



NalandaWay Foundation

# Annual Report

April 2021 - March 2022



## Table of Contents

CEO's Note	1
1. HOLISTIC EDUCATION	2
Gutar Goo	3
Foundational Learning in Standards 1, 2 and 5	4
Project Sakhi	5
2. EXPRESSIVE ARTS	6
Art in Education	7
Children's Choir	8
Schools of Specialised Excellence - Visual Arts	9
Delhi Arts Curriculum	10
3. WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH	11
Take it Eazy	12
Wellbeing of Adolescents and Teachers across Tamil Nadu	13
vAnam vasapadum	14
Ready Joot	15
Financials	16
Partners	17

## CEO's Note

2022 was the second year of Covid. A year of continued school closures, intermittent lockdowns, vaccinations and anxieties. Children from disadvantaged families were feeling low, anxious and even depressed.

There were multiple stressors which affected the students' psychological state e.g. the fears and overwhelming news about Covid-19 infection, the need to continue studying, domestic violence, the inability to meet friends and share their fears, and the uncertainty over parents' loss of livelihood due to the lockdown.

At NalandaWay, we responded to this grave challenge with agility and determination. The successful "Take it Eazy" project which was piloted for 7 lacs adolescents in Tamil Nadu in 2021, was scaled across Bihar, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir, impacting over 1 crore children. We renewed our focus on adolescents in 45 Educationally Backward Blocks in TN, impacting over 2.5 lacs adolescents. Our art based interventions was appreciated by partner governments, donors, civil society and media.

Our team size also grew this year. We would not have achieved these nearly impossible projects without their perseverance and a "never give up" attitude.

My sincere thanks to our donors who believed in the power of arts and NalandaWay's vision and capabilities to deliver joy to children from disadvantaged homes, helping them become hopeful.



**Sriram V**  
Founder and CEO

**A**t NalandaWay Foundation, we believe that whole child development needs education, art and mental wellbeing. And that's exactly how our projects are structured too - All our projects fall under three verticals, 1) Holistic Education, 2) Expressive Arts, and 3) Wellbeing and Mental Health.

# 1. HOLISTIC EDUCATION

## Early Childhood

### Gutar Goo

An early childhood literacy and arts initiative to support children between ages 3 and 6 in the Anganwadis of Noida.

## Children in Transition

### Foundational Learning in Standards 1, 2 and 5

Building foundational literacy and numeracy skills and social-emotional skills for students in Standards 1, 2 and 5 in selected government schools across Chennai.

## Adolescent Girls

### Project Sakhi

Empowering adolescent girls from difficult and challenging backgrounds through a holistic programme in Chennai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Coimbatore, Thiruvananthapuram, Gurgaon, Pune, and Hyderabad.



## Gutar Goo



*Noida, Uttar Pradesh*

Gutar Goo is an early childhood education programme which employs a fun storytelling pedagogy to advance the academic performance and life skills of 3-6-year-olds enrolled in Anganwadis. In the second iteration of the project, we focused on fostering positive health and hygiene behaviours and awareness among 66 children in 2 Anganwadis in Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

The children were exposed to fun storytelling sessions around the domains of community health, self-health and socio-emotional wellbeing, using elements of visual arts and theatre. Learning kits containing Bluetooth speakers for audio stories and illustrated thematic workbooks were distributed to the children. This ensured that learning could continue even in case of inability to access Anganwadi spaces. We also focused on empowering parents and caregivers to support their children in their learning process at home with ease.



# Foundational Learning in Standards 1, 2 and 5



Our Foundational Learning programme helped over 1200 students studying in Standards 1, 2 and 5 across government schools in Chennai. The programme aims to bridge the learning gap and to reinforce conceptual learning of English and Maths for these children through art-based activities and workbooks. In addition to

foundational literacy and numeracy, we also focused on strengthening the children's social and emotional skills.

Due to the uncertainty of school closures during the pandemic, we developed a sustainable model wherein Teaching Assistants were trained to teach the children the contents of the workbooks using distance learning methods such as phone calls. The teaching assistants conducted one-on-one personalized sessions for each child based on the available time slots of the child's parents.

34 teaching assistants conducted over 200 sessions in English and Maths. The assessment results show that the learners performed on higher levels in English reading and Maths, and used creative problem-solving methods.



