



ISSUE #5
Jan-Mar 2026

Sangath Samwaad

SANGATH QR NEWSLETTER

Feature article

What's up Sangath?

Projects in Focus

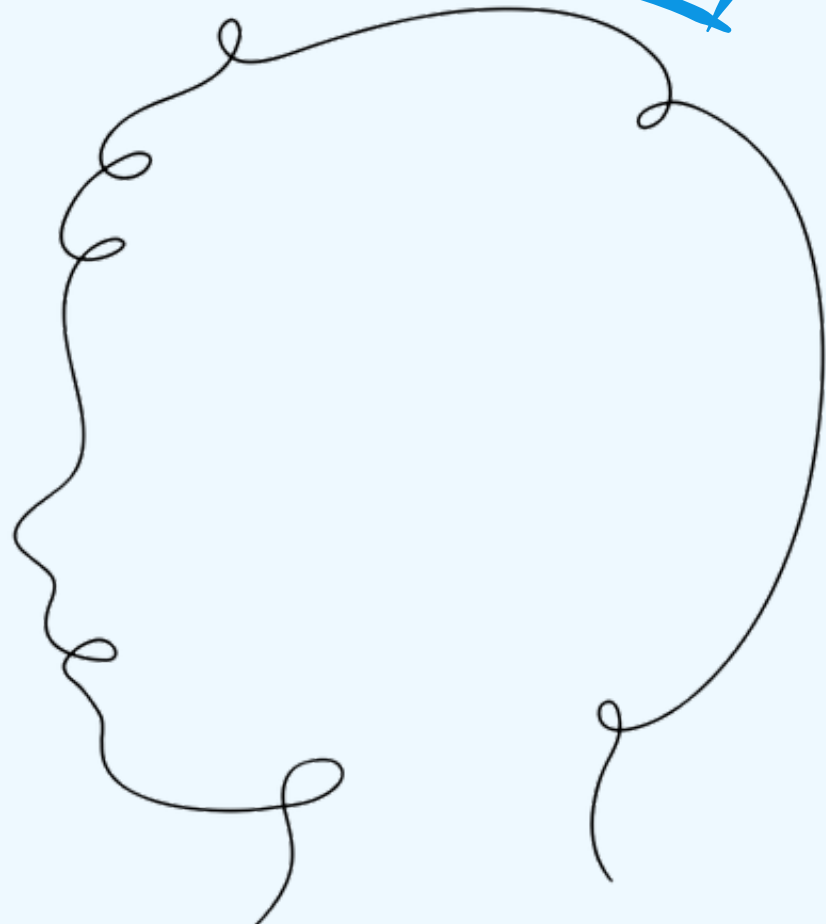
What's inside:

Humans of Sangath

Sangath Culture Corner

World Autism Acceptance Month 2026

Autism and Humanity: Every Life Has Value





Autism &
Humanity

Every Life has
Value

MOMENTS THAT STAY WITH A RESEARCHER.....

“

Working with families across North Goa as part of the NAMASTE project at Sangath, I am often reminded that autism is not just a diagnosis; it is a journey shaped by people, perceptions, and everyday choices.

”

SWAMINI R. KAKODKAR
Research Associate | NAMASTE



This World Autism Acceptance Month, I find myself reflecting not just on autism, but on the people around it- the caregivers, the quiet decisions they make, the doubts they carry, and the strength they often don't realise they have.

I remember a five-year-old boy I met early in my fieldwork. He showed clear signs of autism-limited speech, repetitive behaviours, and sensory sensitivities. A paediatrician had recommended speech therapy, but the family chose not to pursue it. Instead, they enrolled him in an Anganwadi, reassured by relatives who believed he would “grow out of it.”

While his mother seemed open to support, his father remained hesitant. The family was uncomfortable with sharing information and wary of recordings required for the intervention. Concerns around privacy and social stigma ultimately led them to withdraw from the program. It was a difficult reminder of how awareness gaps and stigma can delay access to support, even when help is available.

But there are also stories that stay with me for very different reasons.



At another Anganwadi, I met a grandmother who regularly brought her four-year-old grandson, diagnosed with autism. His mother worked full-time and often considered leaving her job to care for him. But the grandmother encouraged her to continue working, stepping in with quiet determination to support the child.

As they were leaving one day, she gently guided him to put on his slippers. When he succeeded, she smiled and said, "See, he can do it."

That small moment captured something powerful- patience, belief, and the importance of support systems.

Across families, one question comes up often: **"Will my child be okay?"**

As a researcher, my role goes beyond assessments. It is to listen without judgement, to share knowledge, and to support families as they navigate decisions that are rarely simple. Every family's journey is different. Some hesitate, some persist, some adapt in ways that are deeply personal. But when families are informed, supported, and surrounded by understanding, they are better equipped to help their children grow, at their own pace, in their own way.

And in those small, everyday moments of progress, there is always something powerful to hold on to.





What's up Sangath?

Awards & Recognition



Sangath has been officially validated by **CAF America** and is now **recognised as a CAF International Validated Organization**. This validation reinforces Sangath's credibility and accountability on a global platform, opens pathways for international philanthropy to support evidence-based mental health work in India and beyond, and reflects strong governance in a sector where trust is foundational.

