise did not take out time for them, got engaged in the children's development. During this year, 50 children have got enrolled into school. The programme is being supported by Fidelity Company and individuals.

Case study

Bheemavva (10 years) and Lakshmi (8 years) are sisters who do not have a mother. Staying at Bangalore Nagar zille, Old Madras Road, Avalahalli, theirs was a migrant family. Their father is a construction labourer working on site from morning to evening. dusk, leaving the daughters at home. After he goes to work, his young daughters cook

and do all the household work but stay at home. Often the father used to be worried about the welfare of the girls in his absence but there was nothing he could do about it.

At this point in time, Sparsha Trust's staff did a home visit on a Sunday when the father was home and discussed the issue about the girls spending their time at home and not attending school. The staff explained about the facilities at the open shelter and its benefits. The father agreed and the girls were enrolled in the open shelter.

The girls, who had never gone to school, started a new life by learning alphabets. They love to sing and participate in many cultural activities. The father, relieved that his daughters are safe, visits them regularly.