## Project Sakhi



*Chennai, Delhi, Gurgaon,  
Bengaluru, Coimbatore,  
Hyderabad, Pune and  
Thiruvananthapuram*

Project Sakhi is a programme that works with adolescent girls and helps them transition to adulthood with the help of a comprehensive support system. We have successfully established the project in more locations in the previous year. Until November 2021, we had Sakhi cohorts in 5 locations (Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram). In early December 2021, we had begun our expanded footprint to 4 more cities, taking the total to 9 Sakhi cohorts in different regions of India - including Pune, Gurgaon, Hyderabad, and a second chapter in Chennai.

The partners supporting us were Global Logic endorsing 4 new chapters and RRd who continued their support in Chennai and Trivandrum. Our girls in the Chennai Perambur school spent time preparing for the 10th standard board exams they were to appear for in May this year. Despite its bleakness owing to the pandemic, the last year offered an opportunity to strengthen our work and explore engaging ways to run the Sakhi programme. The project teams were hard at work switching between the online mode of connecting with the girls and offline sessions in the schools and Children's Homes in Trivandrum, Bangalore and Coimbatore. The project kick-started with an assessment of needs in some of our new cohorts, and covered rapport-building sessions from 'unmasking feelings' using mime and theatre to mandala art making and compost making.

We also renamed the programme from Scholars' project to 'Sakhi' - to reflect the sisterhood that shapes and inspires further bonding, in the circles, they grow into.

## 2. EXPRESSIVE ARTS

### Art Integration in Primary Schools

#### Art in Education

Creating a joyful art experience for little learners studying in Class 1-5 through the introduction of different art mediums in the classroom.

### Children's Choir

#### Chennai Children's Choir Delhi Children's Choir

Tapping into the transformative powers of music to help children emerge as more confident, hopeful and skillful beings.

### Structured Art Education

#### Delhi Arts Curriculum

Development of curriculum, lesson plans, teaching and learning materials in visual art, music, dance, theatre and media arts for children aged 3 to 14, along with the Government of Delhi.

#### Schools of Specialised Excellence

Visual arts workshops for 14 - 18 year olds with talent and interest to understand and pursue visual arts in their further studies and careers, conducted as a pilot proposed by the Government of Delhi.



# Art in Education

 *Chennai*

In our Art in Education programme, we held visual art classes for children studying in Classes 1-5 in 29 schools across Chennai. Until January, our teaching assistants had to conduct sessions over the phone due to the uncertainty of school closures. Post the reopening of schools in February, we started direct sessions in classrooms and focused on activities that improve student creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

All students received learning kits with workbooks and art materials such as drawing notebooks, crayons, sketches, watercolours, etc. During this year, our teaching assistants conducted 880 sessions in 220 classrooms for 9462 students and created a joyful classroom environment with a creatively designed curriculum.



# Oh Paalanhaare

—❖🎵 Chennai and Delhi Children's Choirs with NalandaWay Team 🎵❖—



Delhi  
Children's  
Choir



## Children's Choir



*Chennai and Delhi*

The pandemic allowed the choir to experiment and explore unique possibilities on the online platform. As the music classes continued to happen through online sessions, we came up with Choir Jugal Bandi, where children from Delhi and Chennai met online once a month and sang together. It was a form of cultural exchange for the children as they got to learn about different music genres and traditions. This also helped a lot of them relieve pandemic-

induced stress. Once we started the direct in-person sessions, we started Harmonica sessions along with the music classes and included a few theatre activities as well.

In addition to the existing group, we welcomed a new batch of children during the new year. The older batch was given an opportunity to engage and teach the first few sessions to the new students through which they developed a strong rapport and bonding.

Across our two choirs, we had 44 children engage in over 200 music sessions throughout the year. Together, they came up with an online video rendition of O Paalanhaare, a prayer song, which was uploaded on our YouTube channel.



# Schools of Specialised Excellence - Visual Arts

 *Delhi NCR*

We were given the opportunity to work with the first batch of SoSE (Schools of Specialised Excellence) in PVA (Performing and Visual Arts) children from September 2021 to January 2022.