Sangath Trailblazers

Vinda Kavlekar, ARG Administrator (Winner) and Godwin Fernandes, Research Group Manager (Selected Contributor) were recognised at the recent 'INPARMA webinar and blog' call for their reflections on research and grant management in India. This recognition underscores the growing importance of professionalised grant management capacity in strengthening robust grant and programme management functions towards ensuring long-term sustainability and competitiveness.



Sangath has been awarded a **Citation of Honour** from Dhempe College of Arts and Science in recognition of our support to the International Conference on "Ethics, Values and Human Dignity in Healthcare: Psychological, Literary, Artistic and Medical Perspectives," held on 23-24 February 2026 in Goa.





What's up Sangath?

State-level Mental Health and Well-being Event



Sangath IMPRESS team (**IMPL**ementation of evidence-based facility and community interventions to reduce the treatment gap for dep**RESS**ion) with Non-Communicable Diseases Cell (NCDC) at the Directorate of Health Services (DHS) Goa and National Health Mission, jointly organised a **State-level Mental Health and Well-being Event** at Goa Medical College and Hospital Auditorium on 11th February 2026.



Over 350 people attended the event, reinforcing a powerful truth: systems can be strengthened when partnerships are aligned - when civil society and government move forward together, with communities at the heart of the journey.

“

The Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour, Directorate of Health Services, Goa Medical College & Hospital, and Sangath can create the type of ecosystem that no state has seen... we want to make Goa a model state and save people's lives.

— Honb'le Health Minister, Goa
Shri Vishwajit Rane



What's up Sangath?

17th Edition: Leadership in Mental Health Residential Bootcamp, Goa



The 17th Edition of LMH Course Residential bootcamp was hosted at the International Centre Goa from 19-24 January, 2026, bringing - a vibrant and human space where leadership, care, and mental health were explored together. Across an immersive week, participants found language of experiences often left unspoken, strengthened their understanding of mental health systems, and built trust, confidence, and lasting peer connections. The residency held one powerful truth at its core: people must remain at the centre of any impact-driven change.



THRIVE Annual Collaborators' Meet

The Annual Collaborators' Meeting of Project THRIVE was held in Betalbatim from 16-18 February, 2026, Goa bringing together Principal Investigators, collaborators, and our research and intervention team from the University of Lucern, the centre for Mental Health Law & Policy ILS, Pune and Sangath for a three-day intensive work session. The meeting focused on advancing preparations for the upcoming trial, particularly the implementation of a **cash-plus-HAP** intervention within Primary Health Centres in rural India.





What's up Sangath?

New Projects in Sangath

IOTTF- This planning grant will optimise the It's Ok To Talk intervention in line with this evidence, preparing for a future implementation-focused randomised controlled trial (RCT) with a focus on university students and diversify narrative content, strengthen the technology platform for safe and scalable delivery, and develop a rigorous trial protocol with stakeholders.

Location: Delhi

Funder: Child Mind Institute through SNF Global Center

Principle Investigator: Dr. Pattie Gonsalves

YVAJH- This collaboration will provide technical support, our expertise and experience to the local partner (YUVA) to adapt and implement Mental Health services in Schools and Communities in 2 coal mining blocks of Ramgarh district in Jharkhand.

Location: Jharkhand

Funder: Youths Union For Voluntary Action, (YUVA), Jharkhand

Principle Investigator: Prachi Khandeparkar



Sangath Speaks!

Ethics, Values and Human Dignity in Health Care : Psychological, Literary, Artistic and Medical Perspectives | Dhempe College of Arts & Science| Goa, Feb 2026



- Keynote addressed by Prof. Vikram Patel
- Pranali Gaonkar, Field Supervisor, ARG presented a paper titled "We are too busy" – Lessons from Integrating a Depression Care Programme (IMPRESS) in a Public Healthcare Setting in Goa, India.
- Richard Velleman, Co-Director, ARG, Sangath, took part in a Plenary Presentation titled, "Human Dignity in Mental Healthcare: Engagement, Ethical Courage and the Centrality of Family."
- Abhijit Nadkarni, Co-Director, ARG, Sangath was present as a Plenary speaker titled, "Human Dignity in Mental Healthcare: Engagement, Ethical Courage and the Centrality of Family."

National Conference on Addiction Medicine | Bangaluru, Feb 2026

Abhijit Nadkarni, Co-Director, ARG, Sangath was invited as a panelist on a symposium titled, "Human Dignity in Mental Healthcare: Engagement, Ethical Courage and the Centrality of Family."



What's up Sangath?

Sangath Speaks!

Meet the Panelists



Miriam Sequeira
Intervention Programme
Lead, Sangath

Miriam Sequeira is a mental health professional with over a decade of experience designing and implementing evidence-based psychological interventions in community and low-resource settings across India and internationally. She is the Intervention Programme Lead within Sangath's Addictions and Related Research Group, overseeing multiple intervention development and implementation teams. Her work spans addictions, depression, adolescent mental health, and HIV, with a strong focus on task-sharing, digital health, and ethical implementation.

