

# EMBERS OF GROWTH

July - August 2025

## New Beginnings:

Early Childhood Education gets a reboot. New books, inclusive spaces and a whole lot of fun!



## Powering Up Child Care:

DCWSS, NalandaWay Foundation, SIAAP, Miracle Foundation India, and SCARF, join forces with a new statewide PMU.



## 50 Futures Fundraiser:

Together, we can help 50 children heal, learn, and chase their dreams — giving them the chance to live brighter, fuller lives.



*Dear NalandaWay Community,*

We are delighted to share with you the July–August 2025 edition of our newsletter — a glimpse into the stories, milestones, and moments that have defined the past two months at NalandaWay.

This August, our founder-CEO, Sriram V, turned 50 — and chose to celebrate by launching a fundraising campaign to support 50 children. Thanks to your generosity, we’ve already raised ₹4.6 lakh, with a goal of ₹50 lakh! Every contribution helps a child heal, learn, and thrive – and you can still join this milestone campaign.

Beyond this campaign, the past two months have been full of learning and creativity. In early childhood education, fresh lesson plans, engaging activities, and inclusive classrooms are sparking curiosity and joy among our youngest learners. Our training sessions are reimagining art and theatre as tools for education, and Anganwadi centres are bringing classrooms to life.

You’ll also read about the Adolescent Mental Health Programme, where musical theatre builds confidence and emotional well-being; the Sakhi cohorts, excelling academically and creatively; and our statewide Project Monitoring Unit, strengthening child protection systems across Tamil Nadu. From children’s choirs exploring ragas in studios to care leavers preparing for higher education, every story reflects our commitment to nurturing creativity, resilience, and hope.

We invite you to journey through these pages, celebrate the progress, and continue standing with us as we empower children.

With gratitude and warmth,  
The NalandaWay Team





## Arts in Education: Nurturing Creativity in Every Classroom

### ➤ Meet Our 2025–26 Teaching Artists

This year, we received 95 applications for the Teaching Artist programme. After rigorous screenings — including phone calls, written tests, mock teaching sessions, and final interviews — 12 candidates were selected for the 2025–26 academic year. Current and former TAs were also consulted to ensure alignment with project expectations.

### ➤ Lesson Plans, Reimagined

Lesson plans were updated based on last year's feedback, aligning with NCF and NEP guidelines. Sessions were reorganised for smooth progression, with new age-appropriate and practical activities designed to strengthen learning outcomes.

### ➤ Four Days of Immersive Training

From August 1–4, 2025, Teaching Artists attended a comprehensive training at Asha Nivas:

- **Day 1:** HR orientation, project overview, and R&I introduction.
- **Day 2:** Deep dive into the three-phase implementation plan and expert-led Visual Arts training, covering line work, colour theory, still life, and portrait study. Key takeaway: “Go as an artist, not just as an art teacher.”
- **Day 3:** Organising and packing materials for schools, preparing acknowledgement sheets for students and classrooms.
- **Day 4:** Theatre and puppetry sessions, plus guidance on documentation and capturing photos and testimonials.

### ➤ Tracking Impact

TAs were introduced to the MEL plan for baseline, midline, and endline assessments, trained on tools, rubrics, and FGDs, and received tips from experienced TAs to ensure accurate documentation and observations.



95

Applications received

12

Teaching Artists selected

4

Training days

New age-appropriate, practical sessions aligned with NCF & NEP content

## Kanna Mucche | Bengaluru: Early Learning Meets Fun and Discovery

### ➤ Empowering Trainers

Over four days in Bengaluru, Teaching Assistants enhanced their knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality early childhood education. The training covered curriculum planning aligned with national standards, early childhood development principles, staff welfare and Child Protection Policy, preparation of Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs), and the Navchetana (Birth–3 years) & Aadharshila (3–6 years) frameworks.



### ➤ Sparking Creativity in Classrooms

16 Anganwadi centres received specially designed art and gaming kits, supporting cognitive, creative, and motor skill development for children aged 3–6.

