

Roots & Ripples

A Year of Grounding and Growth



Annual Report 2024 - 2025



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Letters from Our Leadership

Message from our Founder

This year, our programmes reached children and adolescents across early childhood centres, government schools, child care institutions, and community spaces. From strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy in early years, to building resilience, leadership, and career readiness among adolescents, our work remained grounded in one belief: that creative and emotionally safe environments change lives.

These outcomes result from long-term partnerships, rigorous implementation, reflective learning, and the trust of the communities we serve.

To our partners, educators, caregivers, and the young people who show up every day with courage and hope — thank you. Your belief makes this work possible.



Sriram V
Founder and CEO

Message from our Director - Projects

This year reaffirmed something we have always known — when children and adolescents are given safe, creative, and structured spaces, they rise. What stands out most is not just participation, but progression. From hesitant readers to confident speakers. From withdrawal to collaboration. From uncertainty to informed decision-making. Our work remains deeply collaborative — with teachers, caregivers, institutions, and partners who share our belief that creative, emotionally responsive environments can alter life trajectories. To every partner, educator, facilitator, parent, and young person who trusted this process — thank you. The outcomes we report this year are collective achievements, built with patience, consistency, and care

Sameen Almas
Director - Projects





From our Board & Advisors

NalandaWay has been a part of my heart for the past decade and a half. I have been privileged to play a small part in bringing my art and passion into the NW journey - performing, collaborating, teaching and co-creating a sense of wonder. This is one of the most significant and meaningful sojourns I have ever taken, and I hope that the association will endure, along with the happiness of countless children we have been blessed to encounter along the way.



- **Anil Srinivasan,**
Founder, Rhapsody, Kruu
Professor Krea University,
Award-winning Musician

I've seen how NalandaWay helps children find their voice - through stories, theatre, music, and art. That confidence doesn't stay on the stage; it shows up in classrooms and in life. I'm grateful to be associated with this journey.



- **Aishvarya M,**
Co-founder, Tuco Kids

Serving on NalandaWay's board, I've seen a rare trait shared only by the most impactful NGOs: the ability to marry strategic clarity with heart-led action. NalandaWay proves that the best outcomes in education and wellbeing emerge when we lead with both head and heart.



- **Naveen Mahesh,**
Co-founder, Beyond8

Over the past decade, my close involvement with NalandaWay Foundation has allowed me to witness, at first hand, the organisation's growth and the profound impact of arts-led engagement on children's lives. As someone who believes in the power of art, it has been heartening to see NalandaWay deepen and scale its work this year, especially in response to emerging emotional and behavioural priorities across schools and institutions. Across India, NalandaWay's programmes are reshaping how teachers are adopting and using the creative arts to engage more meaningfully with children. It is encouraging to see educational spaces slowly opening up to the idea of art becoming a daily practice of expression and agency, shaping more resilient learners. What NalandaWay continues to build is not just programmes, but inclusive and nurturing environments where children are seen, supported, and enabled to grow.

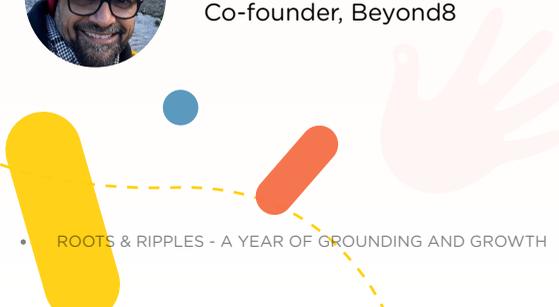


- **Ramya Rajaraman,**
Founder-Director, ArtSpire

NalandaWay demonstrates a thoughtful and sustained commitment to nurturing creativity, confidence, and agency among diverse young people navigating complex realities, grounding students in creativity. Its ability to partner, engage early with students, and sustain attention to mental health enables meaningful transitions from challenging contexts into the mainstream.



- **Shankar Vanavarayar,**
President, Kumaraguru
Institutions





About NalandaWay Foundation

NalandaWay Foundation uses the arts to empower children and adolescents from disadvantaged communities by strengthening their resilience, agency, and emotional well-being.

Over the last 20 years, we have reached 10 million children across 10 states in India — by creating safe learning spaces and experiences that nurture curiosity, creativity, and compassion.

Working in partnership with governments and local communities, we have integrated arts and well-being initiatives into government-run schools, Child Care Institutions (CCIs), urban slums, and Anganwadi Centres, ensuring our impact spans both bustling cities and remote villages.



Snapshots of FY 2024-2025

Direct Beneficiaries:



Children & Youth
16.32 Lacs



Teachers
49,944



Parents
3,210

Jammu & Kashmir

Punjab

Haryana

Delhi NCR

Uttar Pradesh

Bihar

Jharkhand

Maharashtra

Telangana

Karnataka

Tamil Nadu

Kerala



16 Projects Implemented



Income
7.94 Crore



Team
165 Employees



Programmatic Interventions

Early Childhood

Social emotional learning
Foundational learning

Creativity
Safe learning environments

Parents' wellbeing
Health and hygiene

OUTCOMES



Adolescence

Mental health
21st Century skills

Remedial education
Career guidance

Expressive arts
Promoting agency

OUTCOMES





The Wayfinders of NalandaWay

TEAM





Kirti



Krishnendhu



Kritika



Lakshmi



Evanjeline



Mahalakshmi



Meharunisha



Mirnalini



Moorthy



Nafeesath



Nithya



Paramjeet



Prabhakar



Pradeepa



Prashant



Rakshitha



Riya



Rohini



Roshne



Sahil



Sameen



Sangeetha



Sarfaraj



Shanmuga



Sheela



Shikha



Shravani



Sornapriya



Sriram



Sujithra



Suma



Swathi



Swetha S



Swetha



Thaila



Vidhya



Vinoth



Vinoth G



Our Partners



Our initiatives in action

For NalandaWay, the arts have never been decoration — they are our way of listening and enabling children to grow. From a few scribbles and creative classrooms, the work has expanded into learning spaces and well-being initiatives across 10 states.

Twenty years in, Roots & Ripples shows how embedded this work has become: in Anganwadis, schools, CCIs and communities, and how far its impact now reaches — from confidence to classroom culture, from family environments to state systems.

The pages ahead outline what shifted this year: the outcomes, the behaviours and the systems strengthened through arts-based learning.





What data told us this year

NalandaWay's Research & Impact team tracked learning and wellbeing outcomes across early childhood centres, primary schools, arts programmes, adolescent cohorts and Child Care Institutions (CCIs). Across age groups and locations, the evidence pointed that children thrive when learning is joyful, relationships are supportive, and their voices matter.

Using baseline-endline assessments, creative tools for assessing children using **arts**, **SEL tools**, **FGDs**, **classroom observations** and **facilitator reflections**, the year's findings **revealed consistent gains** in communication, emotional well-being, academic clarity and agency

Cross-programme view of progress, learning, and momentum

Early Childhood Ages 3-6 Stronger foundations for learning

90%+
proficiency
in early literacy,
numeracy, and
emotion recognition

Children showed
clearer **verbal
expression and
confidence**

Parents & Anganwadi workers adopted
more **responsive care routines**



Primary Grade 4 & 5 Academic and SEL growth

Hesitant
readers nearly
eliminated

Division proficiency
rose to **72%**

Strong SEL gains
**self-awareness,
help-seeking,
decision-making**





Arts in Education Creativity as a catalyst

80-98% improved
SEL skills through arts



Teachers observed
calmer classrooms
and stronger peer support

More **confidence**,
expression and
collaboration

Adolescent Girls Agency, voice & academic progress

60%+ improved in Maths and English

40-50% stepped into leadership roles

Better **hygiene, fitness,**
emotional regulation



Child Care Institutions & Care Leavers Readiness for life & work

Digital literacy jumped from
36-41% to 82-93%

Financial literacy
reached **91-100%**

Functional English moved from
beginner to intermediate

75%+ recorded high self-esteem & wellbeing



Whole-School Wellbeing Healthier classrooms, calmer minds

More **empathy, emotional
regulation** and **peer support**

“Good
wellbeing”
up by 15
points



“Poor
wellbeing”
down by
67%

Early Childhood

(0-10 Years)



Programme initiatives

In 2024-25, NalandaWay strengthened early childhood ecosystems across states, ensuring children aged 0-10 received the **stimulation, emotional safety and learning foundations** essential for long-term success.