AI for Social Impact | Online, March 2026:

Miriam Sequeira, Intervention Programme Lead participated in Roundtable, sharing field insights on how NGOs move from evidence to action and what it really takes to ensure data meaningfully informs decisions, not just reports them.

Trainings / Workshops / Collaborations

Understanding Stress in Children and Adolescents | Delhi, Jan 2026:

Mental Health For School (MHFS) hosted a workshop for parents at KPS School, Delhi emphasizing the crucial role parents play in their child's emotional and academic well-being. Through experiential activities, parents reflected stress as a universal experience, helping them build empathy and a deeper understanding of their children's needs.



Indian Medical Association (IMA) | Goa, Jan 2026:

Dr. Gauri Divan, CDG Director and Dr. Anup Netravalkar, Senior Programme Coordinator from NAMASTE met with Dr. Shraddha Mulgaonkar Patil, President (IMA) and discussed the level of awareness

and understanding of neurodiversity among the public, medical professionals, educators, and key stakeholders. The discussion proposed a collaboration with the NAMASTE programme, leveraging its evidence-based expertise for capacity-building, sensitisation, and outreach.

What's up Sangath?

Trainings / Workshops / Collaborations

Institute of Public Health | Bengaluru, Jan 2026:

A COINCIDE program theory core group workshop was held at IPH, Bengaluru, discussing development plan of Theory of Change.



Focus Group Discussion, SPRING Cohort | Haryana, Jan 2026:

Smita Todkar, conducted a focus group discussion with fathers from the SPRING cohort to explore paternal involvement.

10,000+ Child Developmental Screenings- a first for Delhi, Jan 2026:



NAMASTE programme, implemented in collaboration with Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Delhi have conducted 10,000+ universal child developmental screenings, a first for the city.

Embracing Neurodiversity, Together | Goa, Feb 2026:

NAMASTE programme, in collaboration with the Indian Medical Association (IMA), Bicholim Branch, came together to facilitate a meaningful awareness workshop for pre-primary teachers from government schools in Bicholim Taluka, North Goa.





What's up Sangath?

Trainings / Workshops / Collaborations

Financial Management and NPO's Compliances | Delhi, Feb 2026:

Trupti Paryekar and Monica D'Souza Senior administrators from ARG team participated in three day Workshop organised by Greencliffe and delivered by CPA Services Pvt. Ltd.



Goals and Goal-Based Outcomes (GBO) tool, NAMASTE | Goa, Feb 2026:

NAMASTE team with Prof. Duncan Law discussed the use of GBO within NAMASTE given a novel contextual adaptation of the tool for a community-based research programme in India.

SIT (School for International Training) Visit | Goa, Feb 2026:

Sangath hosted a 3 days learning & exposure visit for SIT, in its Goa office. The students had the opportunity to engage directly with our project teams and gaining first-hand insights into Sangath's work, from community-based initiatives to digital innovations and global collaborations advancing mental health equity.



KushalMaa Team | Chandigarh, March 2026:

The team spent three days at PGI Chandigarh for a cross-learning visit as part of our ongoing multi-site RCT-an mHealth-based intervention supporting pregnant and postpartum women through education and social connection.

What's up Sangath?

Trainings / Workshops / Collaborations



International Women's Day | March, 2026



Dr. Somil Rastogi, Senior Programme Coordinator from Sangath's NAMASTE Delhi team, received the felicitation on behalf of Sangath at the International Women's Day programme organised by the Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), Delhi.

The Addictions & related Research (ARG) team at Sangath partnered with Project TrêS in Anjuna, North Goa, hosted a community-centred mental health awareness programme. The gathering brought together 35 community members and a powerful community-based skit, written by Lalan Madkaikar was performed by the Sangath ARG team followed by a mental health awareness talk delivered by Subhash Pednekar.



STEER Project Meeting | Rewari & Delhi, March 2026:

STEER project recently welcomed partners from across the consortium for the first in-person meeting, held across Rewari and New Delhi. The gathering brought together investigators and project teams to reflect on the journey ahead - aligning on goals, timelines, and the collective vision that drives the project forward.



What's up Sangath?

Trainings / Workshops / Collaborations

Youth-LEARN Co-design workshops with Mental Health researchers, grassroots organisations, and person with lived experiences | Hybrid, Jan- March 2026

The Youth LEARN project completed four co-design workshops with youth with lived experiences from Goa, Jumbish (Indore), Schizophrenia Research Foundation (Chennai), Ekjut (Madhya Pradesh); one consultative mental health research workshop at NIMHANS (Bangalore).

The participatory co-design sessions fostered honest stories and reflections by centering lived experience, creativity, and dialogue. The workshop created space for participants to share perspectives that are often missing from mental health research conversations.





What's up Sangath?

New Publications

Prioritising mental health research areas for India: A modified delphi-based exercise by the Indian Council of Medical Research:

The paper in collaboration with Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) reflects a shared commitment to evidence-driven, context-specific research that can strengthen mental health systems and inform policy at a national level.