### ➤ Listening First, Acting Next

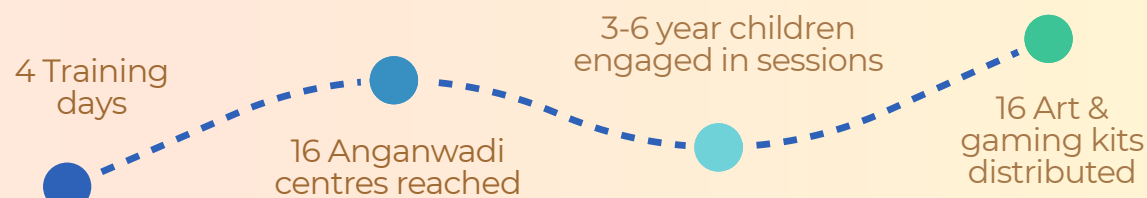
Focused Group Discussions with pregnant women and nursing mothers, alongside personal interviews with Anganwadi teachers, helped identify current practices and community needs—ensuring targeted and responsive interventions.

### ➤ Hands-On Learning in Action

Kanna Mucche sessions launched across all 16 centres, featuring sensory activities and simple germ experiments. Children explored biological concepts through interactive learning, strengthening curiosity, observation skills, and foundational science understanding.

### ➤ Celebrating Culture and Creativity

During Rakshabandhan, children made and tied rakhis, blending creativity with cultural learning and fostering social bonds.







## Adolescent Mental Health Programme

### ► Capacity Building Training for Field Coordinators

A five-day onboarding training was conducted to familiarise field coordinators with the organisation, project goals, processes, and policies. The training focused on inclusion, team building, and clarifying roles. Creative methods such as role-playing, storytelling, and collaborative music and song creation ensured sessions were interactive and aligned with the project's core values. The training provided a strong foundation for field readiness and team alignment.

### ► Training Objectives

- Introduce the organisation, project, and policies
- Strengthen team bonding and collaboration
- Align the team with the project's vision and goals
- Provide hands-on experience of project processes
- Clarify roles and responsibilities

### ► School Visits and Data Collection

The team began school visits to connect with headteachers, introduce the project, and assess feasibility for training. Schools showed a strong willingness to participate. Staff were briefed on project structure and curriculum themes, while demographic data — including gender and class — was collected to support project implementation.

#### Voices of Change

“It was a perfect balance of fun and learning. We were able to know the main aspects of emotional well-being and the importance of mental health. The five-day training session went well and has truly moulded me into understanding what it takes to be an effective field coordinator. The roles and responsibilities were made crystal clear through powerful visualisations and were thoughtfully integrated into the curriculum.”

– Kamleeshwari, Field Coordinator



#### Voices of Change

“During the five-day training, I learned so much, and to be honest, I discovered a new version of myself. I have been associated with NalandaWay for many years, working on different projects with different focus areas. However, this project is unique and surprising to me because it revolves around musical theatre. Coming from a teaching background, we usually prioritise academics. In fact, in a typical classroom, when children start tapping rhythms on benches, we scold them and ask them to stop. But in this project, we are reinforcing those very activities through a structured curriculum based on musical theatre! Initially, I found it hard to believe that children could learn through music and drama. But over the past four years, I have seen it happen and been in awe—learning can happen this way too! We’ve all heard and told stories since our early childhood, but here, we bring those stories alive using emotions, rhythm, voice expressions, and even positive words that inspire children to create their own songs. When musical theatre could keep me enthusiastic and energetic at this stage of my life, it could surely keep children more engaged and excited. Now I realise how powerful it is. I am truly eager to explore this field further and see the wonderful impact it can create.”

