



ISSUE #2
May-June 2025

Sangath Samwaad

SANGATH QR NEWSLETTER

**Every
Voice
Matters!**

Image Source: **queerbeat**

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Pride Month 2025

Celebrating PRIDE 2025: Voices Amplified, Stories Shared at iHEAR, Sangath



As we conclude the PRIDE Month 2025, iHEAR at Sangath, stands in solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community—honoring resilience, celebrating identity, and amplifying voices that have too often been silenced.

This year's theme, "Pride in Every Voice", reflects our commitment to creating inclusive spaces where young people can speak, be heard, and lead change.

iHEAR, a youth-driven initiative under Sangath, works at the intersection of mental health, equity, and expression. Through digital storytelling, community engagement, and youth advocacy, iHEAR has built a platform where LGBTQIA+ youth not only find support but also shape the narratives around their mental health and lived realities.

In 2025, iHEAR continues to center queer voices through its creative campaigns, peer networks, and safe digital spaces. We celebrate the courage it takes to share a personal story, the power of community, and the importance of being seen and heard. PRIDE at iHEAR is not just a month—it's a movement that fuels our mission year-round.

With this Pride Month edition of Sangath Samwaad, we invite you to engage with stories, resources, and actions that uplift queer mental health. Whether you're a young changemaker, an ally, or someone seeking community—you belong in this conversation.

**LET'S KEEP LISTENING. LET'S KEEP LEARNING. LET'S KEEP AMPLIFYING.
BECAUSE EVERY VOICE MATTERS. AND EVERY STORY ADDS TO THE
TAPESTRY OF PRIDE.**

What's up Sangath?

New Initiative in Sangath

Youth Advisory Network (YAN)

Sangath in collaboration with Centre for Mental Health Law & Policy (CMHLP), ILS Pune launched a Youth Advisory Network (YAN), inviting young people aged 18-25 across India, representing diverse languages, cultures, identities & lived experience to contribute to the ongoing youth mental health work.



The YAN is a dynamic community of young changemakers, drawing inspiration from initiatives like Outlive, Being Initiative India, ENGAGE, PRIDE, MADAD, and MeWE Sports. More than just participants, YAN members are co-creators—actively involved in designing, analyzing, and disseminating mental health projects. What sets YAN apart is its commitment to inclusive and ethical engagement. Members benefit from learning opportunities on grant writing, research design, communications etc. Looking ahead YAN plans to:

- ➡ Launch its own webpage/feature member-authored blogs/ expand outreach through regional partnerships.
- ➡ Upcoming activities: Reading circles/ feedback groups/ and youth-led events, fostering spaces for expression, learning, and leadership.

New Project in Sangath

COMPASS Longitudinal Follow Up - This project builds on the strong foundation of the original COMPASS trial, which began in 2018 and concluded in December 2024. It will run from 1 July 2025 to 31 December 2026, and aims to generate valuable follow-up evidence on a cohort of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Location: Delhi

Funder: Medical Research Council

Supported by : University of Manchester

Sangath Speaks!

Parenting and Culture: Cross-Cultural and International Migration Perspective, Chieti, Italy, May 2025

Dr. Smitha Todkar presented her scoping review findings on paternal engagement titled, 'Examining characteristics of father child relationship in early and middle childhood among diverse settings: A qualitative scoping review.'

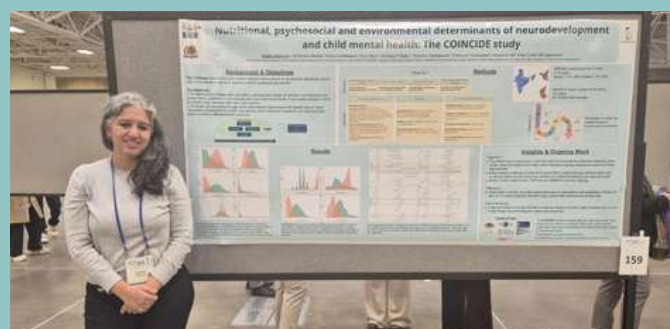


AAFINet's 6th Annual Conference, Quebec, Canada, May 2025

Prof. Richard Velleman represented Sangath as a moderator and panelist on 'Quality Indicators regarding AFMs in Public and Private Health Services in their Relatives' SUD Treatment: A Multicultural Panel.'

Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Meet, Minnesota, US, May 2025

Dr. Supriya Bhavnani presented a poster on COINCIDE findings.



ARUMDA, TIFR Hyderabad, May 2025

Dr. Smitha Todkar represented SPRING birth cohort at ARUMDA cohort consortium meeting alongside COINCIDE team members.

Sangath Speaks!

International Society for Autism Related Research (INSAR) Annual Meeting, Seattle, USA, May 2025

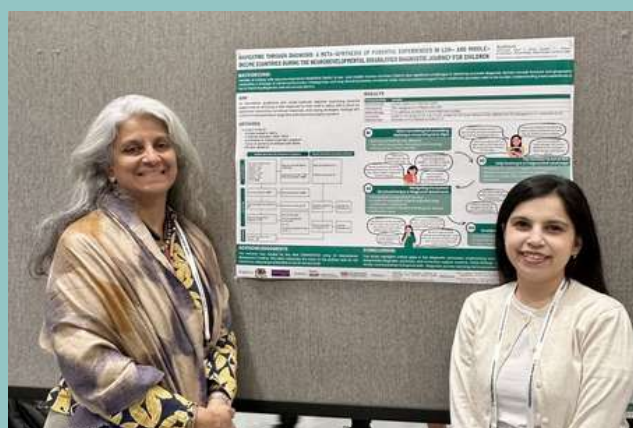
Bhavya Malhotra presented posters on-

1. 'Early Evaluation of a Community Engagement Toolkit's Effectiveness in Facilitating Engagement with a Community Based Detection-Care Pathway in India'
2. 'Community Engagement With Individuals With Lived Experience of Autism and Intellectual Disability to Promote Awareness and Service Utilisation for Early Identification and Intervention: A Systematic Scoping Review'



Dr.Gauri Divan presented on 'Building Capacity to Implement and Evaluate Early Intervention for Young Autistic Children in underserved Communities Globally.'

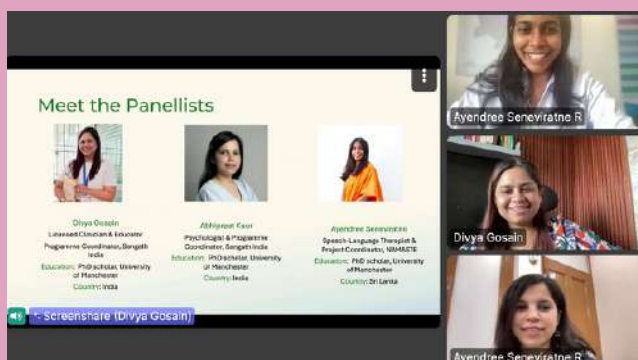
Abhipreet Kaur presented a poster on 'Navigating through Diagnosis: A Meta-Synthesis of Parental Experiences in Low and Middle-Income Countries during the Neurodevelopmental Disabilities Diagnostic Journey for Children'.



Sangath Speaks!

International Congress on Evidence-based Parenting Support (I-CEPS), June 2025

Divya Gosain virtually presented a paper titled, 'Strengthening Caregivers' Wellbeing for Children with Neurodevelopmental Disorders in LMICs: A Systemic Review.'



NAMASTE team members, Divya Gosain and Abhipreet Kaur, participated in a virtual round table discussion on 'Promoting wellbeing of caregiver of children with neurodevelopmental disorders within LMIC's.'

SAHARA's Harshita Yadav and Mrinmoy Gosh presented a paper titled "Overcoming Indebtedness: Parental Migration and Grandparents as Primary Caregivers for Children among the Bhil Indigenous Community.' The study explores socio-economic, community, and cultural factors shaping childcare aged 0-3 years.



Sangath Speaks!