Our Anganwadi and early learning programmes demonstrated consistent, measurable gains: children showed sharper **language development, improved pre-literacy** and numeracy readiness, stronger emotional expression, and **healthier daily routines**.

Impact

Parents and Anganwadi workers reported visible transformation — from **increased participation and confidence to improved hygiene** and more **responsive parent-child interactions** at home. Facilitators adopted child-centred practices that made early learning joyful, culturally grounded and developmentally aligned.

Across all sites, one insight stood out: a nurturing, responsive environment is the single most powerful driver of early learning, especially for children from marginalised communities.

GUTAR GOO

Child-Centred Learning Drives Major Gains Across 36 Anganwadi Centres



Location

Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh; Bengaluru Rural & Urban Districts, Karnataka; Chennai, Tamil Nadu



Partner

HCL Foundation (UP), International Flavours & Fragrances (IFF) (Bengaluru)

Gutar Goo supports children aged 0-6 through play-based early learning, sensory stimulation for infants, and responsive caregiving practices. Through stories, workbooks, toys, and caregiver circles, the programme strengthens pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, emotional expression, hygiene habits, and nurturing home environments. The programme is adapted regionally as Kanna Moochi in Tamil Nadu and Kanna Mucche in Karnataka – reflecting local languages and contexts while retaining the same early childhood focus.

Data Insights



36

Anganwadi centres reached



874

parents (mothers + fathers) engaged



811

children (0-3 years) impacted



1,056

children (3-6 years) impacted



1,867

early learning kits distributed



Child Outcomes

97% of children responded verbally and confidently after nine months



82% correctly identified handwashing steps; 86% enacted them



69% demonstrated empathy-based conflict resolution (sharing, asking for help, comforting)



Ecosystem Shift

Parents gained stronger awareness of nutrition, maternal health, and early stimulation

Anganwadi workers adopted more child-responsive, observation-based practices



“The change happened not by force but by creating a space where children felt happy, and parents saw the difference.”

- Anganwadi Worker



KANNA MUCCHE

Stories, Play and Care Transform Early Learning for Karnataka's Youngest

Partner: International Flavours & Fragrances (IFF) (Bengaluru)

Kanna Mucche supports 3-6-year-olds through a joyful blend of storytelling, art, music, play, and parent engagement. By strengthening Anganwadi centres with training, tools, and facilitation support, the programme builds children's foundational literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional skills, and essential life habits. It also empowers caregivers to create nurturing early learning environments.

Location: Bengaluru Rural & Urban Districts, Karnataka

Data Insights



698

children (ages 3-6) engaged in early childhood learning



1,481

parents meaningfully engaged



352

pregnant women supported through targeted sessions



488

nursing mothers supported with responsive caregiving practice



641

parents of early learners reached through community outreach



48

Anganwadi workers trained and supported



Child Outcomes

89.7%
reached advanced
verbal skill levels
(up from 13.5%)



90%
demonstrated
advanced numeracy
(colour, shape, size
identification)



92%+
reached advanced
emergent reading
levels



94%
showed accurate
emotion
identification
(up from 50-79%)



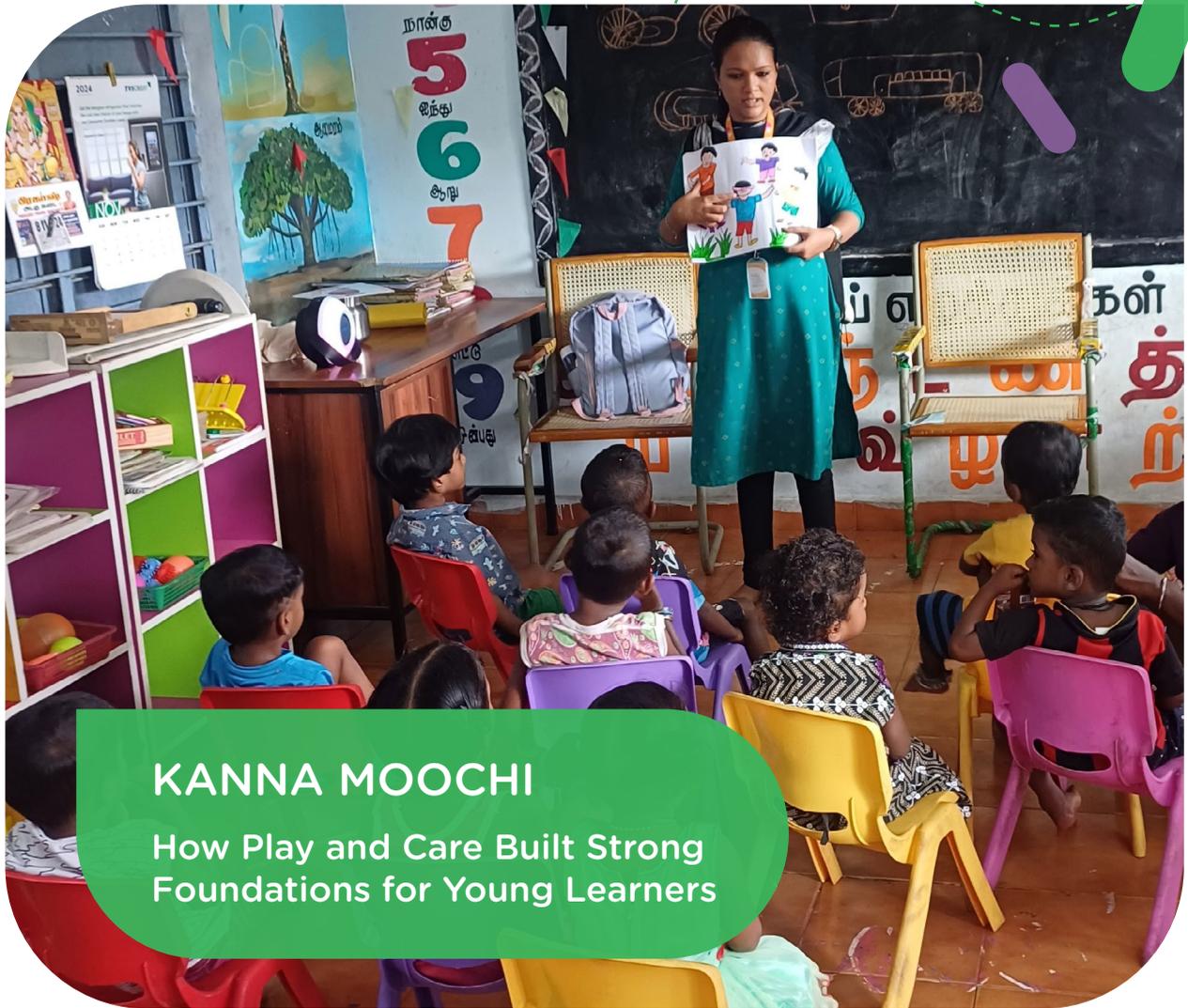
Migrant children
gained confidence,
Kannada
language
skills, and active
participation





“The training gave us clear insights into early childhood education, nutrition, health and community mobilisation, and helped us understand the difference between teacher-centred and child-centred learning. Including both teachers and helpers made the training especially meaningful, as helpers play a crucial role in every Anganwadi.”

- Lavanya, Anganwadi teacher



KANNA MOOCHI

How Play and Care Built Strong Foundations for Young Learners

Kanna Moochi supports children aged 2–5 years through storytelling, songs, arts, and play-based learning. The programme strengthens Anganwadis and equips caregivers with nurturing, responsive practices that build emergent literacy, numeracy, socio-emotional skills and school readiness.