– Padmapriya, Field Coordinator





## Wellbeing of Children Using a Whole School Approach

### Wellbeing Sessions in Classrooms

This month, wellbeing sessions were conducted in four schools, reaching 687 children across 22 classrooms from sixth to ninth grade. The sessions introduced the musical theatre curriculum with a focus on gender equality. They encouraged children to view every individual as unique and to break down traditional gender barriers. Activities were designed to develop self-awareness and life skills such as communication, empathy, critical thinking, and problem-solving.



687

children engaged

4

schools reached

22

classrooms

**Focus:** Musical theatre curriculum, gender equality, life skills development

### Voices of Change

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“The musical theatre sessions have been an interesting experience. As a new student, I was initially hesitant to participate due to difficulty giving a speech. However, the encouragement from my friends and the welcoming environment helped me open up and perform in a drama for the first time without any hesitation. I really enjoyed it and am now eager to participate in more drama.”

– Akash V, Grade 8

“I loved the activities like introducing our names and the 'why I'm late' and 'quick gun Murugan' drama. I felt so happy and enjoyed every moment. Thank you for conducting these fun activities and dramas.”

– Roshini A, Grade 6

## Sakhi: Young Girls, Big Achievements

### Delhi – Ambedkar Nagar: Exploring Art & Tradition

The Delhi cohort embraced creativity through three immersive art sessions. Scholars learned the traditional Kantha Stitch for a CSR wall and experimented with colourful handprint canvases, guiding peers and learning together. The sessions fostered teamwork, skill-building, and creative expression.

### Perambur Seniors: Celebrating Friendship

Friendship Day encouraged seniors to exchange compliments, reflect on memories, and recognise the joy and support that friendships bring. The activities strengthened emotional bonds and social confidence.

### Perambur Juniors: Career & Soft Skills Boost

Juniors and Choolai scholars engaged with Accenture volunteers for career guidance and soft skills training. They learned strategies to enhance communication, teamwork, and self-development—preparing for future academic and professional opportunities.

### Choolai: Raising Awareness Through Theatre

Scholars performed a thought-provoking mime on social media awareness, balancing humour and serious messages about overuse, online safety, and real-life connections. The performance sparked reflection on responsible digital behaviour.





### ➤ Bengaluru Juniors: Counselling Builds Confidence

Expert-led counselling sessions offered emotional guidance and practical strategies to manage stress, academic challenges, and personal growth. Scholars gained self-confidence and tools for resilience.

### ➤ Bengaluru Juniors & Sub-juniors

Independence Day Skit on Child Marriage:

During Independence Day celebrations, scholars showcased their talents with a welcome dance, vibrant Janapada acts, and a skit on child marriage. Two students were honoured on the spot for their compelling speeches—creating an inspiring and emotional moment.

### ➤ Bengaluru Seniors: Friendship Day & Creative Expression

Senior scholars celebrated Friendship Day by making handmade friendship bands and participating in a Sakhi Art Photos activity, blending creativity, emotions, and peer bonding.

### ➤ Pune Cohort: Academic Excellence Honoured

At the Mata Helpline event on 3 August 2025, four Sakhis — Sanchita Andhale, Samruddhi Jagde, Priya Vidhate, and Monika Waghmare — were recognised for excelling in SSC examinations despite challenges. Each received laptops and financial support exceeding ₹5 lakh, empowering their academic journeys.

### ➤ Hyderabad Cohort: Social Media Awareness & Friendship Day

Dr. Subhashini, High Court Advocate, conducted a session on responsible social media use, covering online safety, cyberbullying, and privacy. Scholars also celebrated Friendship Day through card-making, gift exchanges, and tying friendship bands, fostering joy, unity, and lasting memories.



## Kanna Moochi | Chennai: Small Pockets of Joy

### ➤ Stronger Beginnings: New Workbooks for Bright Minds

Student workbooks and parent guidelines were revised using field feedback, making them simpler and more accessible for caregivers. A brand-new academic book was also created, featuring activity-based content to strengthen pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills, ensuring a solid foundation for learning.

