

A QUICK Rewind

Entire village comes together to support PwDs

They say “It takes a village to raise a child” and so it is for people with disabilities and other vulnerabilities, as **Adhingapattu Village in Bahour Commune, Puducherry**, demonstrated.

Satya Special School launched the **Sustainable Inclusive Rural Development** project in four villages in Bahour Commune, Puducherry with the support of United Way Chennai.

With frequent lockdown and COVID waves, the project had a few delays. However, the entire village rallied together to make the project a reality.

As part of the project, we conducted:

- Participatory Rural Analysis, where villagers themselves mapped their homes



- Transact walk to find out how accessible the village is
- Door-to-door canvassing regarding the schemes available for the vulnerable populations, not restricted to disability, and connected them to the schemes
- Raising of awareness about disability through puppet shows, talks, and other sensitization
- Accessibility audit of public spaces and creation of two accessible spaces (anganwadi and community hall)
- Training of the youth to become paratherapists.

To top off the year’s activities, we **inaugurated the anganwadi and organised a disability awareness exhibition** at a primary school on March 29.



A Dream Realized!

R. Muthulakshmi, now 59, remembers how the anganwadi was, fifteen years ago, when she came in as in-charge of the anganwadi. “The place was a dump. There were (liquor) bottles strewn around everywhere, and everyone dumped their trash here,” she says.

“**I always wondered when my anganwadi would be among the best,**” she says, her voice choking up. With the clean rooms and a backyard with a swing set, the anganwadi is a place that will welcome all children. “It is great that all kids can come here and play,” she says, as her helper K. Selvambal, agrees. “I am now happy, a year away from retirement, that the anganwadi is in good hands.”



A new centre opens in Marakkanam

Satya Special School opened its **second satellite centre** at **Marakkanam, Tamil Nadu** on March 23.

Our focus on reaching the unreached continues, as the centre will cater to villages in and around Marakkanam, which is about 35 kilometres from Pondicherry.

The need for the centre was apparent as 25 children were enrolled as soon as word went out about the centre. We also realized how important this centre was, when we saw that of the children, only 15 were under 12 years of age. The others were older and are accessing specialized services for the first time!

It was heartwarming to see the support of the local community to this initiative. Thank you **Ms. Jagadeeshwari**, Child Development Project Officer, Marakkanam; **Mr. N. Venkataramani** of Ramoney Financial Insurance Services; and **Dr. Ramya Moorthy**, of Nimiya Innovations for gracing the occasion!



Best NGO Partner Award for Satya!

Satya Special School won the best NGO Partner (Notable Project) award from United Way Chennai this year.

The Sustainable Inclusive Rural Development Project is our first project with United Way Chennai and the organization's first foray into Puducherry!

Thanks to everyone who made this possible!



Student spotlight

Ever-Ready

Ravimathi, our activity queen!

Ravimathi, 18, is in our Centre for Multiple Disabilities and getting ready for her NIOS exams. You'll see her either preparing for the exam, or for one of various cultural events: dance, or mime, or quiz! Once a week, you can catch Ravimathi at the Makerspace, where she and four others learn to experiment and learn in an open inclusive space.

"She is very interested in making things out of waste," says Ms. K. Nirmala, centre in-charge. "And in knowing about computers."

Ravimathi wasn't always like this, though. When she arrived at the centre, nearly four years ago, she was very shy. Her stutter made things even more difficult for her, and she would not speak with anyone. With constant encouragement, she is now the first to volunteer for any event.

She was worried that she wouldn't be able to manage English, and declined to attempt NIOS; however, with the advice of the teachers at the Centre for Multiple Disabilities, she is trying that too.

"She is one of our most enthusiastic students now," says Ms. Nirmala.



#ThisAbility discusses 'What After Us?'

Experts discuss inclusive employment in hospitality



This Ability Discussion Series
Real Stories. Real conversations.

WHAT AFTER US?
எங்களுக்கு பிறகு?
சிறப்பு குழந்தைகளின்
பெற்றோருக்கு நிதி திட்டமிடல்

CA பரத் ஷா
நிதி நிபுணர்
ஆட்டிஸம் உள்ளவரின்
தந்தை

CA ஸ்ரீராம் நாராயண்
டிரஸ்டி, அமேஸ் டிரஸ்ட்
ஆட்டிஸம் உள்ளவரின்
தந்தை

Saturday, March 26, 11 a.m.

REGISTER NOW!

"Throw the word 'charity' out," said **Ms. Alina Alam, founder of Mitti Café**, a chain of cafes run by people with disabilities, as she discussed her model of inclusive employment, as part of Satya Special School's #ThisAbility series. The webinar was held in association with **Sristi Foundation** on March 30.

Mr. Akshay Tyagi, Lead, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the Lalit Group of Hotels, spoke about their personal experience in inclusive hiring, including LGBTQI+ and people with disabilities. He also explained how guests at their hotels had a very positive experience with PwDs, and that this was not just CSR for the group, but part of their DNA.

The March #ThisAbility series discussed a question that most parents of Children with Special Needs ask themselves: **'What After Us?'** in association with **Amaze Charitable Trust**. The Tamil webinar was an open event and was held on March 26.

Mr. Sriram Narayan, of Amaze Trust, and **Mr. Bharat Shah**, Financial Expert, discussed the need for planning for a scenario where they are not around for their special needs child. They stressed the importance of drawing up a will for every parent, and the need to think of a legal guardian who can safeguard the interests of the CWSN.