Location: Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Data Insights



342

Children (2–5 years) reached



630

parents supported



142

pregnant women benefited



296

nursing mothers impacted



40

Anganwadi workers supported and trained



192

caregivers of early learners



Child Outcomes

69%
of children reached
advanced levels in
literacy, numeracy
and writing



Colour identification
jumped from
**14.29% to
82.5%**



Shape identification
improved from
3.7% to 87.3%



Sorting skills rose
from
**20.63% to
82.5%**



Picture-book
comprehension grew
from
**0% to 50.79%
(advanced)**



Emergent writing
increased from
**4.76% to
69.8%**





75%+
matched basic
emotions to
situations with
accuracy



“NalandaWay’s ability to connect with the children, understand their needs, and adapt their teaching approach accordingly is truly remarkable. Please keep up the fantastic work!”

- Anganwadi Worker on Kanna Moochi’s Facilitators & sessions



Arts In Education

Here, the arts become a language of belonging



Location

Primary schools in
Chennai, Tamil Nadu;
Gautampuri, Delhi



Partner

Indraprastha Apollo
Hospitals (For Delhi)

At NalandaWay, our Arts in Education vision brings structured, high-quality arts learning into government schools — strengthening creativity, confidence, and social-emotional development in children.

Across contexts, this vision comes alive through distinct but aligned initiatives: Arts in Education (AIE), NalandaWay Art Schools (NAS), and the Arts Curriculum in Delhi Government Schools.

Arts in Education (AIE) uses visual arts and theatre to create joyful classrooms where children build confidence, creativity, and strong social-emotional skills. The programme supports self-expression, emotional awareness, collaboration, and deeper engagement across subjects.

Data Insights

4,938

children reached
across 26 schools



171

teachers engaged
across 29 schools in
Phase 2



Child Outcomes

49.49% of Classes 3-5 students reached the highest level in expressing personal experiences through art



98%

of older students showed strong help-seeking behaviour and relationship skills



Children grew more confident in expressing ideas through art, theatre and classroom interactions



Students developed stronger self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation and collaboration



Ecosystem Shift

Classrooms became more disciplined, responsible and reflective, with children making thoughtful daily choices

Creative skills transferred to academics — children used drawing, storytelling and visual thinking in English, Science and Maths



“The students have shown remarkable improvement through this programme.”

– HM, Chennai Middle School, Madipakkam



Art Carnival

Chennai Middle School, MH Road



NALANDAWAY ART SCHOOLS

Arts-Integrated Learning Improves English Communication and SEL Across 3 Chennai Schools

NalandaWay Art Schools (NAS) introduces visual arts, theatre, music and creative expression to students of Grades I-VIII. The programme enhances creativity, English communication, and socio-emotional skills, while strengthening the ecosystem through teacher workshops, parent engagement, Art Corners, and an annual Art Carnival.

Location: Primary schools in Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Data Insights



3
schools reached



30
teachers supported
and engaged



1,009
students impacted



40
parents engaged



Child Outcomes

Stronger teamwork and collaboration



Children reported better sentence construction, vocabulary, and pronunciation



Improved peer support and collective problem-solving



Reduced fear of public speaking and stage fright



Higher self-expression and interpersonal communication



“The theatre sessions helped students improve their attention and reduce distractions. Their memory power has increased significantly. Students who earlier struggled to memorise lines from books were able to confidently deliver dialogues.”

- Jagan, AHM, CMS Pullapuram



ARTS IN EDUCATION IN DELHI SCHOOLS

Art as a Pathway to Expression & Emotional Literacy

Partner: Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals

Arts Curriculum in Delhi Government Schools provides structured exposure to five art forms — visual arts, theatre, dance, music and media arts — for primary grade students (KG-5). The initiative builds creative confidence, strengthens social-emotional learning, and supports teachers and school leaders in embedding arts within everyday learning.

Location: Gautampuri, Delhi

Data Insights



647
children engaged through regular sessions



21
teachers participated



90
parents attended the culminating exhibition



950+
art sessions conducted



250+
artworks created; 20 student performances



647
learning kits distributed



Child Outcomes

Children **expressed emotions clearly** and connected feelings to situations with accuracy.



Better **discipline, attention and participation** during sessions



Stronger **peer support and collaborative work**



Ecosystem Shift

Parents expressed pride and said the project exposed them to arts-rich learning spaces



“I am very happy because for the first time, I performed on stage and my parents liked my performance. I learned many new paintings, and NalandaWay ma’am helped me learn folk dance steps in classes, which I really enjoyed.”

— Student, Grade 3 (MCD Primary Girls School No. 1, Gautampuri, Delhi)

FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING

Where Competence Takes Centrestage: Strengthening Literacy, Numeracy & Wellbeing



Location

Chennai,
Thiruvallur



Partner

Cholamandalam,
Mouri Tech Foundation,
Michelin

The Foundational Learning programme aims to build Foundational Literacy and Numeracy skills in elementary school students. The programme works with Government and Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) school students of classes 4 and 5 to bridge the learning gap and build clarity on basic language and numerical skills. Social Emotional Learning and Health and Hygiene sessions are incorporated to ensure the holistic growth of the children. The project framework is based on the NIPUN Bharath guidelines, the National Mission, NCERT, and the Ennum Ezhuthum syllabus. The pedagogy includes activity-based learning and higher-order thinking practice.

Data Insights



798

students reached across
23 Government &
Corporation Schools



Students Supported by
Cholamandalam - **230**,
Mouri Tech Foundation - **218**
Michelin - **350**



48

English sessions, 36
Maths sessions, 15 SEL
sessions, 12 H&H sessions



46

learning kits
distributed (English,
Maths and H&H)

Child Outcomes

Division skills rose dramatically from negligible levels to **28-72%** proficiency.



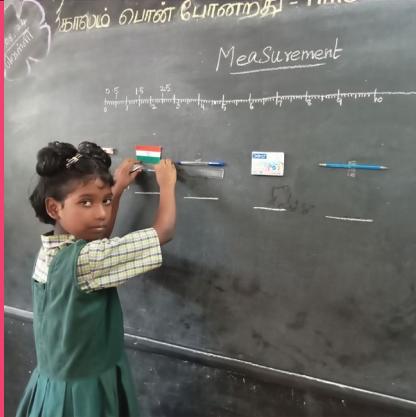
Children demonstrated **stronger problem-solving, accuracy, and conceptual understanding.**



Children began reading with **clarity, confidence and comprehension** in both story-level and paragraph-level tasks.



64-100% demonstrated strong relationship skills and help-seeking behaviour



68-80% reached advanced levels of responsible decision-making



“Your Health & Hygiene sessions have brought a transformation I’ve never seen before. Students now come neat, clean, and disciplined. Thank you for nurturing not just learning, but life skills.”

— Headmaster of PUPS Chandrapuram

STORIES OF CHANGE

A collection of moments from the field across our early childhood programmes.

Realised Potential

Foundational Learning, Tamil Nadu

Hemasree, a class 5 student, rarely spoke to her peers, appeared dishevelled, and showed little interest in schoolwork. Her slow writing and lack of focus hinted at burdens far heavier than academics.

Concerned, the NalandaWay facilitator approached her. Hemasree opened up: her mother had been imprisoned for four years due to family issues. She felt unloved, invisible, and unwanted. “No one likes me,” she said. “But you’re different. You give me space. That’s why I can talk to you.”

The facilitator responded with patience, encouraging her to take small, manageable steps — starting with coming to school in clean clothes and feeling a little more prepared for the day. When Hemasree began arriving with a neater appearance, it marked a significant shift. With positive reinforcement, her confidence slowly started to grow.

Over time, she began engaging in class, especially during Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) sessions. These offered her a safe space to express herself, connect with others, and rediscover a sense of belonging. Her progress wasn’t sudden, but each step was a mark of her resilience.

Today, Hemasree is still on her journey, but she is no longer invisible. Her story reminds us that behind every withdrawn child is a voice waiting to be heard — and that compassion, consistency, and gentle support can help that voice emerge. Hemasree is blossoming not just academically, but as a person. And it all began with someone choosing to truly see her.