### ➤ TA Training in Action: Ready, Set, Teach!

A four-day training programme prepared newly recruited Teaching Assistants for their roles in Anganwadi centres. The sessions covered Early Childhood Education, NEP policy, session facilitation, monitoring & evaluation, case story writing, and Teaching-Learning Material (TLM) creation, combining knowledge, creativity, and teamwork.

### ➤ Celebrating Culture and Creativity

During Rakshabandhan, children made and tied rakhis, blending creativity with cultural learning and fostering social bonds.

### ➤ Donors Witness the Joy of Learning

Representatives visited the Thousand Lights Anganwadi Centre, observing live storytelling and classroom activities. Their interactions with staff, Anganwadi workers, and Teaching Assistants highlighted the joy of learning and reinforced confidence in the project's grassroots impact.

### ➤ Stories, Songs & Flags

Classroom sessions were implemented across 18 Anganwadi centres, with children actively participating in two stories using play-way methods and storytelling. Independence Day celebrations included flag-making, patriotic songs, and storytelling, fostering pride, unity, and a spirit of togetherness among the children.

18 Anganwadi centres reached

4 Days of TA training







## Human Resources

### » Stories, Smiles & Self-Care at Thursday Circle

In July, our Thursday Circle embraced new joiners as they shared their stories. To mark Self-Care Day, surprise affirmations were shared across offices and with remote colleagues, carrying warmth and positivity to every corner of the team. What began as a simple gesture became a gentle reminder of how vital it is to care for ourselves.

### » Colours, Flavours & Fun at Onam

August brought festive cheer with the Onam celebration. The Chennai and Delhi office teams came together to create colourful Pookkalams, enjoy traditional payasam, and take part in engaging activities. The day concluded with a joyful group photos capturing the spirit of togetherness.



## GET TO KNOW THE FRESH FACES BRINGING NEW ENERGY TO NALANDAWAY!



Anvita Patra

Ashna Rahim

Sarfaraj

Krishnendu

Kasi Viswanath

Mirnalini V

Neeraj Shiv



## Project Monitoring Unit: Strengthening Child Protection Across Tamil Nadu

### » Collaboration for Change

We are proud to partner with the Department of Children Welfare and Special Services (DCWSS) to strengthen the child protection system through Individual Care Plans (ICPs). This holistic, multi-sectoral initiative ensures quality care, accountability, and overall development for children in the system.

### » Statewide Reach

Reaching over **800 institutions** (Government-run, Grant-in-aid and Private Institutions) across **38 districts**.

Nearly **30,000 Children** (Children in Need of Care and Protection, Children in Conflict with Law & Non-institutional Care).

### » Shaping Individual Care Plans

Key focus areas include educational needs, leisure and play, self-care, and independent living skills.







### Co-Creating the PMU

A two-day design workshop was facilitated by design thinker Akanksha Thakore, in collaboration with SIAAP, Miracle Foundation India, and SCARF, set the foundation for a state-wide PMU. The workshop created space for co-creation and dialogue, producing a shared framework and roadmap to strengthen ICPs for every child in care across Tamil Nadu.

We are grateful to Johnny Tom Varghese, IAS, and the DCWSS team for their active participation. Together, we are building safer spaces and stronger support systems for children — a powerful example of government and civil society working hand in hand.



## Kalakriti: Making Space for Growth and Expression

### Opening New Doors

In July, NalandaWay secured permission to bring Kalakriti into 10 government schools in Ambedkar Nagar. Sessions have already begun in two schools, where children are being introduced to Veera (Musical Theatre). These first steps — simple introductions and early conversations — are helping build trust and lay the ground for safe, creative spaces that will nurture wellbeing over time.

### The Big-Screen Experience

For 18 Kalakriti children, a theatre visit turned into a day of joy and discovery. Watching Mahavatar Narsimha on the big screen, many experienced the magic of cinema for the first time. Beyond the excitement, the story left them with powerful lessons about conviction, truth, and courage. Made possible by the generosity of Ex Squared India Pvt. Ltd., the visit was more than entertainment; it was an opportunity to learn, reflect, and dream bigger.