This webinar was one of the most interactive, with parents coming up with questions ranging from how much their special child might understand about their inheritance (not much), and how much the government might step in (again, not much).

The experts brought their own experiences to the table and reiterated the need for planning for the life of their child after them.



Mr. K. Amarnath, of Surguru Hotels, who was instrumental in organizing the session, asked about the ways to get started on this path, to which Alina responded that the best way was to just get started.

The webinar was held as part of the Employment Series of #ThisAbility, Satya Special School's conversations on lesser known aspects of disability.

Satya event spotlights inclusive workforce initiative



In a one-of-a-kind live session on March 31, five CEOs and 25 HR professionals of Indian industry learnt about the inclusive workforce story of Grundfos India, at Hotel Surguru in Puducherry.

Mr. K. Amarnath, past chairman, CII Puducherry and vice president, Hotel Surguru, welcomed the gathering. Dr S. Surender, chairman, CII Puducherry, gave an introduction to the work done by CII in inclusion.

The seminar, headlined by Mr. N.K. Ranganath, past chairman of CII Tamil Nadu and ex- managing director, Grundfos India and Ms. Arudhra Mathur, country HR head, Grundfos India, gave a real peek into how an inclusive culture can be built in industry. Mr. E. Vallavan, IAS, district collector, Puducherry, and secretary, local administration, excise, information and publicity, commissioner (excise) to the Government of Puducherry, introduced the importance of building an inclusive workforce,

and highlighted the government's efforts towards the same.

Grundfos has hired several people with mild and moderate intellectual and developmental disabilities in their organization. Some of the ideas shared included giving the new recruits ample time and opportunity to acclimatize themselves to the environment. In the Grundfos experience, this period was around two months, during which time the recruits performed some minor tasks. The panellists agreed that there were challenges, but it was a new opportunity, just like one tries out in business.

Ms. Chitra Shah, director, Satya Special School, and Mr. Karthikeyan Ganesan, director, Sristi Foundation spoke about the other side of the coin: skilling of people with IDD's so that they are employment-ready.

Mr. V. R. Raguraman, convenor of the CSR panel, CII Puducherry, proposed the vote of thanks.



Role Model Award

We're happy when we win an award, but we're happier when our people win awards!

Savitha Badri Narayanan, who runs our Pollachi centre, was recently presented the **Role Model for Humanity award**, created by Radio City.

Savitha, who was trained at Satya Special School, decided to do something about the fact that there were many children with special needs who had no access to therapy. And the Pollachi centre was born! Now catering to 28 children,

Savitha says she has plans to expand the centre, so that no child goes without therapy.



Ananya and Mom on an awards spree!



Our student, **S. Ananya**, has added another feather to her crowded cap!

She won the **“Sadhanai Kuzhandhai Virudhu” (Child Achiever Award)** from Nallore Vattam, an NGO **inspired by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam’s vision** for India.

Ananya has been with Satya Special School since 2010, and shows enthusiasm in most activities. Her mother, Mrs. Geetha, participates in most capacity building activities and exemplifies the “mother as co-therapist” model.



Among 75 winners across the southern states, Ananya was one of three children with special needs students who were honoured. She cleared three rounds of interviews before she was selected for the award!

Ananya's mother, Geetha, for her part, won the Special Mom Award given by Sri Arunodayam Charitable Trust.

Three cheers to Ananya and her mother!

'Aatral' focuses on the ability of Satya youth

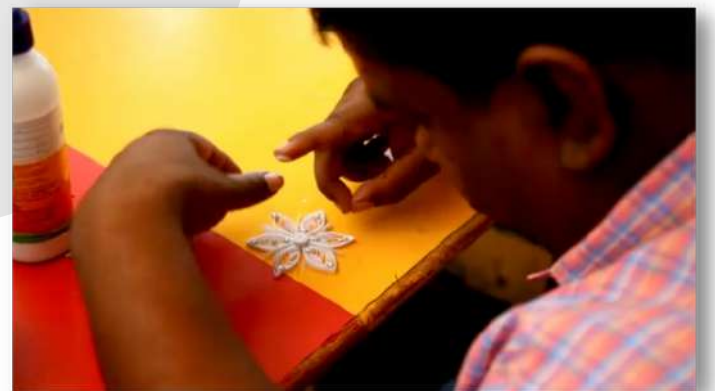
Satya is launching a bold experiment in inclusion: Aatral.

Aatral, meaning skill in Tamil, will be an activity centre for the general public where our youth with disabilities lead fun activities like baking, quilling, art, and dancing, for a fee. This will flip the giver-receiver equation, for more mutual respect, dignity, and understanding.

Patrons will pay to have the experience of baking their own signature dish, or making a personalized craft item. It will be a step forward in showcasing the capabilities of those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, while creating spaces for interaction and understanding. This centre will create partnerships with schools in Puducherry, and across the hospitality sector. The activity leaders (our youth with disabilities) will be paid a stipend for their work.

For art and craft, our children are trained in painting, quilling and weaving.

As a first step, we have collaborated with Eat my Cake! to train eight of our students in baking special goods. Eat my Cake! is a café headed by Ms. Saloua Sahl from France, who visited Pondicherry two years ago and made a home here. Her café is fondly appreciated by both tourists and locals.



Donate to Aatral

Thank you for your support!

SATYA SPECIAL SCHOOL