

Newsletter 2022



# SAAMARTHYA FOUNDATION

Celebrate Ability, Unleash Potential



## 2022: A look back

As another eventful year draws to a close, we invite you to join us in looking back on all that we have achieved together.

Created By: Aatish Shinde (Research & Development Manager)

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“Diversity and inclusion, which are the real grounds for creativity, must remain at the center of what we do.”

Marco Bizzarri

## Our Mission

- **Awareness, Advocacy, Action**

We strongly believe in creating an equitable and inclusive world for persons with disabilities. Our comprehensive three-fold approach (awareness, advocacy, and action) is designed to support individuals with disabilities, their families, and the professionals who work with them.

Through our advocacy efforts, we strive to ensure that people with disabilities receive the respect, dignity, and rights they deserve, while at the same time empowering them to live life to the fullest.

The end of 2022 is fast approaching, and as we look ahead it is important for us to take a pause, rest, and reset. This pause gives us an invaluable opportunity to reflect on the past year.

Another exhilarating and eventful year for Saamarthya Foundation has come to an end. Our team has expanded in size, while we remain steadfast in our commitment to extending our reach to people with disabilities across the nation. We want to ensure that all children with disabilities have access to the resources they need to reach their full potential.

Furthermore, we wish to bridge the gaps between remote and urban areas and provide the same level of quality education and opportunity to all. Our dedication to using technology for this purpose is unwavering, and we are determined to continue to find innovative ways to use it to strengthen our children's futures.

We would like to thank all of you for your support, encouragement, and engagement in our mission to raise awareness, improve human rights, and promote the well-being of people with disabilities. We are delighted to present a comprehensive overview of our projects and activities this year in this newsletter.

**Join us in creating a meaningful change together!**

## Launched ASMI Group Sessions

### ASMI: Interventions for children with ASD & IDD

We believe that children with disabilities deserve access to affordable educational support to reach their full potential. Through our ASMI initiative, we provide educational services in Hindi, Marathi, and English for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), intellectual & developmental disabilities (IDD), and learning disabilities.

ASMI Intensive Programs were conducted in the months of June, August, and November. Different types of skills from specific domains were enhanced and encouraged in children. 65 children attended our learning camps. We have successfully conducted and delivered three group sessions targeting specific domains like academic and cognitive skills, ADL & computer skills, literacy & reading skills, and early literacy skills. The one-on-one and group sessions are conducted online by qualified special educators. We have supported parents and children from cities like Doha (Qatar), Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Mohali, Delhi, Ghaziabad, Indirapuram, Lucknow, Kolkata, Vellore, Mumbai, and Siliguri. We are grateful to Ms. Harshali Kharche and SNIC Rehab Foundation for their ongoing support and partnership in reaching out to parents.