Finding Voice and Confidence

Gutar Goo

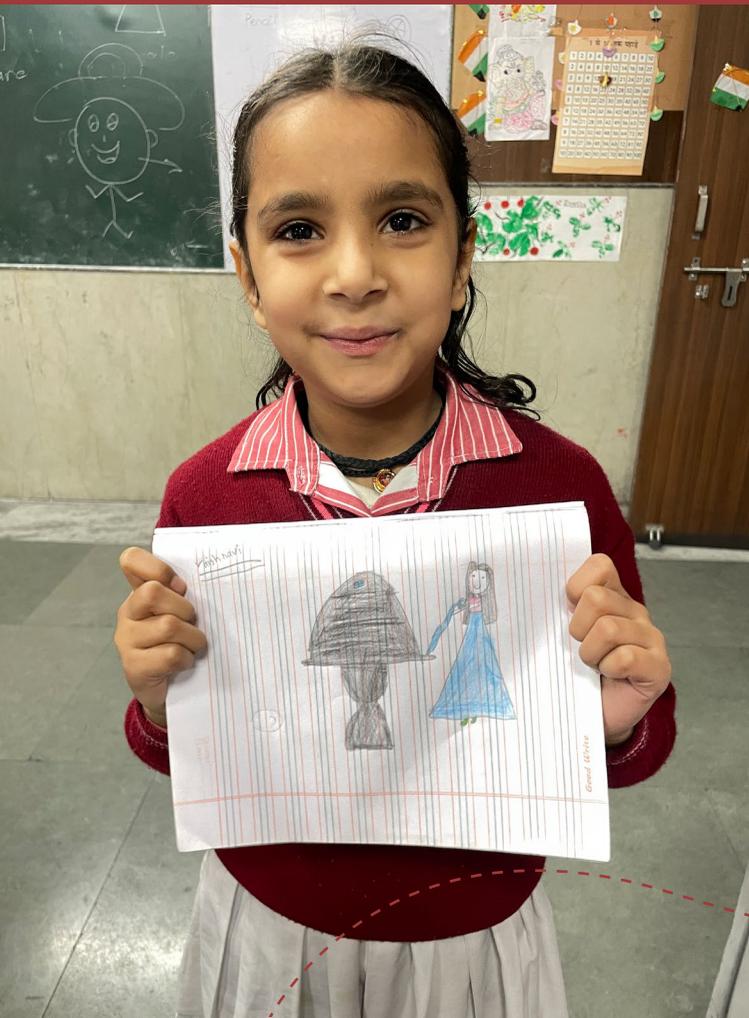
Rinki, a mother of three who migrated from Bihar, was hesitant to speak in groups due to limited Hindi and low self-confidence. Through Mother Circle Meetings, she found a space where she was heard and supported. Gradually, she began sharing openly, applying new parenting ideas at home, and engaging more deeply in her daughters’ learning. “NalandaWay has listened to me, understood my concerns, and answered my questions. Because of this, I now feel confident to express myself and learn new things,” she said.



Reconnecting as a Father

Kapil, a labourer from Chhapraula, always prioritised earning over connection. In a Father Circle meeting, he reflected on his own childhood and realised the role he wanted to play for his children. He began reading to them, playing with them, and making time after work. This gentle shift helped him step into a more present and nurturing role — one that echoed the warmth he once received from his own father.

His story reflects how gentle, structured spaces can help fathers step into more engaged, nurturing roles.



A Journey to Connection Kanna Mucche, Bengaluru

Arya, a five-year-old who was deeply attached to his mobile phone, avoided interaction and often lashed out. Audio stories introduced through Kanna Mucche caught his attention and slowly opened him up. A colouring activity became a breakthrough moment — a gentle word of praise lit up his face.

Gradually, Arya began engaging with peers, participating in stories and art, expressing pride in his work, and reconnecting emotionally with his mother. His mother shared tearfully, “I never thought I’d see him this happy again. Thank you for believing in him.”

Adolescence

(10-21 Years)



Programme initiatives

NalandaWay's adolescent programmes supported students and young adults across schools, CCIs and community settings with a comprehensive blend of **social-emotional learning, arts-based engagement, academic strengthening and life-skills training.**

Impact

Adolescents demonstrated **improved emotional regulation, clearer communication, stronger peer relationships** and more **responsible decision-making**. Teachers reported calmer classrooms, higher engagement and more empathetic interactions among students. Older adolescents and care leavers gained the confidence and **readiness to transition** into college, vocational training or the workforce. Academic support, digital literacy, mentoring and independent living skills enabled them to make informed choices and pursue long-term aspirations.

SKILLING & WELLBEING OF CHILDREN IN CHILD CARE INSTITUTIONS

Empowering Children Build Pathways to Independence



Location

Tamil Nadu
Punjab



Partner

Dentsu
(For Tamil Nadu)

NalandaWay's Skilling & Wellbeing programme supports children and young adults in Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to develop academic strength, emotional resilience, life skills, digital literacy and career clarity.

Across both states, the programme integrates:

- Trauma-informed emotional well-being
- Arts-based expression and stress management
- Academic strengthening in core subjects
- 21st-century & digital literacy
- Life skills, financial literacy and communication
- Career readiness, mentoring & aftercare support



145

children transitioned to aftercare



1300

Children supported across 34 CCIs in 24 districts

Data Insights - Tamil Nadu



123

young adults (care leavers) impacted



123

enrolled in colleges



17

secured scholarships



Child Outcomes

79%

adopted healthy routines: exercise, grooming, balanced diet



81%

improved empathy, teamwork & communication



Academic milestones

pass percentages of 93.4% in Class 12, 89% in Class 10, and 89% in Class 11.



Conflicts reduced; peer support increased



Children gained clearer academic & career goals





Stronger self-motivation, goal-setting and decision-making



90%+ learnt budgeting, saving, and financial planning



90% found mentoring helpful for college life adjustment



A Way Forward: Project Monitoring Unit (PMU)
 As part of the state-wide CCI transformation journey since 2021, NalandaWay now partners with the Department of Children Welfare and Special Services (DCWSS) as part of the Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) for Child Protection in Tamil Nadu.

PMU Reach

- 800+ institutions (Government-run, Grant-in-aid & Private) across 38 districts
- Nearly 30,000 children (Children in Need of Care and Protection, Children in Conflict with Law, and non-institutional care)

The PMU strengthens Individual Care Plans across domains such as:

- Education & training
- Leisure, creativity & play
- Self-care and life skills for protection from abuse, neglect and maltreatment
- Independent living skills

This marks a shift from programme-level impact to systemic, state-wide strengthening of the child protection ecosystem.



Data Insights - Punjab



245
Children impacted
across 6 CCIs in
5 districts



8 Adolescents
appeared for Board
examinations



5 students
from Class 10 achieved
an average score of
72.6%



3 students
from Class 12 achieved
an average score of
74.8%

Child Outcomes

Higher confidence in
expressing needs
and emotions



**Reduction in
withdrawal
and isolation**



**Healthier
social
behaviour**
cooperation, listening,
sharing, peer support



**Improved academic
performance in
English, Math
and Punjabi**



**Clearer career
aspirations
through IDPs,
aptitude tests &
counselling**



Ecosystem Shift

Tutors and staff observed more curiosity and willingness to learn
 Children actively engaged in life skills, digital training and group discussions
 Increased trust in facilitators and the process



“I used to think freedom was stepping out of the CCI, having fun with friends, and using my phone without restrictions. But after sessions with NW facilitators, I understood the difference between freedom and autonomy, and that making responsible decisions is very important.”

- A Child, class 12, Tuticorin CCI, Tamil Nadu

“It was an enriching experience for us to attend the training with NW. The session was interactive and a good opportunity to learn for me.

- Staff, Children’s Home, Bathinda, Punjab

Empowering Social Emotional Learning Through Digital Pedagogies

Where Climate Science Meets Emotional Intelligence



Location

Chennai,
Coimbatore,
Kerala



Partner

UNESCO MGIEP

The project blends Social Emotional Learning (SEL) with digital climate education, using video-game environments, interactive modules and student-friendly digital content. The programme helps adolescents understand climate change, biodiversity, ecological interdependence, emotional responses to environmental loss, and actionable ways to protect the planet — building both knowledge and agency.