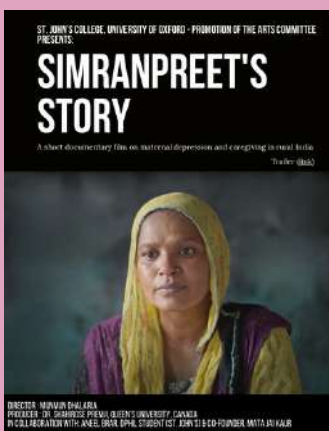
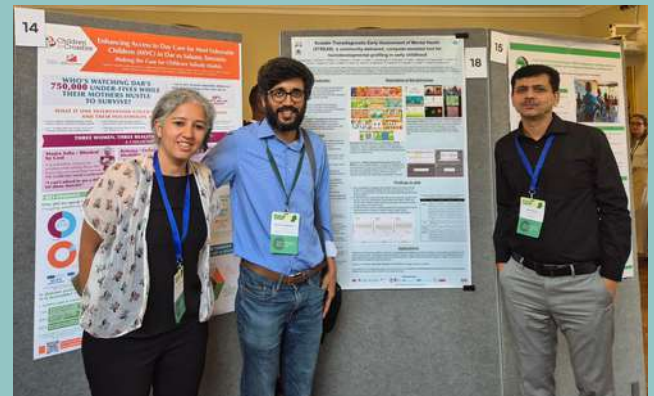


IGACD Annual Scientific Meet 2025, June, Rwanda

Miriam Sequeria presented IMPRESS community intervention toolkit and e-course during the knowledge sharing competition. The presentation showcased practical, community-driven approaches for mental health intervention.

Thrive conference, London

Alok presented the DEEP tool, while Supriya Bhavnani showcased a poster on the STREAM study.



Starving for Love-Decolonizing Maternal Depression in Rural India through Visual Art, St. John's College, Oxford

Sangath's Photo Voice Study and Khushee Mamta project's counsellors were featured in a photo exhibit. The event also screened a documentary film titled, "Simranpreet's Story"- capturing lived

experiences of pregnancy, maternal depression and caregiving in rural India. The event was concluded with a panel discussion, featuring Dr. Abhijit Nadkarni & Soumya Singh.

Trainings / Workshops

Manas Mentors- Stress Management program for Goa Police personnel

Sangath conducted in-person workshops for Goa Police personnel, equipping them with practical tools and technique to manage stress. With over 500+ participants from all across Goa, Manas Mentors addresses the growing occupational stress faced by law enforcement.



Training of Gatekeepers for Suicide Prevention, for SAHARA project team:

Suicide prevention trainings were organized for SAHARA team from 8 districts in MP. These one day trainings were facilitated by PRESENCE team.

PRESENCE's Gatekeeper training for Suicide Prevention:

Over 160 individuals (including teachers, youth volunteers, and other responsible individuals) were trained at Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan- to identify and prevent mental health challenges like stress and suicidal ideation, to offer timely intervention and connect individuals at-risk to mental health professionals.



PRESENCE's My Peer - Student leaders

The RISE program under PRESENCE trained 90 student leaders, who will be involved in delivering the school based-intervention, expanding the reach within their age group and thereby actively engaging them in related activities.

IMPRESS conducts a refresher training for 38 PHC counsellors:

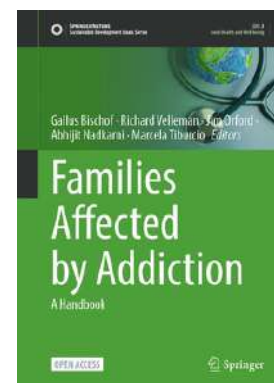
The one-day in-person training aimed to strengthen the counsellors' skill in promoting inclusive, stigma-free care and ensuring adherence to safety protocols.

New Publications / Disseminations

Explanatory models and coping with alcohol misuse among conflict-affected men in Ukraine : Abhijit Nadkarni's participation and contribution to SSM-Mental Health journal explores the escalating risk of harmful drinking among men, in low- and middle-income countries, which lacks comprehensive exploratory models for understanding and addressing harmful drinking.