## Delhi Children's Choir: A Musical Offering

### Making Every Note Count

In August, as part of the project, the children recorded Kun Faya Kun in a professional studio — an exciting first-time experience for many. The process opened up new experiences for them, including long hours of practice, learning to stay in sync as a group, and discovering the unique thrill of recording in a professional studio.



## Chennai Children's Choir: Notes of Expression

### Exploring Indian Ragas

The children are stepping into the world of Indian classical ragas with a brand-new repertoire. These early lessons are playful yet focused — helping them sharpen pitch, explore musical expression, and grow more confident in their swara (Indian solfa syllable) renditions.

### Revisiting a Favourite

Prayer for Peace returned to rehearsals, not as a repetition but as a chance to look closer. With each refinement, the children discovered new layers of meaning and lifted the quality of their performance.





## ➤ Learning Beyond Music

Structured Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) sessions have now been introduced. These activities nurture teamwork, build stronger peer connections, and help children practise emotional regulation. The sessions also created space for children to express themselves openly — some shared their joys, while others courageously spoke about personal struggles.

### Voices of Change

“During the (SEL) activity, I shared that no one has ever celebrated my birthday with a cake. I felt very sad when my friend was excited about hers. But after speaking about it, I felt lighter.”  
– Mohana, CCC child



## Gutar Goo 6.0: New Beginnings

### ➤ Stepping into Gutar Goo 6.0

The Gutar Goo team welcomed 13 Anganwadi Workers, the District Programme Officer, and HCL colleagues for an orientation session that introduced Gutar Goo 6.0 and its plan to build Model Anganwadi Centres. The new lesson plan and curriculum were shared, followed by a group activity where workers spoke about their experiences. Many said the programme brought them valuable learning.

### ➤ Child Protection Policy Training

A dedicated training was organised on the Child Protection Policy, highlighting its importance in safeguarding children and protecting their rights. Anganwadi Workers were encouraged to follow these principles in their daily work to create safer, more supportive spaces for children.

### ➤ World Breastfeeding Week Celebrations

As part of the ECCD initiative, the team marked World Breastfeeding Week with mothers from Noida communities. In Hoshiarpur, over 30 mothers joined a gathering that cleared myths about breastfeeding. They also tried relaxation exercises and received the Jachcha-Bachcha guidebook to support mindful caregiving. The session ended with mothers pledging to care for their own health alongside their children's.

In Haraula, the closing ceremony brought together 40 mothers and experts from partner organisations. The sessions covered breastfeeding practices, maternal nutrition, postpartum care, family planning, and balancing home and work. The conversations encouraged healthier habits and reminded mothers to practise self-care. Both events created safe spaces for mothers to share, learn, and feel celebrated.

### ➤ Making Anganwadi Centres Inclusive

The Gutar Goo team held the 7th Mega Training for Anganwadi Workers and Helpers of Gautam Buddha Nagar. The theme was Inclusion, with a focus on gender. Through activities, stories, and role-plays, participants reflected on their views of gender and learnt simple, low-cost ways to make centres inclusive for both girls and boys. The training ended with each worker making a personal commitment, taking small but meaningful steps to ensure every child feels seen, heard, and valued.







## Skilling and Well-being of Children in Child Care Institutions, Tamil Nadu

### Capacity building training for CCI Leads

A 3-day intensive capacity-building training was conducted for 15 Child Care Institution (CCI) leads from various districts of Tamil Nadu. The training aimed to strengthen their ability to create safer and more supportive environments for children and youth across 34 CCIs by enhancing their knowledge, psychosocial skills, and operational capabilities.

### Navigating the Digital World – 21st Century Skills

Through hands-on workshops, children explored essential 21st-century skills while learning to navigate the digital world. They practised using Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint by writing letters to their future selves, entering marks, and creating presentations. Canva workshop introduced creative design, helping them experiment with colours and layouts. Discussions on cyberbullying encouraged honest reflections and raised awareness about online safety.