Citizen-Centred Health System for India:

The Lancet Commission's report marks the culmination of a multi-year, collaborative effort to synthesise evidence and outline reform pathways towards a health system that is equitable, future-ready, and truly accountable to India's citizens.

Co-design in preventive mental health research: Advancing evidence, equity, and engagement:

This editorial feature in Mental Health & Prevention (Elsevier) highlighted how codesign is reshaping preventive mental health research - shifting the focus beyond clinics and services to families, schools, communities, and systems where wellbeing is shaped every day.

Beyond a seat at a table: Embedding lived experience in mental health ethics committees:

The article from iHEAR team opened up a much-needed space to pause and reflect on questions many of us have been grappling with for some time - how knowledge is produced, who gets to define rigour and ethics, and whether inclusion truly redistributes power or merely rearranges it.

Correlates of suicide attempts in young people in India – a case-control study of persons admitted to a hospital in Pune:

The paper highlighted descriptive data on life events revealed several relationship adversities, and the importance of acute interpersonal stressors in precipitating suicide attempts.

Building LGBTQIA+ Affirmative Health Professional Education Spaces in India through Student-Led Advocacy: The TransCare Queer Ambassador Model:

The paper explores a powerful grassroots approach led by students themselves - the TransCare Queer Ambassador (QA) model, a year-long, mentored, student-led initiative designed to drive change from within campuses.

Humanizing AI in Health: the ethics challenges – Outcomes of stakeholder engagements in India:

The paper brought together insights from participatory workshops with researchers, technologists, healthcare professionals, and community stakeholders.



What's up Sangath?

New Publications

The effectiveness of a community-based video-facilitated parenting intervention for child development integrated into routine maternal and child care services in India:

The paper highlighted Aalana Palana -a community-based parenting intervention that uses video-facilitated learning to support caregivers in promoting EarlyChildDevelopment.

Pathogen access and benefit sharing in a pandemic: working towards fair exchange?

The paper in the The Lancet Microbe brought colleagues from the global south from the Ethics Working Group of the Coalition for Equitable Research in Low Resource Settings, focused on analysing the PABS system element of the pandemic agreement.

Estimating the direct health and broader societal costs of caring for autistic children and adolescents – Preliminary findings from a tertiary care centre in urban India:

This research was a collaborative work between Sangath and the National institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru. This takes an important step towards making the invisible economic burden of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) more visible as families raising autistic children often navigate complex systems of diagnosis, therapy, education, and other forms of care, frequently with limited financial support.

Community engagement with individuals with lived experience of autism and intellectual disability to promote awareness and service utilisation for early identification and intervention- A scoping review:

The review article is the first of its kind to report on how to engage people with lived experience, especially those who are autistic or are caregivers of autistic adults in building awareness and subsequently lead to programmes that help with detection and intervention.

What's up Sangath?

Programmatic Dissemination Events

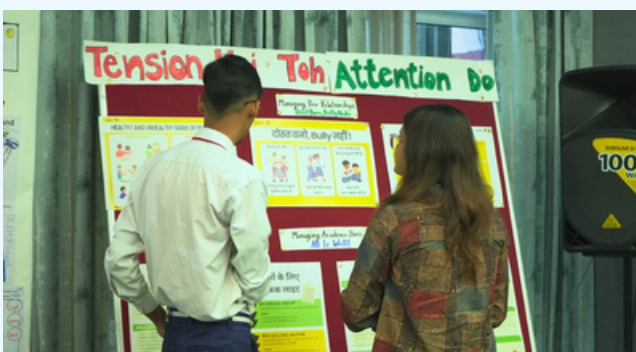
School Mental Health Promotion Programme (SMHPP) Dissemination Event | March 2026:

The SMHPP project organised a dissemination event on 18th March 2026 for heads of participating schools and school management members to orient them on the work completed, achievements so far, challenges faced and sought their suggestions for planning the way forward.



Mental Health For Schools (MHFS) Dissemination Event | Delhi, March 2026:

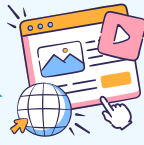
The Mental Health for Schools Dissemination Event on 25th March 2026 brought together students, educators, school leaders, partners, and supporters, united by a shared intention to make mental health more accessible in schools. Reflecting on the MHFS programme's reach, impacting 5,500+ individuals across 17 schools in 8 cities, and the launch of the MHFS Impact Report (2025–2026), the event marked both a milestone and a step forward in strengthening mental health support within school ecosystems.





What's up Sangath?

Sangath in Media



All images are hyperlinked for easy access.

What the US Withdrawal from WHO Means for Global Health

How will the US' exit from the WHO impact funding, programmes, and the future of international health collaboration?

MANJUNATH SHANKAR & ANANT BHAN Published: 31 Jan 2026, 9:53 AM IST OPINION

The Indian EXPRESS JOURNALISM OF COURAGE Why a young Indian dies every 8 minutes and the 'communicative act' behind the crisis; insights from 'Young Lives Matter' project

The project interviewed young survivors at YCM Hospital, Pimpri. Less than half the young survivors had clinically significant depressive or anxiety symptoms; instead, socio-cultural norms and interpersonal conflicts were dominant.