Data Insights



18,626

student enrolments
achieved (target: 15,000)



6,847

certifications issued
(target: 6,750)



100%

coverage of Grades 6-8
in 15 Chennai schools



29

schools reached across Chennai,
Coimbatore & Kerala



Child Outcomes

Knowledge & Understanding

Strong grasp of climate change concepts



Clear understanding

of biodiversity, food webs, ecosystem services and the drivers of biodiversity loss



Noticeable change

in how students perceive everyday species, such as honey bees, spiders, and house lizards



Many shared that while they previously killed insects out of fear, they now chose to chase them away, recognising their **ecological role**



Ecosystem Shift

Students displayed increased empathy toward living creatures

Adoption of simple, sustainable practices (waste reduction, protecting small insects, mindful behaviour)

Higher self-reflection on the environmental impact of everyday habits



UNICEF – Adolescent Well-Being & Life Skills Programme



Shaping Future-ready Adolescents through Digital Life-skills Learning



Location

All districts of
Tamil Nadu



Partner

UNICEF,
Tamil Nadu School
Education Department

Adolescence is a period of rapid growth, change, and vulnerability. To help students navigate this stage with emotional strength and clarity, the Tamil Nadu School Education Department and UNICEF developed a digital life-skills and wellbeing platform for government school students in Classes 9-12.

The programme uses videos, interactive games, reflection exercises, and art activities to help adolescents:

- Understand and articulate their emotions
- Build resilience, self-awareness and confidence
- Improve communication, relationships and decision-making
- Strengthen academic motivation and goal-setting
- Engage with life skills through a safe, joyful, digital-first experience
- Track their own progress through a Life Skills Measurement Tool (LSMT)



Data Insights



16 lakh
students reached



6,500
government schools
covered statewide



30
life-skills video modules
developed for 2024-25



49,000
teachers completed
refresher training

Child Outcomes

Resilience
increased by
10.52%



Self-awareness
grew by **2.5%**



Girls' motivation
to learn increased
by **47.5%**



Students became
more aware of their
emotions,
thoughts and
triggers



Adolescents welcomed
reflective
writing and
self-expression



Adolescents showed increased willingness to **articulate sadness, happiness, stress, and hope**



Ecosystem Shift

Teachers observed students attempting activities independently and enthusiastically

Teachers reported higher classroom engagement and openness in SEL-based conversations



“I learned more about myself. I became more aware of the emotions that I feel. We wrote down our feelings, what made us feel sad, and what made us feel happy.”

- Student, Sathyamangalam

WELLBEING OF CHILDREN USING A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH



Musical Theatre Approach Boosts Emotional Skills for 2,500 Students



Location
Thiruvallur,
Chengalpattu

Partner
HCL Foundation

This initiative supports students in Classes 6-9 through a whole-school wellbeing model that blends musical theatre methodologies with the WHO Life Skills Framework.

Across five government schools, the programme helps children aged 10-14 build emotional regulation, empathy, kindness, resilience, and stronger peer relationships, while also nurturing teacher wellbeing and healthier school cultures.

Data Insights



2,500
students (Classes 6-9)
reached



30-60
teachers across five schools
supported her Wellbeing Course



Child Outcomes

Social Competencies & Empathy



Clearer understanding of sympathy vs. empathy



Musical theatre and drama increased awareness of bullying and cyber addiction



Students became more confident about standing up for peers



Musical theatre helped students overcome stage fear and discover hidden talents



“After acting as a bully in our anti-bullying drama, I realised I had laughed along when a classmate was teased for speaking differently. I told Akka I wanted to apologise, because now I understood how he must have felt. This activity changed how I see things — I want to stand up for others instead of staying silent.”

– 9th-grade student, GHSS S M Nagar, Avadi

ART VANDI

Mobile Arts Intervention Leads to Clear Gains in Expression, Resilience & Cultural Awareness



Location

Chennai,
Chengalpattu,
Krishnagiri



Partner

Intertrust,
Tata Electronics

Art Vandi is NalandaWay's travelling art truck-studio — a vibrant, mobile space that takes creative exploration directly to children in schools and Child Care Institutions. Through hands-on workshops, identity-building exercises, and traditional art revival, the programme creates joyful, inclusive environments where children connect personal stories with community heritage.

Data Insights



1,895

children across 13 schools
and 5 CCIs reached



Child Outcomes

Photo storybooks strengthened **identity and self-recognition.**



Reserved children began **presenting confidently**



Activities helped children explore **family, values and aspirations.**



Hands-on artmaking built **ownership, confidence and pride.**



Children articulated **dreams more clearly**, many for the first time.



Stronger understanding of how **identity connects to family and community**





Celebrating Children’s Voices Through Art

Art Vandi’s journey for the year concluded with Varnajalam, a showcase hosted at the Tata Electronics Plant, featuring children’s identity-based artworks — dream trees, story worlds, woven memories and community-rooted installations.

The exhibition deepened children’s pride and voice, affirming that with space and support, creativity becomes confidence.



“Our village sits at the edge of Tamil Nadu; beyond us is only forest. Schools here rarely receive attention, so your decision to come meant a lot. For two days, every student from Classes 6, 7 and 8 attended — something that never happens. It showed how much they enjoyed and looked forward to the sessions. What moved me most was seeing a usually quiet boy step forward and share his dreams during the presentation. That moment showed how powerful the workshop was in giving children the confidence to express themselves. I hope we have more such opportunities — our children deserve them.”

— Uma Maheswari, Headmistress, U Puram Middle School

PROJECT SAKHI

Strengthening Education, Well-Being and Leadership Pathways for Adolescent Girls



Location

Chennai, Pune, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Thiruvananthapuram



Partner

GlobalLogic, RR Donnelley, Archis Foundation, Samsung Semiconductor, EFL, IQ-EQ

Project Sakhi is an eight-year programme that supports adolescent girls from disadvantaged backgrounds to transition into confident, educated, resilient young women. The programme strengthens four pathways essential for adulthood:

- Academic & Cognitive Development
- Physical Health & Safety
- Emotional & Social Wellbeing
- Agency, Leadership & Community Contribution

Sakhi ensures girls stay in school, make informed decisions, and step into adulthood with clarity, confidence and self-belief.

Data Insights



271

girls reached across 10 cohorts



40

teachers engaged



6

schools



216

learning kits distributed



216

nutritional kits distributed



95

parents reached



Child Outcomes

Academic Momentum
60%+ girls showed clear gains in Maths and English, stronger concepts, and better exam readiness.



Emotional Wellbeing

SEL, journaling and art improved emotional regulation, empathy and self-awareness.



Leadership & Agency
40-50% took on leadership roles across school, community and peer mentoring.



Steady Participation
75%+ regular attendance across cohorts, supporting better engagement and learning.



Health & Hygiene
70%+ adopted healthier routines — better menstrual hygiene, fitness and nutrition habits.



Peer Relationships
Improved empathy, collaboration and peer support; reduced conflicts across cohorts.





She Rises: A Milestone Showcase

She Rises: Unseen to Unstoppable, a photo exhibition celebrating the journeys of our Perambur Senior Cohort Sakhis, was hosted at NalandaWay’s Chennai office in November 2024. Captured by photographer Harshitha Parthasarathi, the portraits documented the girls’ resilience, agency and personal growth — offering a powerful window into the courage with which they navigate their circumstances and shape their futures.

The exhibition marked five years since the project began and celebrated a milestone moment: the first cohort of Sakhis entering college. **Over 100 visitors** attended, honouring the girls’ achievements and the transformative work of the programme.



“During my public exams, things were very difficult at home. Even after I passed, my parents said they wouldn’t send me to college because they didn’t want to ‘waste money’ on my education. I thought my life was over and that I would end up working as a salesgirl. Because of NalandaWay, I am in college today. Thank you for convincing my parents and believing in me.”