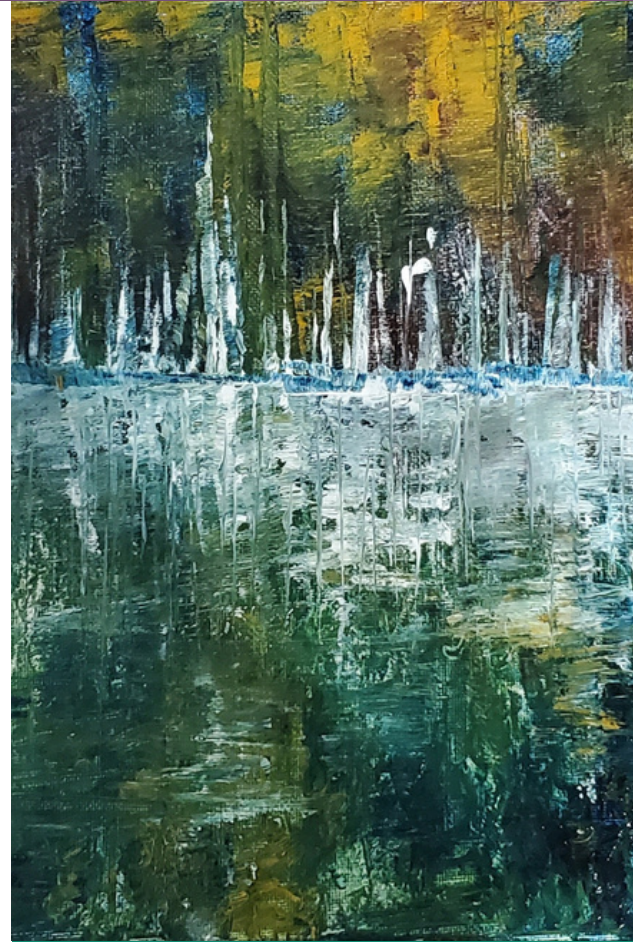
### ASMI: Summer Intensive Sessions

#### 12-Day intensive group sessions with a focus on Academic & Cognitive Skills for children with all abilities

This intensive program welcomed children of all abilities (aged 11 to 18) and aimed to address Cognitive and Academic skills. This was taught by our Occupational therapist, who designed it alongside our Special Educator and Counselling Psychologist.

The camp addressed Executive and Memory functions while working towards integrating Visual and Auditory skills. Fundamental skills like reading, writing, prediction, and inference. A few sessions were conducted utilizing digital resources.

Over the course of 12 days, participants reported feeling more organized and confident about perceiving new information and retaining it effectively.



## Launched Saamarthya Learning Hub

### A brand new virtual training platform:

- Virtual academy
- Self-paced, Hindi E-modules
- For parents of children with ASD and IDD

The virtual learning hub, a welcoming and nurturing space for families was launched in March. Families can access various resources via self-paced, e-modules on various topics in multiple regional languages.

All our modules are designed to be evidence-based and delivered in a simplified manner for maximum impact. These can benefit parents of newly diagnosed children (ASD and IDD) as well as parents who live in smaller cities where they cannot access high-quality services.

The initiative aims to leverage technology and reach out to families who may not have easy access to training and support. Saamarthya's learning modules (currently in Hindi and other regional languages being created) were developed by **Dr. Shivani Pandit**, Ed.D, Special Educator and Founder of Saamarthya Foundation.

A special focus has been put on bringing evidence-based practices to families, on overall child development, the importance of early intervention, parents' role in child development, and strategies for daily management of a child's needs at home.

### Recipients of Saamarthya's E-modules in Wardha , Maharashtra

A Marathi language Parent Cohort, led by Mrs. Vaishali Thakare, was set up in Wardha, Maharashtra. This outreach initiative provided parents with necessary training through our comprehensive e-modules created by our founder and CEO, Dr. Shivani Pandit. Additionally, these parents received high-quality group coaching to meet their individual needs. Through similar parent cohorts, we plan to reach families across the country who may not have easy access to training and support. We look forward to expanding this program in the new year.

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“You cannot help but learn more as you take the world into your hands. Take it up reverently, for it is an old piece of clay, with millions of thumbprints on it.”

John Updike





The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance.

Nathaniel Branden

## Learning Empathy, Nurturing Diversity (LEND) Toolkit

### Focus on Social-Emotional Development

We believe that equipping teachers with relevant skills and resources is necessary to foster positive and inclusive environments in which children of all backgrounds and abilities can thrive.

Saamarthya has created a comprehensive learning resource for teachers. LEND is a collection of activities, strategies, and resources to help educators foster a positive and inclusive classroom environment for all students. LEND toolkit emphasizes empathy as a building block to create peaceful, productive, and positive spaces at school. The four themes addressed in the toolkit are:

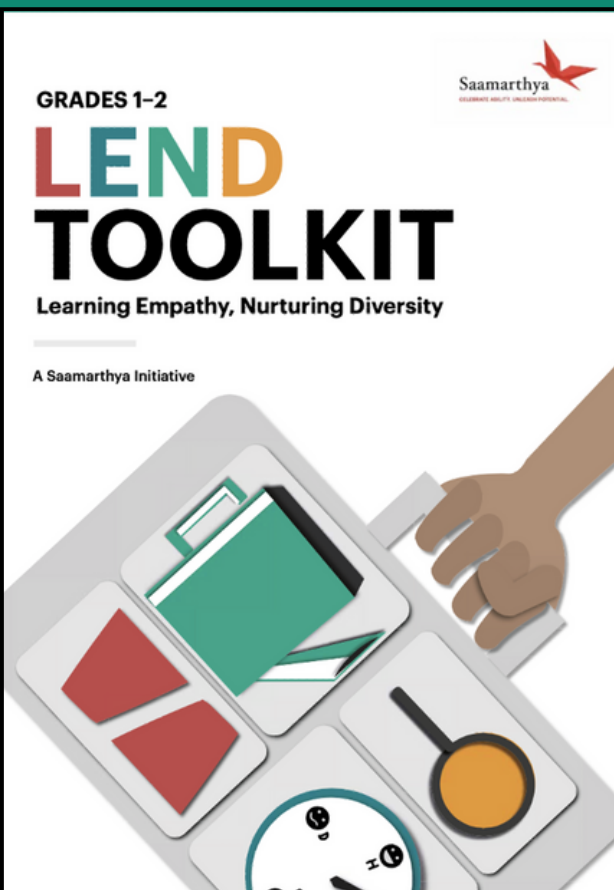
- Strengthening Identity
- Understanding Emotions
- Cultivating a Supportive Classroom
- Developing a Growth Mindset

### What the LEND toolkit offers:

1. A blended learning approach that combines online and physical modes of instruction and interaction.
2. Activities, strategies, and resources that lend themselves to the regular classroom routines.
3. Suggestions for different ways to use learning tools to best suit the needs of your students
4. Discussion prompts to help you guide conversations in the classroom.
5. Information and tips to broach difficult subjects such as bullying and stereotypes
6. Worksheets and examples to accompany the learning tools that require them

### How to use LEND:

The toolkit is divided into four themes. Each theme contains one or more chapters and each chapter has a variety of learning tools: Activities, Strategies, Resources, and Information cards. Some of the topics included are: looking beyond stereotypes, strengthening identity, celebrating uniqueness, learning about disabilities, dealing with bullying and conflict, and developing a growth mindset.



## Our Public Awareness Campaigns

### Social Media Campaigns

In a social media campaign series: **'Helpful Schemes for People with Disabilities (PwDs)'**, we attempted to provide information about various schemes, provisions and care centers that assist Persons with Disabilities in different ways.



#### HELPFUL SCHEMES FOR PWDS

- **Gharaunda:** Group Home for adults
- **Nirmaya:** Health Insurance Scheme
- **Disha:** Early Intervention and School Readiness Scheme
- **Vikaas:** Day Care
- **Prerna:** Marketing Assistance
- **Sambhav:** Aids and Assistive Devices

### 'A Day In Our Lives'

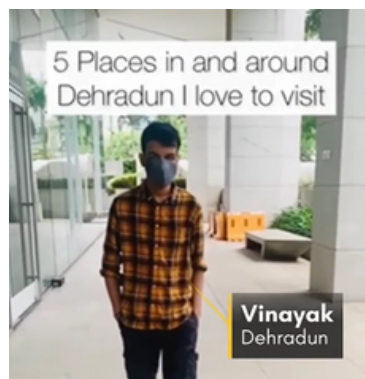
In this campaign, we featured various professionals like: Speech Language Therapist, Developmental Psychologist, Occupational Therapist, Special Educator.

Professionals shared insights about their domain, work profile and work philosophy.

Inclusion is one of the key aspects in the discourse around disability.

With **'Minclusion Mondays'**, our goal was to create awareness about disability inclusion in daily life. Through a series of short video-clips and simple posts, we put forth some useful points to keep in mind when interacting with a PwD in simple settings such as supermarkets, parks, weddings, etc., which can help people be more mindful and inclusive.