ASHA'S MENTAL HEALTH PARADOX
They are being trained to spot depression and prevent suicides, but who cares for the ASHA worker's well-being?

THE HINDU
By N. Srinivasan
Published: 28 Jan 2026, 10:30 AM IST

ASHA workers are the backbone of India's public health system. They are trained to spot depression and prevent suicides, but who cares for the ASHA worker's well-being?

ASHA workers are the backbone of India's public health system. They are trained to spot depression and prevent suicides, but who cares for the ASHA worker's well-being?

Re:Orient Dalberg ASIA SOCIETY

EPISODE 5
Good health for all: How do we build equitable healthcare systems?

Host
Gaurav Gupta, Global Managing Partner, Dalberg Advisors

Balkrishna Korgaonkar, Associate Director - CEO South Asia, Global Development Incubator

Diwakar Mittal, Senior Director, Corporate Affairs, Novo Nordisk

Vikram Patel, Paul Farmer Professor and Chair of Global Health and Social Medicine, Harvard Medical School

THE CURIOUS CASE OF...
NO RISK VS LOW RISK
ft. Abhijit Nadkarni
with Ira Khan

BECAUSE MENTAL HEALTH IS MORE THAN JUST MENTAL ILLNESS

When research meets real life
Families caring for disabled children face emotional, psychological, and financial challenges, highlighting the need for coordinated support systems

SHWAMI R. KAKOORAKAR

The Neurodevelopment and Autism in South Asia Treatment and Education (NAMASTE) project, initiated by SANGATH, aims to bridge the gap in care by identifying children with neurodevelopmental disorders in communities across South Asia and providing early intervention services to support their caregivers. It is implemented by SANGATH in collaboration with the Directorate of Health Services and the Department of Women and Child Development.

NAMASTE delivers non-stigmatised, Parent-Mediated Autism Social Communication Intervention for Non-specific Children (PASC) for children with autism risk and WHO-Cambridge Infant Learning (WHO-CIT) for families whose children have other neurodevelopmental difficulties. Screenings conducted by faculty that includes Karayemba (KAR) doctors across the 17 Primary Health Centres (PHCs) in South India. Children experiencing challenges in social communication, learning, memory, and language are referred to the intervention. The project challenges related to the disability and separation within four communities, the faculty worked together, providing that assistance and support that create progress even without formal education. Through the mother contact, she manages by stabilising the picture in the intervention manual. This enabled the family certificate and supported them in the construction of their own home.

Another family comprises of an elderly couple with a seven-year-old child who has severe disabilities. The child has been diagnosed with hydrocephalus, muscular dystrophy and severe speech difficulties. The child's health centre is a special school, but for major treatments, they have to travel regularly. The father works as a daily wage labourer, while the mother is employed as a community health worker with a limited monthly income. They also have an older son and are concerned about the demands of competing care affect the emotional, educational, and financial needs. Although the family receives outside government health services and welfare facilities, they receive only partially often medical-related costs and is insufficient to cover all household needs.

In the past, families caring for disabled children face emotional, psychological, and financial challenges, highlighting the need for coordinated support systems. While parents often experience significant stress and require accessible counselling and mental health services, grandparents and extended family members who play a crucial caregiving role frequently remain unrecognised and unsupported.

When families are supported, it fosters sustainable care and leads to improved outcomes for both the child and the family. The lack of coordinated access to education, therapy, and medical services increases time, physical, and financial burdens.

Govt has developed a strategy using knowledge of medical, educational, and social support services for disabled children. The plan is supported by several specialised medical institutions like Foundation for Psychological Growth (FPG) and Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour (IPHS) at Manipal Hospital. Early Intervention Services (EIS) in both North and South India, provide early diagnosis, intervention, and rehabilitation services. The shift from individual and family-based care to a focus on individual and family-based care, including financial and social support.

Complementing these efforts, the Children with Special Needs (CSNS) scheme implemented by the Government of Karnataka, Government of Govt, provides comprehensive educational support, including financial aid, specialised training, and resource rooms in various schools. The Government of Goa has also introduced various initiatives to support families of children with disabilities among them, the Government of Karnataka, Government of Govt, provides comprehensive educational support, including financial aid, specialised training, and resource rooms in various schools. The Government of Goa has also introduced various initiatives to support families of children with disabilities among them, the Government of Karnataka, Government of Govt, provides comprehensive educational support, including financial aid, specialised training, and resource rooms in various schools.

As a way forward, strengthening welfare initiatives by creating a new joint coordination service, improving financial support, and creating meaningful employment opportunities and support groups for caregivers could greatly reduce stress and improve overall family well-being.

(The author is a research associate for the NAMASTE Program of Sangath CoA)

Wednesday 11 March 2026

I studied alcohol. Academia took it seriously: The accidental researcher's tale

Inaugural lecture of Professor Abhijit Nadkarni

LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE

What's up Sangath?