- Hemavathy, Sakhi Perambur Senior Cohort



CHENNAI CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Where Young Voices Find Confidence, Discipline & Joy



Location
Chennai

The Chennai Children's Choir offers children — particularly those from under-resourced communities — a space to discover their voice, build confidence and experience the joy of singing together. Through structured rehearsals, performances and creative reflection, the programme develops musical skills, emotional expression, teamwork and a strong sense of belonging. Music becomes both a learning tool and a pathway to wellbeing.

Data Insights



500+
children engaged
through choir sessions
and activities



Child Outcomes

Increased participation

during community performances



Improved vocal discipline,

breath control and group blending



Children displayed stronger **confidence and emotional balance** through performance preparation and stage experience.



Weekly practice

imbibed discipline, listening, and collaboration.



Many children reported the choir as **a safe, joyful space** that helped them feel seen and valued.





Ecosystem Shift

Educators gained new tools for engagement, using music to strengthen rapport and self-expression.

Communities witnessed children's growth first-hand, with performances uplifting local morale and creating shared pride.

Musical Exchanges

This year, the children presented their production Prayer for Peace at **5+ venues** across the country, including Azim Premji University, the Indian Music Experience Museum, and the Bangalore School of Music, among others.

Collaboration with Philadelphia Boys Choir and Chorale (PBCC) through Classical Movements by Neeta Helms

Collaboration with Circle.help UK - "We Are the World" – children contributed to a global music project promoting collective action and artistic solidarity.





DELHI CHILDREN'S CHOIR

Strengthening Skills & Wellbeing Through Choral Learning



Location

Kalakriti Centre, Tigri,
Delhi

The Delhi Children's Choir (DCC) offers children aged 12-18 from under-resourced communities a safe, creative, and emotionally supportive space to learn choral music. The choir strengthens musical skill, discipline, emotional expression, teamwork, leadership, and self-belief — helping adolescents grow with confidence and purpose.

Data Insights



84

children
reached



120+

sessions
conducted



6

performances
delivered



2

international
collaborations



95+

parents reached
through meetings



Child Outcomes

Seniors confidently led sections and guided peers

— signalling internal leadership growth



Performance-readiness

improved despite academic pressures and logistical challenges



Learners expressed increased self-belief, emotional grounding and resilience



Children showed discipline, presence of mind, and teamwork – especially during challenges like technical glitches



Improved focus, responsibility and collaboration





Musical Exchanges

Joint performance with the Philadelphia Boys Choir & Chorale (PBCC) at India Habitat Centre — cross-cultural learning, ensemble discipline, and international exposure.

Collaboration with Circle.help UK - “We Are the World” — children contributed to a global music project promoting collective action and artistic solidarity



“I have many lovely memories. Music is my passion, and DCC helped me pursue it so much. Being in DCC has brought about many improvements in me like increasing my confidence and ability to understand new things.

- Shafia, 18, DCC (2018 to 2025)



KALAKRITI

Arts, Expression & Community Strength



Location

Tigri & Ambedkar
Nagar, Delhi

Kalakriti makes the arts accessible to children and women across Tigri and Ambedkar Nagar through school-based programmes and a dedicated community centre. Using dance, music, theatre, visual arts and media arts, the programme strengthens confidence, emotional wellbeing, creativity and social-emotional learning for children and adults who otherwise have limited access to artistic spaces.

Data Insights



4,452

children (Grades 1-8)
directly engaged



3,500+

children reached
indirectly



3,000+

artworks
created



12 exhibitions hosted



60+

child-led performances



170

children & women participated
in regular classes



160+

parents & community members engaged
through events and showcases



Child Outcomes

65% increase in children's ability to plan compositions, sketch methodically and complete artworks with intention



40% showed strong gains in listening, comprehension, vocabulary and grammar



Nearly 100% achieved high confidence in oral expression during end-of-year assessments

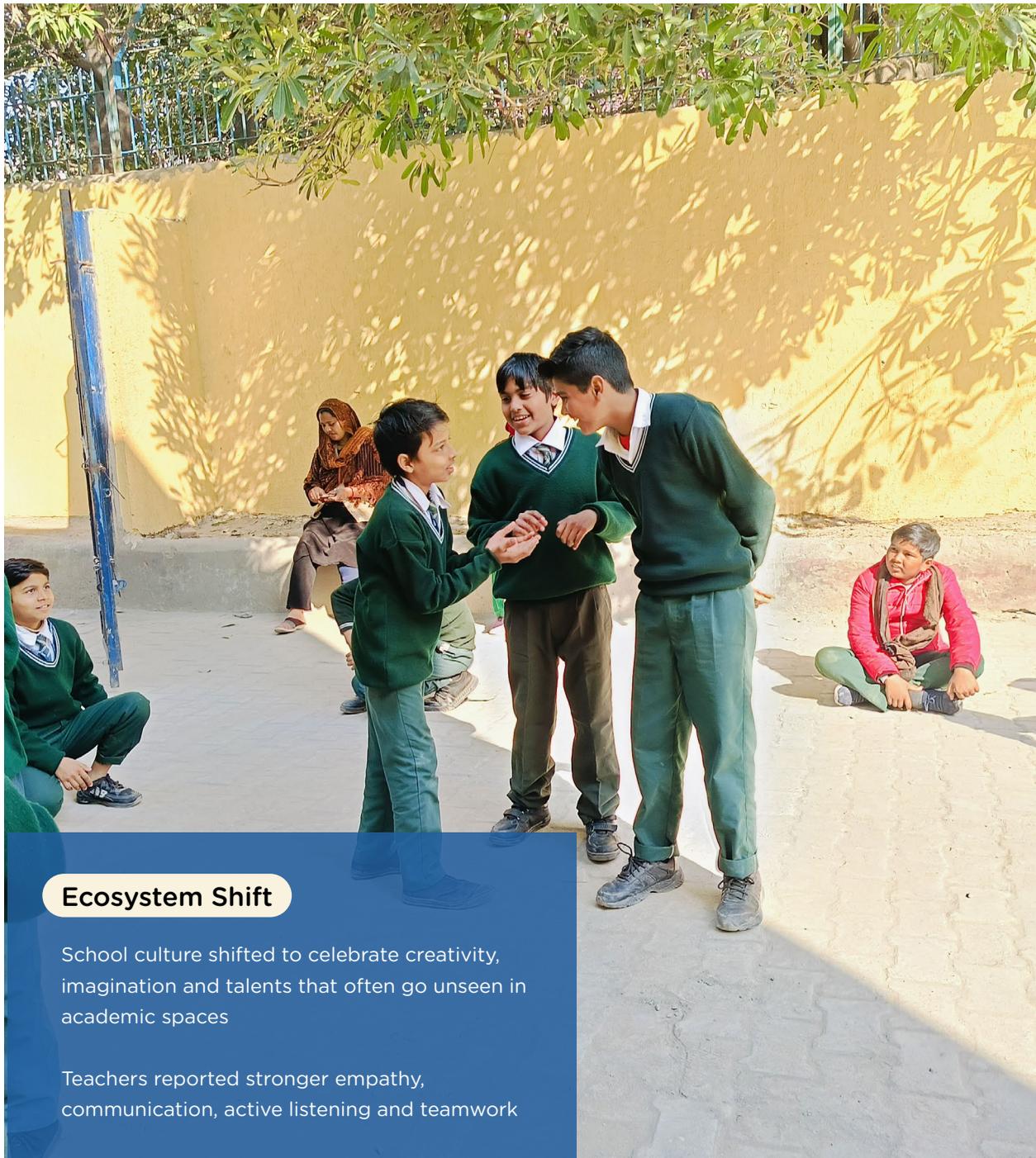


Noticeable rise in confidence, stage presence and expression



Friendships deepened; students collaborated with peers they had never engaged with before





Ecosystem Shift

School culture shifted to celebrate creativity, imagination and talents that often go unseen in academic spaces

Teachers reported stronger empathy, communication, active listening and teamwork



“The image of government school children has changed. They were involved in numerous extracurricular activities. We were mesmerised by their work and by the final exhibition. Students danced, acted, sang and created art. We hope to continue working together like this.”