Our other social media campaign: **'Travel Accessibly'**, where insights were shared by persons with disabilities about traveling across the nation.



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The human species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories.

Mary Catherine Bateson



I hear and I forget.  
I see and I remember.  
I do and I understand.

Confucius

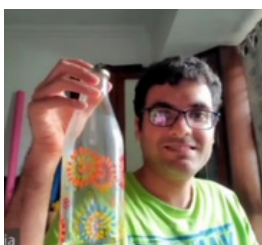
# Learning Together

## Our Virtual Events

Throughout the year, we organized several recreational activity sessions as part of **Club Ananda**. Our sessions include learning basic life skills like cooking, physical exercise, creative pursuits such as crafts & singing, and activities that focus on social-emotional development.

Our program is available for all children with all abilities. We strive to make our services accessible to all students, while especially reaching those who may not have access otherwise, and adapting and personalizing to meet each student's individual needs.

This year, we worked with over a hundred children with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, & other developmental disabilities. We have supported children from cities like Bangalore, Bikaner, Chennai, Delhi, Hubballi, Mumbai, Pune, New Mumbai, and Vellore. Sessions are conducted online twice a week and registration is free.



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People forget facts,  
but they remember  
stories.

Joseph Campbell

# Weaving Stories Together

## Annual Inclusive Storytelling Festival 2022

Storytelling as a practice has been one of the biggest contributors to progress in the Saamarthya Community. However, we always felt that what's more magical and powerful is to see yourself in those stories, be the HERO of these stories and even share friendships. This led to Saamarthya Annual Inclusion Storytelling Festival, a journey we all cherish. **We use storybooks as a tool to have conversations with children about different abilities and perspectives, such that it leads to friendships and empathy.** We believe that every child should be able to see themselves in children's stories and learn that we all are so unique and different. We want children to learn our mantra- different is just different-not less than!

We were grateful for a lineup of incredibly passionate and creative storytellers: **Dr. Vinalini Mathrani, Shwetal Pandit, Shivani Dhillon, and Sharlie Wason.** Around 110 children joined the storytelling session and were mesmerized by the different stories, fascinating characters, and the underlying wisdom that each storyteller quite elegantly emphasized upon.




  
 Saamarthya

**SAAMARTHYA'S ANNUAL  
INCLUSIVE STORYTELLING FESTIVAL**

**MEET OUR STORYTELLERS**



**Dr. Vinalini Mathrani**



**Shwetal Pandit**



**Shivani Dhillon**



**Sharlie Wason**

[saamarthya.org](http://saamarthya.org)



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Story, as it turns out, was crucial to our evolution – more so than opposable thumbs. Opposable thumbs let us hang on; story told us what to hang on to.

Lisa Cron

## Launched Storyboat

**Our curated collection of stories for Educators and Parents.**

The medium of Storytelling has been a major contributor to progress in the Saamarthya Community, allowing individuals to share their stories and ideas, and most importantly, be heard.

This form of communication has been fundamental in fostering relationships, allowing members of the community to come together and share their experiences, in order to build a better, inclusive future.

***What better way to further that goal than by telling diverse stories that promote compassion, empathy and emotional intelligence?***

We are super proud to launch our initiative: **Storyboat**, library of curated stories from Naini Inclusive Books which is Saamarthya's own publishing initiative; while others are videos and books from creators around the world.

Encourage the young minds around you to explore Storyboat and complete the suggested activities. Some may find themselves reflected in the stories, while others may gain insight into the experiences of those who are different.

**Visit: [saamarthya.org/storyboat](https://saamarthya.org/storyboat) to sign up for free!**

Join us on the  
**Storyboat!**



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People think that stories are shaped by people. In fact, it's the other way around.