### Voices of Change

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The CCI lead training was insightful. I learned practical skills to support children, engage with stakeholders, and apply psychosocial approaches. Activities and theory sessions strengthened my confidence, adaptability, and understanding of program goals.

- shared by our CCI lead

“Akka, I entered my real marks in the Excel sheet and created a bar graph. I feel so happy seeing it! For the next quarterly exam, I want to score higher marks and see my bar graph rise even more.”

-one of the child shared excitedly

### College Mapping Supports 167 Care Leavers for Higher Education

As part of the 2025 batch care leaver support initiative, 167 students have been mapped to receive higher education assistance. Among them, 86 students are actively supported and guided by NalandaWay through admission follow-ups and access to academic resources, skill-building opportunities, and well-being interventions. This comprehensive mapping ensures that each care leaver is closely tracked, empowered, and connected to the right resources, paving the way for their continued education and holistic personal growth.



## Foundational Learning

### Teachers Gear Up for Action

Teachers participated in dedicated training sessions to strengthen classroom delivery and prepare for the academic year.

### Materials on the Move

Learning materials were packed and distributed to schools, ensuring children have the resources they need for effective learning.

### Baseline Check Complete

Baseline assessments for Classes IV and V were successfully conducted, setting a clear benchmark for student progress.

### New Tools for SEL

SEL rubrics were prepared for Classes IV and V, offering teachers structured ways to track children's social-emotional growth.

### Classroom Learning in Full Swing

- English (Classes IV & V): Covered Samacheer Units 1–3, EM Workbook Units 1–9, along with classwork, formative assessments, and weekly SLAS tests.
- Maths (Classes IV & V): Covered Samacheer Units 1–3, EM Workbook Units 1–8, plus classwork, formative assessments, and weekly SLAS tests.
- SEL: 3 activities completed.
- Health & Hygiene: 2 activities completed.

### The Road Ahead

- Continued roll-out of English and Maths sessions for Classes IV and V.
- Implementation of Formative Assessments A & B.
- Strengthened focus on SEL and H&H activities.
- Regular monitoring and reporting through weekly documentation.
- Roll-out aligned across all donor-supported projects — CHOLA, Mouritech, Michelin, and Reliance.







## Skilling and Well-being of Children in Child Care Institutions, Punjab



The past two months were filled with movement, storytelling, reflection, and collective care — nurturing both children and caregivers across homes.

### ➤ Dance Ensemble Workshop & Physical Well-Being

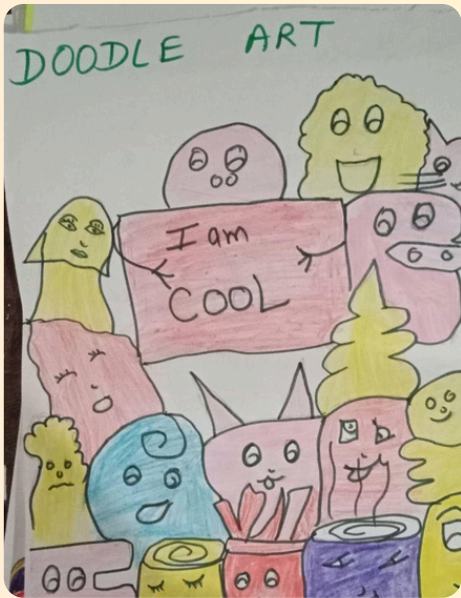
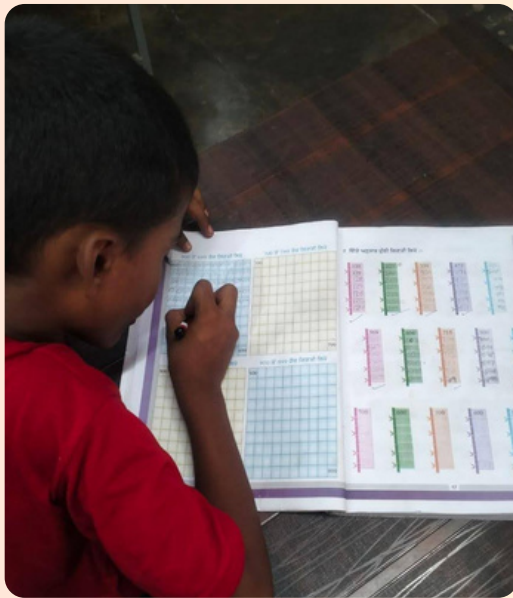
July saw the energetic Dance Ensemble Workshop with Girls in Transition (GIT), where 47 adolescent girls (including Lock Room participants) came together in an intensive two-day engagement. Facilitated by Nitisha and Aaliya, the girls revisited earlier routines and mastered six choreographies: Sultaan, Heer, Chunni Dance, Dhol Jageero Da, Chanda Chamke, and O Re Manwa (ribbon).

