



SNEHAVAANI

NEWS LETTER OF SNEHAGRAM - CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL
TRAINING AND REHABILITATION OF CLHIV



Editorial

These days technology has advanced so much that we do not need to know exactly the road map and direction to our destination as “google directions” will guide you step by step to get your goal. It will prompt you and even correct you if you took a wrong turn. I wish life was as easy as that. We know it is not... and may be rightly so. As you read through the pages of this issue of Snehavaani, you will see how our children, staff and partners are searching together and journeying together to the goal of building the lives of children. It was exciting to see how children worked in groups to envision their 2015 and beyond and come up with bright ideas in the form of art, stories, poems and vision statements. It reflects a journey we have been making together to a better future for them and as I present this long overdue issue of our News Letter, I wish you happy reading to recapture the beautiful learning and experiences of the past and invite you to join us in shaping the future of our beautiful children. Let's journey with our special children to guide them and learn with them. May be like the “human google directions” in their journey. God Bless us all !!!

Fr. Mathew Perumpil, MI
Director

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Administrator's Desk



Frontline leaders in the making...

We had a wonderful Christmas and festive season and are back to business as usual. It was great to recharge and refresh and I am sure the time away has given us a whole lot of new ideas to explore and discover what the future holds for us. I believe it is important to take time at the beginning of each year to review the past to see how we have outgrown or what we have left behind. This helps us to work on the areas that we need to make amendments and stay focused. Every New Year gives us surprising opportunities to build our lives and enhance our communion with each other. Snehagram has a set of values that glue well with the day to day functioning of the lives of everyone here. That said, Snehagram since its inception has been shaping up well to face the future working as a catalyst for the like-minded initiatives in India. 'Lead with intention and stay in the frontline' : this is my vision for Snehagram as we step in to the year 2015. When we become clear about our common vision we need to move on making sure everyone is aligned with that vision and encourage them to have unique visions and goals for them. There is a world out there looking expectantly to this village of love and it is our call to fit the bill. Have a great year ahead... God Bless!

"When we become clear about our common vision we need to move on making sure everyone is aligned with that vision and encourage them to have unique visions and goals for them."

Fr. Russell MI

Feature

National Strategic Planning Workshop on the Needs of Children Infected and Affected with HIV

National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO), in collaboration with Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT) under the USAID funded OVC Social Protection Project, organised a two-day workshop on the 'Needs of Children infected and affected with HIV' at Snehadadan in Bangalore, Karnataka on 29 & 30 January 2015. The children of Snehagram was involved in the programme for a better understanding of the problems faced by the children affected

Panel Discussion on the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Children

The sharing of experiences and needs of children infected and affected by HIV was one of the major highlights of the workshop. The children from Snehagram attended the panel discussion on **the impact of HIV/AIDs on children**, moderated by Fr. Mathew, Director – Snehagram. Six children from Snehagram represented the HIV infected children while the affected were represented by two.

Children raised the issues they face in the Family, Social life and in the areas of education and health with the real examples from their own lives. They narrated their stories since they became orphaned till the present day. They also shared their dreams for future and their anxieties on passing through the shaky bridge of adolescence to the adulthood where they would be challenged by the question: 'are you ready to stand on your own feet'.

In the interactions that followed, on answering a question from the audience on the 'apt time for the disclosure of HIV status to a child', one of the panellists replied that it is not the age that matters most but the way the 'HIV status' is presented to them is the matter of concern. He stressed the need for presenting it to the infected in a positive manner rather than intimidating them. His statement that: "HIV, for me, is just three letters in the English alphabets" was received by the audience with a huge applause.

"HIV, for me, is just three letters in the English alphabets"



The 'voices from the affected' was a reminder that they shouldn't be ignored on the pretext of their negative status and instead, they should be taken care with a sound mechanism of psycho-social support along with their education and other socio-economic requirements. The programme was attended by Dr. Naresh Goel, DDG, NACO; Dr. Melissa Freeman, Team Lead, Infectious Disease prevention and Control, Health Office, USAID; Dr. Reynold Washington, Managing Trustee – KHPT; Dr. S G Ravindra,

Project Director, KSAPS; Dr. Bitra George, Director, FH India; Ms. Elizabeth, Team Leader Mainstreaming, NACO; Dr. Manish, PD – OVC Project, KHPT and Fr. Mathew Perumpil MI, Director Snehagram.