This was a unique proposition by the Department of Education, Government of Delhi for 14 to 18-year-olds with talent and interest to understand and pursue visual arts in their further studies and

careers. Our learners came from very varied backgrounds with different language abilities, aptitudes and aspirations. Our approach was to immerse these young minds in many forms of visual arts through an introduction of varied artists, mediums and concepts from India and the world, such as Bhuri Bai, Ragmala paintings, Pattachitra, Yayoi Kusama, Amrita Shergill, Gauri Gill, Chhau art, street art from Delhi and international districts, and more.

Through an interdisciplinary arts exposure to visual arts, theatre, media arts, movement and music, woven seamlessly by NalandaWay, we reached 120 students in the 9th grade, from across Delhi NCR. The programme inspired high motivational and receptivity levels in the students as they produced artistic expressions that were creatively and critically executed on themes such as emotions, the rhythm of life, community and heritage, identity, and environment.



# 3. WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH

## Adolescents

### Take it Eazy

Using storytelling and an IVRS technology-enabled phone-in programme to discuss adolescent problems during the pandemic in Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, and Jharkhand.

### Wellbeing of Adolescents and Teachers

Workbooks and training programme aimed at addressing the emotional wellbeing of students and teachers in the educationally backward blocks of Tamil Nadu.

### vAnam Vasapadum

Creating joyful art experiences for children in government-run homes that build their sense of self and wellbeing by means of a trauma-informed expressive arts intervention.

### Ready Joot

A game-based intervention aimed at enhancing adolescent wellbeing and learner motivation in adolescents from urban slums in Chennai.



## Take it Eazy



*Bihar, Jammu and  
Kashmir and Jharkhand*

In collaboration with UNICEF and the governments of Bihar, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir, we launched 'Take it Eazy' to help adolescents improve their wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was first launched in Tamil Nadu in 2020 between May and June during the heights of the first lockdown. The second phase was implemented based on the learnings from Tamil Nadu whilst keeping the contextual nuances of the different states in mind.

It was designed as a 30-day project, one story every day between November 22 to December 21. Students gave a missed call to a number, an automated call was placed back to their mobile phones using IVRS technology, and the story of the day was played in Hindi for listeners from Bihar and Jharkhand and in Urdu for listeners from Jammu and Kashmir. We used the

methodology of creative storytelling, where two characters (Kabir and Tara) discuss and resolve issues of adolescents in a fun and engaging manner. The stories narrate the fears and difficulties of adolescents, with the characters sharing their thoughts and finding solutions and ways to address them. Laced with friendly humour, each episode gave the listener art and mindfulness activities to cope with their stress. 10 episodes were created for teachers as well to help with their wellbeing and to help them facilitate students' wellbeing.

We held pre-launch and launch events in all states along with UNICEF and the respective Directorates of School Education of each state. The stories were played daily during the school assembly in several schools. We disbursed Whatsapp-friendly creatives to be sent to teachers, students and school groups. The stories were also made available on our YouTube channel.

In total, we reached over 19 lakh children across the three states. We also received a lot of positive feedback from children and teachers via photographs, text messages, comments on YouTube videos and over the IVRS response system.



# Wellbeing of Adolescents and Teachers across Tamil Nadu



*Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB) of Tamil Nadu*

Tamil Nadu has around 250,000 students in classes 9 to 12, who study in the Government and Government-Aided schools in 45 Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB), spread across 12 districts. Some districts like Dharmapuri, Erode, Krishnagiri, Salem, Thiruvannamalai and Villupuram have a more significant share of enrolments in EBBs. NalandaWay, along with the Tamil Nadu State Council of Educational Research

and Training (TNSCERT), decided to reach adolescents in these blocks with joyful learning material that aimed to address students' emotional wellbeing for students in grades 9-12.

The intervention for adolescents entailed a self-paced workbook with 30 art-based activities that the students could engage with. The workbook was intended to be a visual resource with minimal verbal instructions to make it user-friendly and inclusive. Each activity had a QR code that led to a video demonstration of the instructions.

We also identified the need to support the emotional wellbeing of teachers and encourage them to act as facilitators for change. This was done through a teacher's manual (with topics focusing on their wellbeing, purpose, positive classroom strategies, etc.) and a training workshop that helped them connect their wellbeing with their students' wellbeing through an experiential journey.