– Vice Principal, GGSS School

STORIES OF CHANGE

A collection of moments from the field across our early adolescence programmes.

Regaining stability through support

Project Sakhi, Choolai Cohort, Tamil Nadu

Barkath, a lively and curious Sakhi girl from the Choolai cohort, suddenly became irregular in school and stopped attending sessions. When facilitators finally reached her over phone calls, she shared the reason: her mother had been diagnosed with a heart condition and advised complete bed rest. With both parents as daily wage earners, the family struggled, and Barkath was asked to pause her education and find work.

The Sakhi team encouraged her to keep learning in small ways — studying on weekends and staying connected to her syllabus. Her friends stepped in too, checking on her regularly and sharing notes so she wouldn't fall behind.

Slowly, with this support, Barkath convinced her family to let her return to school. Today, she is back in class, preparing for her exams with clarity and determination. Her story is a reminder of how encouragement and steady peer support can keep a girl's education on track.



From disengaged learner to resilient achiever

CCI, Punjab

School was never part of Manu's childhood. He moved constantly with his mother across Delhi, Ajmer and Haridwar, doing odd jobs like collecting scrap and selling tea. Survival took priority, leaving no space for education or stability.

When he entered a CCI in Rajpura, he faced another hurdle: without identity documents, he waited nearly a year to be enrolled in school. By the time he joined Class 5, he was older than his peers and could not recognise Punjabi letters or numbers. With steady support from the CCI and tutor Enosh, Manu began learning from the basics.

Now in Class 6, he can solve addition, subtraction, multiplication and simple division. He reads short Punjabi words, enjoys writing, and quickly picks up new vocabulary. He also excels beyond academics, winning races, chess and carrom on Sports Day. When asked to choose a word starting with his name, he called himself Mehnati Manu — Hardworking Manu — a description that fits.

When asked about his dream, Manu said simply: "I want to build a home". For him, it represents safety, belonging and the stability he has long hoped for.

Rebuilding confidence through music

DCC, Delhi

Gaurav, a cheerful and hardworking member of the Delhi Children's Choir, throws himself into every practice — whether it's guitar, cajón or vocals. He has grown steadily in musical technique and stage presence, and is known for helping peers and contributing rhythm patterns during sessions.

In 2023, Gaurav lost a close family member, a grief that pulled him away from school and DCC classes. With support from his teachers and family, he slowly found his way back. Music became a steadying force, helping him regain focus and confidence.

Today, Gaurav is more self-aware and committed to strengthening his skills, especially high-pitch control and guitar technique. He says DCC has sparked wider interests, improved his discipline and even helped his academic marks. Supported by his parents and teachers, he now dreams of becoming a musician — seeing DCC as a place where he grows both as an artist and as a person.



When second chances change life

CCI, Tamil Nadu

When Ananya (name changed) completed Class 12, she returned home to mounting financial struggles. She wanted to support her mother while continuing her studies, but uncertainty about her future left her overwhelmed. She missed counselling sessions and eventually joined a computer course she didn't enjoy, feeling pressured, disconnected and unmotivated.

During this period, a NalandaWay mentor began visiting her. At first, Ananya barely spoke, but over time she grew comfortable. When invited to the NalandaWay Retreat Workshop, she agreed — a decision that shifted everything. In a supportive space, she spoke in English for the first time. "Pradeepa akka looked at me in a way that made me feel trusted," she shared. "That gave me the confidence to stand up and speak." Her mother's pride strengthened her resolve.

After the workshop, Ananya deleted her gaming and social media apps, focused on her studies, and used a NalandaWay-provided laptop to attend classes and practise coding. Regular mentoring helped her manage family stress and build better routines.

Today, she describes herself as confident, focused and ready to pursue her goals. She has learnt to ask for help when needed and hopes to support other CCI children to believe in their dreams — just as she learned to believe in hers.



Collaborative Networks for Innovation

NalandaWay strengthened its sector footprint this year through peer-reviewed paper presentations, participation in national and global conferences, and active contributions to dialogues on education, wellbeing, gender, arts, and data innovation.

Across the year, our team participated in 40+ convenings, sharing evidence from our programmes and strengthening our role as an advocacy leader in arts and wellbeing.

Peer-Reviewed Papers Presented



September 2024

Leadership for Equity & FLAME University - National Research Symposium

- Beyond Academics: Project Sakhi's Approach to Building Resilience & Self-Esteem

February 2025

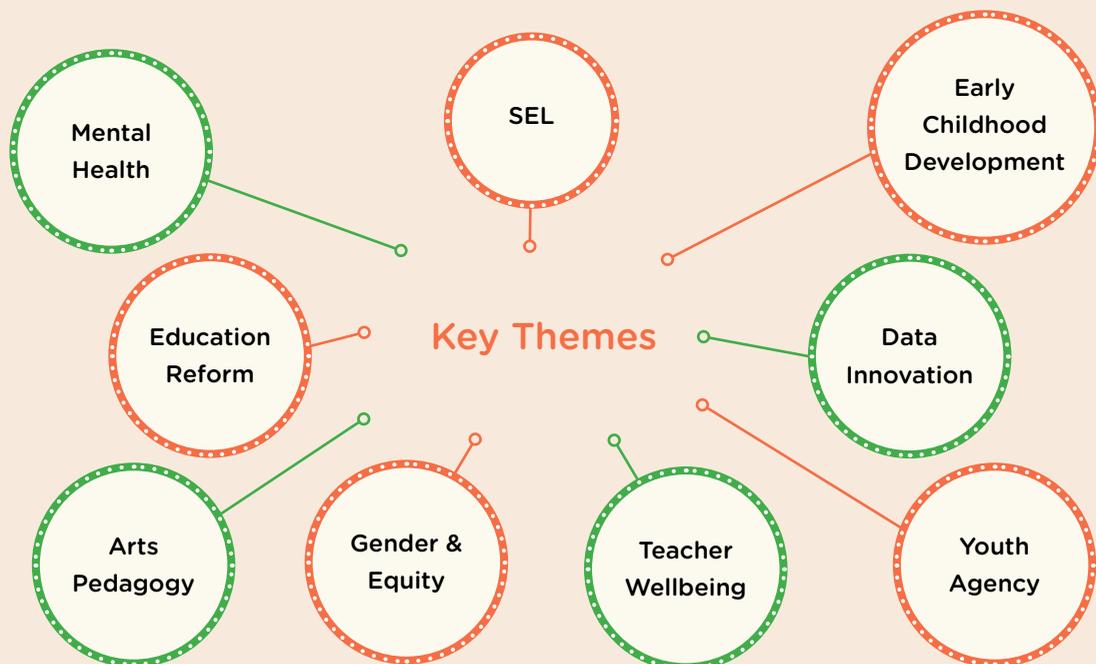
Azim Premji University - Global Forum 2025

- Sakhi's Sisterhood: Building Bonds, Reimagining Holistic Education
- Nurturing Hope, Gratitude, Kindness: A Transformative Educational Intervention

March 2025

Centre for Women's Development Studies - International Conference 2025

- At the Frontline of Change: Women in Early Childhood Care & Education





Publications & Academic Contributions

Our work was published in leading academic platforms and shortlisted for major international volumes, strengthening dialogue on arts-based wellbeing, youth development and community-rooted methodologies.

Published Works

1. European Society of Medicine - Journal Article
Title of Article: Wellbeing Through Remote Storytelling: A Digital Arts Intervention for Indian Adolescents During Pandemic Isolation.
Authors: Sandepudi, S., Sharma, G., et al. (2025)
2. Arts-based wellbeing & youth development research.
3. Springer Handbook - Methodologies of the Peripheralized
Title of the Paper: Participatory Action Research: The Experience of NalandaWay Foundation, April 2025
Authors: Kritika Chadha, Vidushi Jain and Garima Sharma
Contributors: Sameen Almas, Baishali Das, Kulpreet Kaur
4. Chapter on community-rooted methodological approaches.