Help-Seeking for Illicit Drug Use in Adolescents: A Qualitative Study From India This Sage Journal study aims to develop an explanatory model to identify barriers and facilitators for help-seeking, resources, and treatment strategies among adolescents struggling with it.

Families Affected by Addiction: A Handbook : This book features substantial contributions from Sangath's Addictions and Related-Research Group (ARG), bringing together global expertise, with ARG members authoring and co-authoring several key chapters.



Building trust and equity in vaccine communication through community engagement : Sangath's iHEAR in collaboration with Sabin Vaccine Institute, Boost Community, and People Power Health explores how community-based research, capacity building and hyper local strategies contribute in building trust and equity in implementing public health initiatives.

Ethics in research participants' payments: navigating institutes finance and administrative mandate : In Sangath's commentary on ethics, Harikeerthan Raghuram and Anant Bhan highlighted the often-overlooked ethics challenge in research with serious concern about privacy breaches, confidentiality violations, and breaking commitments outlined in consent forms.

Co-designing a community engagement toolkit to raise awareness of screening and care for neurodevelopment delays and disabilities in India : This paper highlights work conducted in 2022-23 as part of the NIHR-funded NAMASTE programme. Through a participatory research with caregivers, health workers and autistic individuals, a multi-media based toolkit was developed to support caregiver engagement for neurodevelopmental delays and disabilities across India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

New Publications / Disseminations

Analyzing Trends in Suicidal Thoughts Among Patients With Psychosis in India: Exploratory Secondary Analysis of Smartphone Ecological Momentary Assessment Data : Marking the 8th paper from SHARP consortium, the study led by Sangath Bhopal, examines patterns of suicidal ideation among individuals living with schizophrenia in real-world outpatient settings in Bhopal and Bengaluru, India.

The art of medicine: A death foretold : Dr Vikram Patel's take on recent US termination in healthcare funding reflects both his personal and professional journey in Global Health research, alongside the growing research community, who are tirelessly working towards health equity in low-resource settings.

If you build, they will come: India has programmes to attract scientists affected by fund crunch in US. It needs to expand them : Dr. Vikram Patel's opinion piece on US fund crunch highlights the expandable growth of India's research ecosystem to expand and attract global talent, reciprocating a global challenge into national opportunity.

iHEAR Access Matters dissemination event in Goa & Bhopal :

Two dissemination events were held in Goa & Bhopal, by iHEAR Access Matter team. The Goa event held in collaboration with Goa State Commission for Persons with Disabilities and DesignBridge Foundation, where hospital administrators, disability rights advocates, and individuals with lived experiences address the need for accessible healthcare system in Goa.



Towards Inclusive Care: A Dissemination Webinar:

The webinar brought students, faculty, and queer community members together across Kerala, who contributed to the AffirmCare workshops.

The main highlight was the launch of the '**Kerala LGBTQIA+ Medical Education Guide**' - a community-informed resource', developed in collaboration with queer community members, medical educators and other collaborators.

Public Engagement/ Campaigns

Launched as a web-based storytelling platform in 2017, Sangath's It's Ok To Talk (IOTT) ran two mental health storytelling campaigns in this quarter April-June, providing a supportive digital space for youth—especially those from marginalized backgrounds—to proactively address mental health challenges.



Zubaan-e-Dil: Collaborative campaign with Youth for Mental Health Foundation

Spread in 7 campuses across Delhi University, Jamia Milia Islamia & through social media dissemination, the campaign received 32 expressions of interest and have collected 27 ground-breaking stories around youth mental health. Themes including academic stress, relocation, family difficulties, financial stress, career uncertainties, health and loneliness have an impact on mental health among young people.