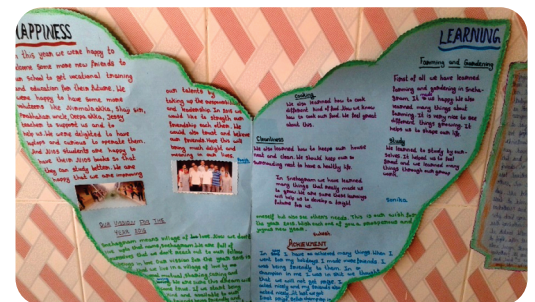
Child Rights Charter

The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines basic rights of children covering multiple needs and issues. India endorsed it on December 11, 1992. However it was felt that the Child Rights Charter was written by adults and in their language. Snehagram children were asked to discuss these rights and come up with a charter in their own words and present it to the DDG of NACO during the National Strategic Workshop held in Snehadaan on 29 January 2015.

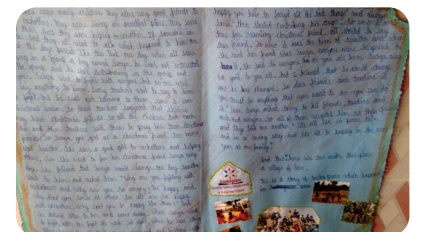
VISION-2015

Every New Year arrives with a lot of hope. Year ends are the time we ruminate on the past year to take stock. The mistakes and the ways travelled are given a thorough retrospection.

To welcome the New Year 2015, Snehagram students divided themselves into various groups to review the best and difficult experiences in the year 2014 and learnings from them. They discussed their vision for the year 2015 and articulated them in the forms of art, literature and theatre. The summary of this vision is captured by Suresh in the following words.



"Our vision for the year 2015 is that we live in a village of love by mutual sharing, caring and loving. We are sure this dream will come true if we start being kind and available to our friends by being friendly and helping each other. For that we ought to be selfless enough to see others' needs, and be ready to share the pains and gains together."



Auroville Experience 2015

We were very excited to have a three day trip to Puducherry. All the students and staff of Snehagram were part of the outing. The main objective of the trip was to take part in the 8th edition of the *Auroville Marathon* on 8 February 2015. All of us enjoyed the trip which spanned from 6th to 8th of September. It was memorable since the places we had visited was amazing and informative. We wish to share with you some of those vignettes from our trip...



Auroville Papers

On the first day, we have visited Auroville papers. We were split into three groups and were taken inside the processing unit. There we were shown making of decorative papers and paper designs from the waste materials like cotton clothes and waste papers. They were designing them naturally sticking dried leaves on them. They make ornamental pieces with the fibre from the stem of Banana plants too. They showed and explained the process. I was inspired by their work because they were making all these out of waste materials eco-friendly. No plants were cut and they use only the fallen leaves for designs. They make pots, toys, ornaments, book covers etc. I liked all the things that they were making because they were creatively making use of the waste materials which are otherwise discarded. This was a great learning experience for us.

Sivananda



Botanical Garden

In the Auroville botanical garden there were varieties of plant species. There was a plant nursery inside. They also have a kitchen garden for their own purpose. We knew from them that they did not use any pesticides for that. The place was full of greenery. I liked the way they are taking care of the plants. I felt that we should do the same at Snehagram also.

Manik Prabhu

Botanical garden gave me more information about plants and trees, It was really good to walk around and learn about the plants and trees. There they grow vegetables and fruits to sell in the markets in Chennai and other places. I enjoyed this place a lot



Vanitha

At the Pegasus

The place I liked most was Pegasus. It was here we stayed during this trip. In Pegasus we had a wonderful place to sleep, place to play and good food. Pegasus is located near the beach and was surrounded by trees. I was surprised to hear that this place was destroyed by Tsunami and they had to rebuild this beautiful place. I liked this place because they organised good activities which were helpful for us in our daily life. The activities were connected to life and helpful for future. The activities taught how we should set a goal for future and also how we can do good for others. One of the activities was on achieving our goal step by step. The activities helped us to learn to adjust, cooperate, and the importance of team work.