Sangath Intramural Grants 2026



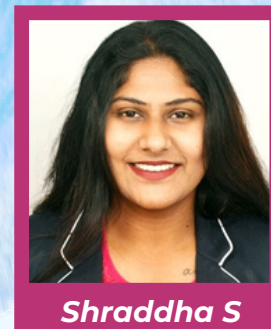
Khushiyon Ka Pitara: Toy Libraries to Promote Early Learning and Mental Development”



The Hidden Cost of AI: A sensitization skit for college students on responsible use of Artificial Intelligence

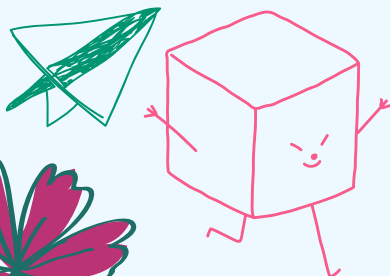


Utilizing Arts for addressing mental health challenges in College students



Open Hearts Corner - Play-Based Healing and Emotional Coping Sessions for Children Living in Prison Settings

CONGRATULATIONS



SEA : Supporting Emotional Awareness among Goan Seafarers



What's up Sangath?

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT / CAMPAIGN

Dost Bano, Bully Nahi- MHFS | Feb 2026:

Mental Health for School (MHFS) conducted an antibullying campaign across five schools in Delhi, Noida, Gurugram, and Bengaluru, responding to a growing concern many schools are grappling with: bullying that often goes unseen, unspoken, and unaddressed.

This campaign carried one clear message: Bullying is not tolerated. But it also went further — helping students and teachers recognise bullying early, encourage upstander behaviour, and build healthier, more respectful relationships in everyday school life.



2000+ students participated. . .

“ The resources shared with us during this campaign, helped us identifying the 'bullying'... earlier I used to get negative towards the ones who would bully but through this campaign, I understood that we need to talk to both - the one who gets bullied and also the one who bullies. We need to make them understand & also ourselves.

-Teacher, KPS Convent, Mahipalpur, Delhi

“

Most of the schools don't do anything about bullying. In this school also things used to go unseen and now because of you, they are not anymore. I've also been bullied and no one stood up for me then but now talking about it has been good.

- Student, Grade 6, Bengaluru





Projects in Focus

OptimizedD



OptimizedD Community visit

The OptimizedD project, led by Sangath Bhopal Hub, is a large-scale RCT to improve treatment outcomes in depression care in primary healthcare settings. It compares a task-shared psychological intervention (Healthy Activity Program – HAP) and Antidepressant medication (ADM) to identify effective, resource-efficient strategies for treating depression in low-resource contexts.

300+

Frontline workers trained

315

Primary Healthcare staff trained

Capacity building and training focused on early identification of depression, suicide risk recognition and referral pathways

3300+

Individuals reached through community sensitization activities



234 outreach activities



Research Assistants Team at Official lunch



Research Assistants with Recruitment Supervisor Misrod PHC



Misrod Phc ASHAs awareness for Mental Health



Research Coordinator with field team Professors Colony PHC

Looking ahead in 2026

- Project Dissemination with medical stakeholders
- Continue to work on Retention – follow up assessments.



For more information on OptimizedD, write to anuja.lahiri@sangath.in



Projects in Focus

Mental Health for Schools (MHFS)

Mental Health for Schools (MHFS) is a school-based implementation programme that emphasizes prevention and early intervention by equipping students (6th-12th grades) and educators with practical knowledge, coping skills, and pathways for seeking support in low-income schools. Over the duration of nine months, the project ran across 8 Indian cities.



Students writing on the gratitude tree as part of the school-wide activity

4920+
Students

17
Schools

Students outreached through **8 Indian locations** (Delhi, Gurugram, Noida, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Uttarakhand, Mumbai, and Pune)

190+
Teachers

200+
Volunteers

146+ students who sought individual counselling

83% of educators felt confident to identify and refer students to appropriate support

85% of students built a stronger understanding of healthy relationships

Students practising the 'butterfly hug' calming technique during workshop

Looking ahead in 2026



- Initiate engagement at the start of the academic year
- Expand programme delivery to include younger grades
- Create more accessible pathways for both in-person and online students
- Introduce digital tools to streamline service delivery
- Pursue partnerships with government schools