**Key impact:** Beyond learning routines, the workshop nurtured self-confidence, leadership, and peer bonding. Several girls shared feelings of being “seen” and “proud” of their bodies and talents, embracing joy and resilience through rhythm and teamwork.



### ➤ “Club of Life” – Re-membering Relationships

The “Club of Life” sessions, rooted in narrative therapy’s re-membering practice, helped children reflect on the people who affirm their worth and sense of belonging.



- At GIT: Girls began by drawing themselves at the centre of their world, then added names of loved ones — family, friends, teachers, pets, even admired figures — who had made them feel special, safe, or strong. They reflected on why these people loved them, surfacing memories like “my grandmother loved me because I made her laugh.” This exercise built self-worth, emotional grounding, and peer connection.
- At Ludhiana CCI: Boys engaged in a similar reflective space. Beginning with playful breathwork (“hissing like a snake”) to build comfort, they recalled moments of being valued — Aniket for his helpful nature, Sachin for being reliable. The session closed with calming breathwork and optional sharing.

**Key impact:** Both sessions anchored identity in love and affirmation, encouraging children to recognise their own strengths, resilience, and belonging amidst experiences of trauma and isolation.

### ➤ Staff Wellbeing & Capacity Building

On 21st August at CCI Jalandhar, a wellbeing session titled “Sapno se Buni Aashayein” (Hopes Woven from Dreams) brought together 11 staff members. Inspired by community art and movement practices, the session unfolded in reflective and creative steps.



- It began with participants envisioning hopes for children — kindness, equality, opportunities, and care “as one’s own.”
- In the yarn web activity, each hope was shared while passing yarn across the circle, creating a web symbolising interdependence and collective strength.
- The group then traced and coloured the web, filling spaces with colors and hopeful messages like “Respect child’s interest,” “Encourage their dreams,” “Education for all.”

The session closed with free expression and reflection, reminding participants of the joy of play and the interconnectedness of their roles.

**Key impact:** Staff shared feeling lighter, connected, and renewed in purpose. They recognised that care for caregivers is deeply linked with children’s wellbeing and suggested extending such reflective spaces to children in the future.

## 50 futures, one birthday wish

This August, our Founder-CEO, Sriram V, turned 50 — and he chose to celebrate by supporting 50 children growing up in challenging circumstances.

Your contribution can help them heal, learn, create, and thrive.