Meena



Auroville Marathon

The Auroville Marathon is being conducted every year with the goal of 'offering a platform for those who develop in themselves grit, tenacity, plasticity and become runners for the rest of their lives'. The run was offered 'to all in the spirit of joy of running'. The event was marked with the participation of around 3500 people including 150 children in the age group 8-18 representing 5 different schools. Six of the Snehagram students featured among the first ten to complete the contest. The experience from the run is put down below by a participant from Snehagram, who stood second in the 10k category of the marathon.



The day before the marathon my toe was aching. I told it to my teacher and she asked me not to be worried and keep cool. The next day my toe-pain was reduced. When the marathon started I was full of energy and out of my worries. While running I was not really thinking of winning but I ran well for my life and health. On the way while running the volunteer who was cheering told me to run faster since I am in the second position. But I never bothered and continued my run. When I finished the 10K run I came to know that it was true that I was the second among the whole group. I finished the run in 37 minutes and 10 seconds. I was overjoyed. First, I thanked god who guided and helped me in running and then the others.



Participants from Snehagram in the Auroville Marathon 2015

We concluded our outing with a short pop in to a beach nearby. During these days, we had a lot of fun and also learned a lot. Days seemed to be shorter!

Babu



Students' Corner

THE BEST FRIENDS

The best friends
Can turn a frown
Into a smile
When you feel down

The best friends
Will understand
Your little trails, and
Lend a hand

The best friends
Worth more than gold
Give all the love
A heart can hold



Ambika

WHAT IS PAIN

When we are physically hurt
People see our wounds
When we get beat by stick
It may stay for a few days

But when we are hurt by words
It will take a long time to heal
Can people see our suffering?
When we go through emotional
Or mental pain
No, they cannot; so we suffer alone

Words are ghost
Means when we are hurt by someone
It will be coming behind us
Cuts and bruise now have healed
It's words that I remember.



Meena

Staffs' Corner

A companion to self-realisation

When I came to accompany the children in Snehagram in their intellectual growth, I thought I would be teaching them a few subjects. Yes, I do it; but as time passed, I do understand that teaching them is a challenge. Understanding and accepting each one of them with their strength and limitations and bringing the best out of them is a real challenge. I think I have failed several times to face this challenge. Since I was trying to implement my own plans and ideas. I believe that I have to take up this challenge collectively with patience and optimism. And this is my mission and vision for Snehagram children in 2015.

I feel that each student of Snehagram has to become aware of his/her potentials, challenges of with a sense of realism. Understanding one's real self and emotionality is a precondition to accomplish this objective and thereby learn to live. I would like to become a companion or friend to them in this process. I am sure that this has to be done in an ambience of homeliness and fraternity.



Shaji George

Miles to go...

I am elated to be a part of Snehagram once again. In fact, this is a second stint for me with the Sneha Charitable Trust (SCT), since I had worked earlier with Snehadan, a care and support initiative for PLHIV by SCT in 2007-08. What appealed me most, here in Snehagram, is the conducive environment it offers for the children for their development. As a pioneering venture of its kind in India, it envisions to provide the CABA with the right kind of training according to each child's taste and preference. Students' needs are holistically addressed here - be it education, health, nutrition, leadership training or skill training – and keeps on putting in all the effort to create a familial environment through a sound psycho-social support. As a result, many children are vowed to help others in the situations similar to theirs by choosing a career in counselling. The emphasis of Snehagram for the future is to develop this humble experiment into a unique model. So that the lessons learnt can be passed on to other similar initiatives, across the country, through training, mentoring and handholding. Though the task is quite challenging, I hope this initiative would revolutionise the concept of not only the care for CABA but the very concept of care for the children in needy situations. I consider this as a great learning opportunity.



Joby Joseph K

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