For more information on MHFS, write to sanjana.jain@sangath.in



MHFS videos



LEARN MORE



New Joiners in Sangath family

Welcome

NAMASTE



Rutvik Dattaram S
Junior Officer - CEI



Kumari Neha
Programme Officer
Digitisation & Documentation



Amiksha Ganesh B
Community Facilitator



Avinash Digambar H
Office Assistant

EMPOWER INFOSYS



Ritesh Kumar D
Research
Assistant/Supervisor



Deeksha Gurjar
District Coordinator



Anukriti Kunwar
Research Assistant



Prajan Narayan A
Jr. Administrative Officer



Sushim Kanchan
Research Assistant



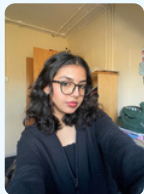
Shruti Chakraborty
Research Assistant

Youth LEARN

MANTHAN

METROPOLIS

COMPASS LFU



Aahana Singh
Asst. Research
Coordinator



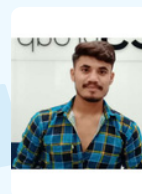
Shubhangi
Asst. Research
Coordinator



Chaitali Mishra
Asst. Research
Coordinator



Krati Dixit
Asst. Research
Coordinator



Neeraj Bisht
Sr. Officer
Administration



Rohit Bisht
Admin Officer



Sadiya Tabreek
Clinical
Coordinator

SMHPP

STEER



Varsha Ganesh J
School Health
Facilitator



Akshada Dattatray
School Health
Facilitator



Nikita Bapusaheb
School Health
Facilitator



Abhishek Kumar
Research Associate



Taniya Singh
Research Associate



Daniyal J
MEAL Coordinator



Humans of Sangath: The people behind the purpose

I ride my pink auto for a living and have always been active in my community, but this was the first time I was being invited to work on something like mental health. It was my curiosity that kept me going.

”

Anuja A Dicholkar
Cumbarjua, North Goa, Betki Cluster
IMPRESS Sangathi



I come from a small village, where most work happens within familiar circles and everyday routines. In the beginning, everything felt new. We started with small steps - visiting people, distributing pamphlets, and speaking to women and men in the village. One moment that really stayed with me was when we were asked to perform a script (skit). At first, it felt impossible. We practiced online, often late into the night after finishing our daily responsibilities. There were doubts - how would this work? Would we be able to perform in front of people?

But with practice, our confidence slowly grew. I decided to take the first step in my own village. I gathered people and organized our first performance there. It wasn't perfect, but it was real. With guidance and more practice, we performed again in another village. This time, the response was overwhelming. People clapped, listened, and understood. That's when I realized that through these small efforts, we were actually reaching people and spreading awareness. It encouraged me to keep going.

My connection to mental health work is deeply personal. I lost a relative to suicide-an experience that changed how I see things. I often wonder if things could have been different if support or counselling had been available. That moment became a turning point for me. It made me believe that mental health awareness and support can truly save lives. I began to see my work not just as volunteering, but as something that can make a real difference. For me, mental health is about the mind - understanding it, supporting it, and "polishing" it so people can cope better with life's challenges. I believe that if communities become more aware and supportive, many tragedies can be prevented.

I also strongly believe in the role of community volunteers. Real change happens at the grassroots level. While organizations and leaders can guide and design programs, it is volunteers like us who carry that work into homes and everyday lives. When volunteers are motivated, they can bring others along, expand the work, and keep it alive in the community. I feel this work would not have been possible without partnerships-between volunteers, organizations, and even the government. When everyone works together, the impact becomes much bigger.

Today, I see myself as part of that collective effort-someone who started with curiosity, stayed with purpose, and now believes deeply in the power of community to create change.



Humans of Sangath: The people behind the purpose



For me, this is not just work. It is a chance to stand beside someone in their hardest moments and remind them that life is still worth choosing. It is about the feeling that in some small way, I've helped someone.

”

Prema D Shetverekar
Savoi Verem, North Goa, Betki Cluster
IMPRESS Sangathi

I have always felt a strong connection to my community. Working with people has never been just a duty for me - it's something I truly care about. As an Anganwadi Worker, I spend my days listening and guiding people which gives me a quiet sense of happiness. For me, this work has never been about money.

So when Lalan Madkaikar from Sangath asked if I would like to work with the IMPRESS programme, my answer came without a second thought, "Yes, I'm ready!" It didn't feel like a new path, but a continuity of what I already believed in. As I began this work I completed my online training and joined with excitement and hope. I found even more meaning in it from speaking with people, understanding their struggles to supporting them through tough moments. The appreciation I receive stays with me.

One patient once told me, "What you've done for me is so nice. I'm okay now." Those words reassured me that my efforts truly matter. I remember working with other Sangathis from my cluster to prepare a skit. Even though we practiced online, we performed it in our villages. The appreciation we received, especially from the Sarpanch of Savoi Verem village, filled me with confidence. It showed me how powerful awareness can be when it reaches people in simple, relatable ways.

But my motivation also comes from a place of loss. Before joining the programme, I lost a friend to suicide. That memory has stayed with me. I often wonder if things could have been different if support had been available at the right time. That thought drives me every day, to be there for others in ways my friend never had.

Through it all, my family has been my strength. My husband, son, and daughter-in-law support and encourage me, helping me manage both home and work. Their belief in me keeps me going. I can clearly see how many people in my village are struggling with mental health challenges. I believe that programmes like this are not just important - they are necessary. Community volunteers, like me, can make a real difference because we understand people's lives in our villages and can reach them easily when need help the most.

And so, I continue - determined and hopeful.



Humans of Sangath: The people behind the purpose



My journey with autism did not begin as a professional, but as a caregiver—with questions, fears, and an overwhelming need to understand my child's world.

”

Somil Rastogi
Senior Programme Coordinator
NAMASTE

My journey with autism did not begin as a professional, but as a caregiver—with questions, fears, and an overwhelming need to understand my child's world. What started as uncertainty slowly turned into acceptance, strength, and a deep belief that every child is unique in their own beautiful way.