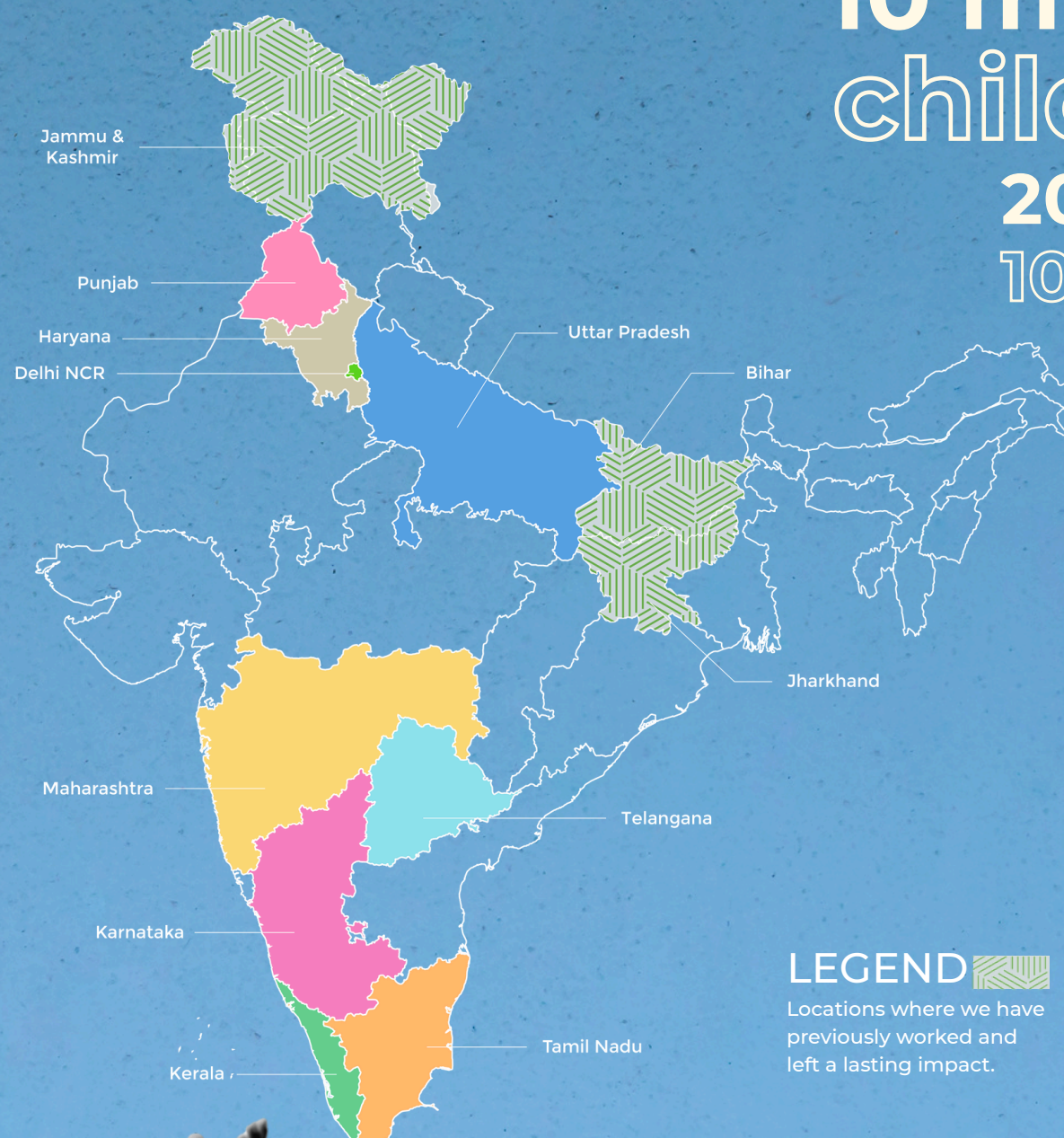
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**10 million**  
children  
**20 years**  
**10 states**



### LEGEND

Locations where we have previously worked and left a lasting impact.





# Looking Ahead

“Children are not things to be moulded, but people to be unfolded.” – Jess Lair

Creativity, care, and opportunity help children flourish. Looking ahead, we are building on these foundations — expanding mentorship for our children, strengthening early childhood education, and wellbeing initiatives through the arts, and widening the reach of our children's choirs. At the same time, we are deepening child protection across Tamil Nadu and enhancing our impact through ongoing trainings, innovative approaches, and platforms. Will you join us in nurturing, inspiring, and empowering these children to truly thrive?

## Our Partners