## vAnam vasapadum



*Tamil Nadu (Chennai,  
Vellore, Kanchipuram,  
Salem, Erode,  
Coimbatore)*

“vAnam vasapadum” is a Tamil phrase which translates to ‘The sky is ours’. The phrase gives us hope and lets us believe that the sky’s the limit. We launched ‘vAnam vasapadum’ in 10 government-run children’s homes across Tamil Nadu with the aim of creating joyful art experiences for children that build their sense of self and wellbeing. This project uses a trauma-informed expressive arts intervention to foster social-emotional learning.

We conducted a detailed need assessment, built a facilitator-led model and designed curriculum handbooks for the facilitators to teach different art forms including visual art, theatre, music and wellbeing sessions. Prior to the implementation of the project, we conducted capacity-building sessions for facilitators and trial sessions for the children to see how they responded.

Across the 10 homes, we conducted over 1400 fun art/music sessions for 230 children. An Annual Art Festival was conducted at the end of the year to celebrate the artist in each child and provide them with a joyful platform to showcase their artistic skills. For children aged 16 and above, we launched a peer mentoring programme with sessions focusing on leadership skills and emotional awareness and regulation.



# Ready Joot

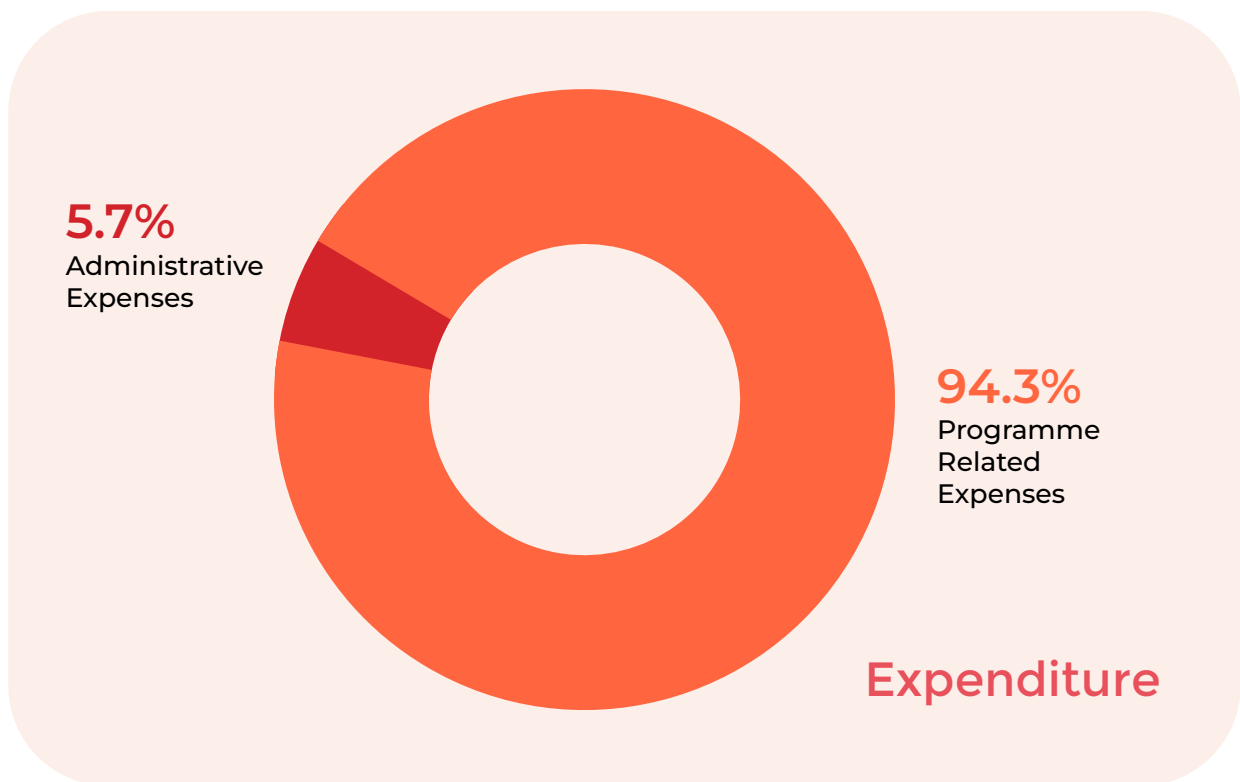
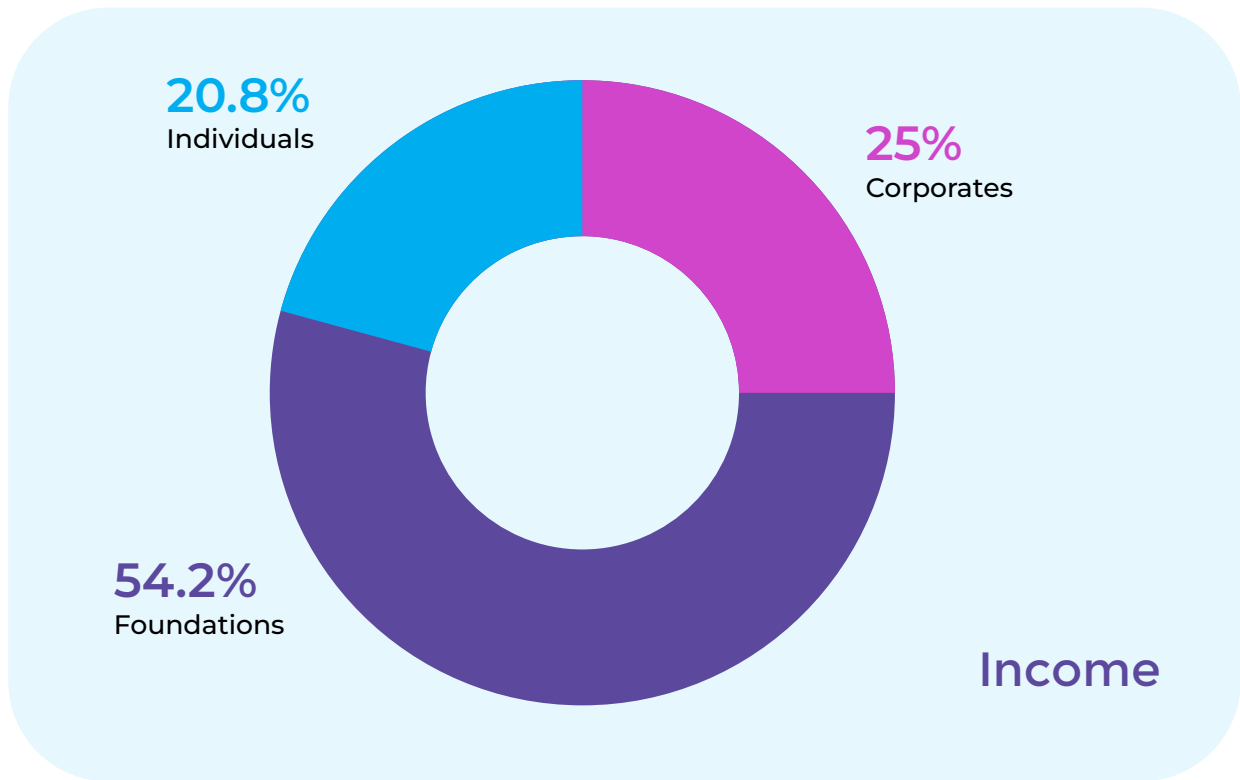