Through this journey, I learned that children with autism do not need sympathy—they need patience, understanding, and the right support to thrive. It changed me not just as a parent, but as a person.

Today, as a core member of the NAMASTE programme at Sangath, my personal experience finds purpose. I work towards ensuring that children with neurodevelopmental differences are identified early and supported within their own communities. Seeing Anganwadi Workers, parents, and families come together to support these children is deeply meaningful.

For me, this is more than work—it is a commitment. A commitment to a world where every child is respected, supported, and given an equal chance to grow.



Sangath Culture Corner

The “Juggle Life” of Workplace Newbies: Learning to Manage It All!

by- Sneha Naget
Junior Officer, Office of Project Management

Development sector work has its moments. Not always chaotic, not always calm—but somewhere in between. We may not wear suits, but between deadlines, LOIs, grant reports, calls, and last-minute emails, some days do feel a bit... packed. And then there are days where everything just... ‘overlaps.’

When I started, I thought I’d just follow a to-do list and get things done one by one. Simple. But reality hit different.

You sit down to work on one task, and at the same time there’s an email to reply to, a tracker to update, and something else that suddenly becomes “important.” Not urgent exactly... but also not to put under the rug.

That’s when it starts feeling like juggling—not chaos, just... sab ek saath kyun hai?



When **EVERYTHING** decides to happen at once.

Picture this:

you’re working on a report, your coffee is getting cold, Teams pings, and someone sends a “quick MOU update pls check.” And you’re like—yeh pehle karu ya woh?

Sangath Culture Corner

Some very real work moments:

- You switch between things thinking “bas yeh karke aati hoon...” and then forget what you were doing first
- Multiple tasks come up together, and all of them feel equally important
- Deadlines move faster than you can say “extension request”



- That report you finished? Oops - someone spotted a missing column. Time to backtrack
- Sending a perfectly drafted email... and then realizing attachment hi nahi dala → “Please find attached” (now actually attached)

And then comes the review phase.

You send your work thinking “okay this is done... and get: “Looks good, just a few small changes.” Those “small changes”?

Version 2. Version 3. Version 4.

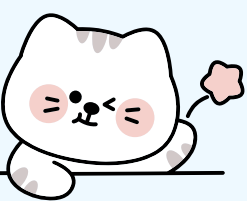
At this point, even the document is like—mujhe kya banna hai finally? But okay, you fix it. Again. . .

Somewhere between all this, lunch breaks and chai in the pantry become small resets. You sit, talk, vent a little, laugh—and suddenly things feel manageable again.

NGO work isn't constant chaos.

You don't really “do it all”—you learn to prioritize, adapt, and move forward one task at a time.

Over time, you get better at handling the overlap, managing the pressure, and letting go of the idea that everything has to be perfect on the first try.



Sangath Culture Corner

A heartfelt Poem by Somil Rastogi, father of 11 yrs. old Sarvagya and Senior Programme Coordinator, NAMASTE

Through My Eyes

By Somil Rastogi, In his role as a parent



The world to me is loud and bright,
A storm of colour, sound, and light.
I cover my ears, I turn away,
Too many words, I cannot say.

I flap, I spin, I love my space,
Unseen rhythms I embrace.
I want to speak, laugh and play,
But my mind sways a different way.



A spring of thoughts, won't stay still,
They twist and turn beyond my will.
I try to rest, to find some peace,
But storm inside may never ease.

I always wonder what others feel,
Beneath their smiles, what's truly real.
My own emotions I struggle to reveal,
Others just mock, unaware how I feel.



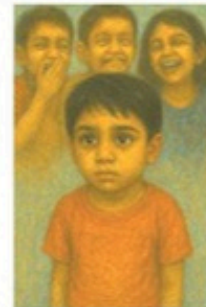
I may look lost but I see and feel,
My love is real, having great zeal.
This rushing world is hard to bear,
I just need your love and care.

I turned messy when anger is strong,
Can't be consoled and all feels wrong.
Parent's eyes then get filled with despair,
Yet deep in their hearts, they still care.

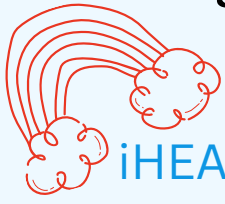


Then comes NAMASTE, gentle and wise,
It saw the world through my eyes.
Shows the parents, how to understand,
Gives them strength with guiding hand.

Thank you NAMASTE, shining so bright,
With gentle strength and steady light.
You helped me grow, helped me see,
A promising path ahead of me...!



Sangath Culture Corner



iHEAR Team Retreat, Goa



METROPOLIS Team Offsite Visit, Goa



Sangath Headquarters Quarterly Picnic, Nuvem, Goa



Sangath Culture Corner

NAMASTE @ World Autism Awareness Day



Stories from the Ground: Sangath Comms, Savoi Verem, Goa





Autism &
Humanity

Every Life has
Value



Healing Minds, Inspiring Lives

Sangath QR Newsletter is prepared by Sangath Communications.

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