Terry Pratchett

# Learning Together

## Our Offline Events

### Naini Inclusive Storytelling Session in Delhi | In collaboration with the Rotaract Club of Resilience

The storytelling session was conducted to raise awareness about the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, through interactive stories, games, and activities. The event was held on 30th September 2022 with around 75 students of fourth and fifth grade at Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Delhi.



### Storytelling Session in Karnataka

The storytelling session was conducted in a Government Higher Primary School in Kodi Bhengre, Karnataka. The event was held on 21st May 2022 with around 50-60 students participating in various games, activities, and engaging stories.



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There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Margaret J. Wheatley

# Saamarthya's Outreach

## Our Offline Outreach Events

We conducted an amazing outreach event at the Little Flower School in **Calicut, Kerala**. The event was in collaboration with the Kerala government's initiative on an anti-drug awareness drive. Saamarthya's session was focused on boosting the children's socioemotional skills based on our LEND toolkit activities.



## Screening Camp Event: Cheruvannur Anganwadi, Kerala

We conducted a free screening camp for children for early identification in collab with Anganwadi & health workers.



## ToT Event: Samagra Shiksha, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala

TOT (Training of trainers) - as a resource person and trainer for Samgra Shiksha Kerala's training event for special educators, in collab with SCERT. We dealt with topics such as PECs and AAC integration for children on the spectrum.



## Fundraising in 2022

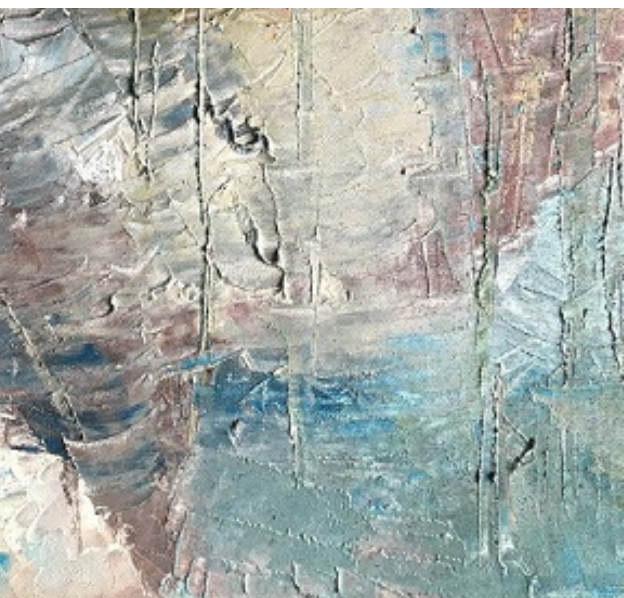
We are grateful to the **Fleishhacker Foundation** for their support and generous gift to Saamarthya Foundation's intervention programming for children with Autism and Intellectual disabilities in India.

Fleishhacker Foundation, based in San Francisco, has been dedicated to public service since 1947. Their values are "integrity, honesty, humility, thoughtfulness, intellectual curiosity, respect for all people, personal empowerment, self-determination, and "repairing the world" in the Jewish tradition of Tikkun Olam." This holiday season, we are proud to receive support from such a mission-driven organization. ([fleishhackerfoundation.org](http://fleishhackerfoundation.org))



Help us to amplify the lived experiences of people with disabilities, challenge community attitudes, and perceptions about disability and empower families of children with Autism and Intellectual Disabilities.

Your support will ensure that we continue to provide safe, inclusive learning spaces that can help children develop their cognitive and social-emotional skills. Your contribution (of any amount) will go directly to expanding direct intervention services to children and our parent coaching & training.



## JOIN US IN CREATING CHANGE

[Donate](#)[Contact](#)[Partner](#)[Volunteer](#)

# The evergrowing Saamarthya family!

Here's to many more milestones together!



Shivani Pandit Saamarthya Foundation

Shivani Dhilon

Viviani

Shalini Wilson

Shweta Eard

Anjala Nilofar, Saamarthya Fo...

Aarathi Nagvenkar, Saamarthya Fo...