Together with UNICEF, we worked on developing 'Ready Joot', a game-based intervention aimed at enhancing adolescent wellbeing and learner motivation in adolescents from urban slums in Chennai. Through this intervention, we want to help adolescents navigate through the various physical, social and psychological challenges of adolescence, practice self-love, and enhance emotional awareness and regulation along with their abilities to cope with stress. Upon conducting a need analysis, the primary concerns of the adolescents were understood, and the 'Ready Joot' game was designed accordingly.

Inspired by the five elements of nature, the Ready Joot game has a pack of 75 cards, divided into 5 suites of Earth (self), Fire (potential to destroy), Water (nourishing and healing), Wind (change) and Ether (environment). Each element represents a different theme/activity for the questions on the card.

Ahead of the project's implementation which was scheduled for May 2022, we worked on the content development and design of the card game, identified locations, partnered with local community-based organisations, conducted feasibility tests and planned for the distribution of the game kits and orientation. We identified four urban slum locations across the city of Chennai, namely Ennore, Vyasarpadi, Saidapet and Semmenjeri. By implementing this project in these locations, we aim to help over 10,000 adolescents studying in Classes 7-12.

# Financials



For the financial year April 2021 to March 2022

# Partners



सत्यमेव जयते  
Government of the National  
Capital Territory of Delhi





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