Shortlisted

1. Encyclopedia of the Anthropocene
Title: Nurturing Hope, Gratitude, and Kindness: A Transformative Educational Intervention
Authors: Garima Sharma, Kritika Chadha, Vinothkumar and M P Prabhakar
2. Pluriversal Perspectives Edition
3. Special Issue: Mental Health, Music & Dialogue
4. Routledge Edited Volume
5. GenMH - Global Mental Health Forum 2025



Sector Engagement Highlights



Education & Systems Change

- Azim Premji University (Global Forum, Competency-Based Assessments)
- Leadership for Equity × FLAME University (National Symposium on 21st Century Skills)
- Azim Premji Foundation (Classroom-Based Assessments)



Gender, Equity & Research

- Indian School of Development Management
- Breakthrough Trust
- Centre for Women's Development Studies
- British Council
- Parity Lab



Mental Health & Wellbeing

- National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences × Rohini Nilekani Philanthropy
- Youth for Mental Health - Mental Health Confab
- UNICEF × National Disaster Management Authority - National Consultation on Mental Health & Disasters
- Duke University × Mental Health Innovation Network Asia (International MH Conference)



Early Childhood Development & Responsive Care

- Asia-Pacific Regional Network on Early Childhood (ARNEC)
- Vikramshila Education Resource Society × NITI Aayog × Van Leer Foundation
- Rocket Learning × Future First



Arts & Creative Pedagogy

- School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University
- India Foundation for the Arts – South India Conference on Arts Education
- Centre for Music and Health



Data, Measurement & Innovation

- RTI International × New York University – Global TIES for Children (ENGAGE Tool)
- Fourth Wheel Impact (Innovative Data Collection; Open-Source Tools)
- Dalgo (Data Modelling)
- African Development Bank Group (Impact Assessment Methods)



Youth Leadership & Capacity Development

- Young Leaders for Active Citizenship – Young Researchers for Social Impact
- Sexual Violence Research Initiative – Research Abstracts Workshop
- ECD Collective – Intersectionality Masterclass

Sector Engagement Snapshot

40+ convenings



4 peer-reviewed papers



Representation across education, arts, wellbeing, gender, data and ECD



Collaborations with 25+ national & global organisations





Collectives

NalandaWay deepened its roots in collaborative networks this year, contributing insights and co-creating tools with national and global partners committed to strengthening systems for children and adolescents.



1. Project Sampoorna 2.0 - Jharkhand

We are deepening our commitment to integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into every classroom in Jharkhand — as both an implementation partner and a subject-matter expert, bringing an art-integrated lens to the work. Together, we are reimagining learning by embedding SEL across schools and communities so that every child can thrive.

2. Life Skills Collaborative

We engage in the Narrative and Evidence Tracks, contributing field insights through audits, dialogues and convenings across Karnataka and Punjab, alongside youth, teachers, parents and government partners.

3. Early Childhood Development Collective

Sharing insights and championing better early childhood care and education across India.

4. Community Arts Network

NalandaWay is now part of CAN (a global platform of over 1000 members across 80 countries) and engages in global knowledge exchange on arts and community arts for social impact.

5. India Mental Health Alliance

We contribute programme perspectives within a national coalition of 150+ organisations, strengthening mental health systems.

6. Mental Health Innovation Network (MHIN)

We are part of a global network advancing mental health innovation and shared learning.



Extending the Ripples

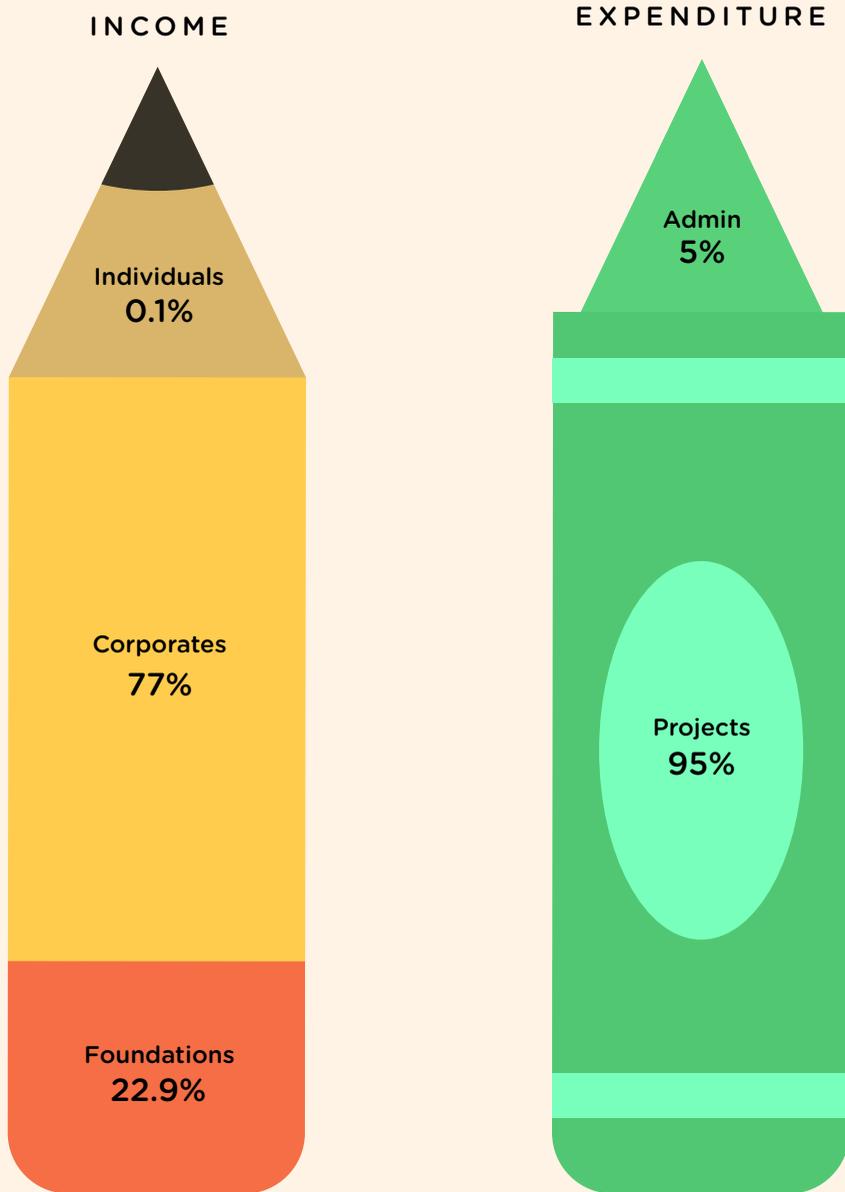
As our roots deepen across schools, Anganwadis and communities, the ripples continue outward. In the coming year, we will broaden our work in adolescent mental health — ensuring young people have safe spaces to speak, seek support and build resilience.

We will also invest in a first-of-its-kind repository on care leavers, mapping their journeys so systems can respond with greater clarity and compassion. Our early learning and arts-based programmes will continue to anchor classrooms in creativity, wellbeing and curiosity, while new collaborations will help us take these models to scale.

The work ahead is both simple and ambitious: to ensure every child — no matter where they begin — grows with confidence, dignity and opportunity. The ripples continue; our commitment deepens.



Financials



Recognition

Great Place To Work **certified** for the third consecutive year - for building a **High-trust, High-performance culture!**



In the News

How music amplifies social, emotional development in education

April 2024
India Today



Scoring success, smashing struggles

May 2024
The New Indian Express

An Artistic Way Ahead

August 2024
The New Indian Express

Mann Govt's historic initiative for kids residing in Children Homes; MoU signed with NalandaWay Foundation

August 2024
Yes Punjab

NalandaWay Foundation MoU with Punjab government

August 2024
Yes Punjab

Dr Baljit Kaur Announces MOU with NalandaWay Foundation for Empowering Children by Art Objectivity

August 2024
Babushahi

Frames of Strength and Sisterhood

November 2024
The New Indian Express

Scan to know more





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