Saamarthya

# PARENT TESTIMONIALS

"The session content has been very informative not just for my child, but I noticed that even for other parents because of their constant engagement and asking the facilitator various questions. This is my first group session with my child, and I loved the way the content was very organized, and the facilitators were calm throughout the sessions."

– ASMI Group Session Participant

"The facilitator broke it down to a small level and it is quite helpful. They give us ideas that we can utilize throughout the day, as we do not get that much time. At Saamarthya, we find a door or a window that helps the light to come in."

– ASMI Group Session Participant

"This program was very affordable for us. Even though the program charges are less than other programs, the facilitators always went above and beyond time, Each activity was unique and playful. Even the recorded videos to review later are commendable and following up both personally and in the group is very much appreciated. I would recommend this program to others."

– ASMI Group Session Participant

"I wish all the parents get therapy from Saamarthya. I am looking forward to all their programs. It is economically helpful and the confidence and positive energy they give out are so great. I also thank them for recording the sessions because I can replay them at my convenience. While teaching, several tips are given, small things that make the learning smooth. Online sessions are convenient."

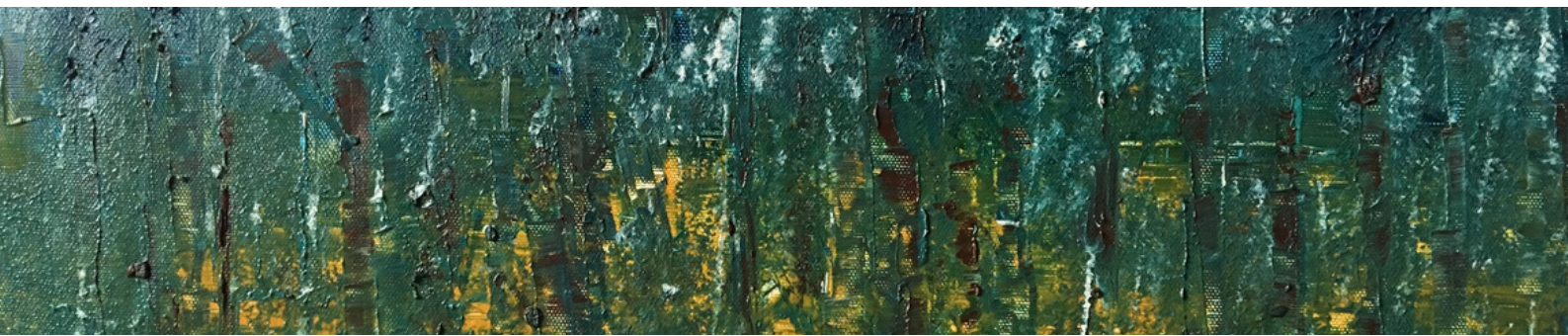
– ASMI Group Session Participant

"Saamarthya facilitators are truly an inspiration for parents who have lost hope in life and their constant encouragement, not only in group sessions but also when I message them with any doubts, they are very quick to respond. I want to be a part of the Saamarthya Foundation for my child. They are doing very great work and a lot of parents must get connected to them and I will try my best to gather more parents for our future programs."

– ASMI Group Session Participant

"I live in a small town in Punjab – Ludhiana and there are no such services at all. I was surprised when I came across the Saamarthya flyer with a very economical cost, so I joined in for the sessions and I was satisfied with the teaching method and the support to parents. I would like to join future programs and would suggest to more parents in my community to join as I know they also want help."

– ASMI Group Session Participant



# SAAMARTHYA FOUNDATION

Celebrate Ability, Unleash Potential

## Original Artwork by Ms. Ashwini Joshi

All the artwork featured in this newsletter has been created by Ashwini Joshi. She is a visual artist by profession who enjoys recreating scenes from nature using only a palette knife and canvas. We are grateful to her for sharing her work.

Follow and support her work: [ashwinijoshi.ca](http://ashwinijoshi.ca)