[Check the stories: https://itsoktotalk.in/](https://itsoktotalk.in/)

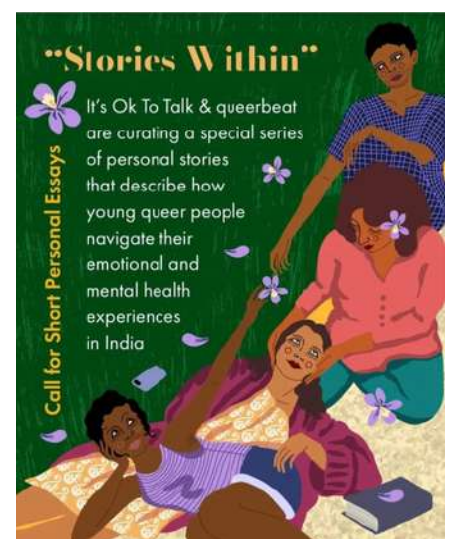
[Check the stories: https://itsoktotalk.in/](https://itsoktotalk.in/)

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Stories Within: Short personal essays in collaboration with Queerbeat

An online (social media) campaign with queerbeat media, a journalism agency focused on covering issues related to the LGBTQIA+ community in India through their own voices. This campaign received 20 expressions of interest and have collected 7 stories for cross-posting on both platforms and an additional 4 stories exclusively for the IOTT website. These stories focus on themes of gender dysphoria, coming out, abuse, and intersectionality between gender, sexuality and caste in the LGBTQIA+ community and their impact on mental health. The campaign is collaborating with a queer non-binary artist with lived experience (previously contributed their story to IOTT as well) to create artwork to accompany each story on the websites.



Projects in Focus

PRESENCE: Protection, pRomotion, and prEvention of mental health amongSt youth through Early iNtervention and Capacity Enhancement

The PRESENCE project adopts a holistic, multi-pronged approach to strengthen adolescent mental health through **Prevention, Protection, and Promotion**. By engaging schools, colleges, and community platforms, the initiative creates safe, inclusive, and supportive environments, where young people can thrive.

PRESENCE was launched in November 2024 in Rajasthan (Rj) & Madhya Pradesh (MP)



RISE Session- Jaipur

Jan- May 2025 Impact

19

Rj



51

MP

No. of Schools outreached

2450

Rj



2780

MP

No. of
Adoloscents impacted



PRESENCE Mental Health Marathon & Festival 2025



Looking
ahead in 2025



- Expand the outreach to 60 new schools, taking a total of 100 schools in each state (Private and Government)
- Induct 450 Peer Facilitators
- Outreach 20,000 adolescent in each state

For more information on PRESENCE, reach out to Ravindra.agrawal@sangath.in

iHEAR: initiative for Health Equity Advocacy & Research

iHEAR was built in response to the inequities faced by activists from the trans and disability communities, specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through iHEAR, Sangath collaborates with diverse partner organisations and community members with lived experiences using participatory approaches.

For more information on iHEAR, reach out to harikeerthan.raghuram@sangath.in

New projects we started in 2024



Explored experiences of Mental Health Professionals & Civil Society in providing psychosocial support for trans & gender diverse people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Funded by the Gender and Public Health Emergencies working group.



An action-research project assessing disability accessibility of public hospitals in Goa & Madhya Pradesh. It will also advocate for and train people in making health facilities more accessible. Funded by the Azim Premji University.



Centers mental health support, craft preservation & income generation through workshops held in collaboration with Mahei Centre, a women, queer & trans* led free skill-building collective based in Manipur. Funded by the Australian Consulate General in Kolkata.



Promotes LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in medical education in Kerala with 4 workshops for medical educators and students and a community consultation. It is supported by the Australian Consulate General, Chennai.



Explores how identities shape experiences of transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse individuals in India facing technology-facilitated gender-based violence, aiming to inform interventions. Funded by Association for Progressive Communication.



A Sangath-BMGF initiative to integrate considerations of ethics, equity, and community engagement in health research and programmes via workshops, consultations, and other resources.

New Joiners in Sangath family

Welcome

EMPOWER HCL



Divyanshi Srivastava
Project Secretary



Chhaya Pandey
THPP/ECD Supervisor



Rizwana Khan
THPP/ECD Supervisor



Rita Chauhan
Senior Psychologist



Kamlesh Khatak
Office Assistant



Piyush Raghuvanshi
Psychologist

EMPOWER Infosys

MENTOR



Purva Madnani
Research Coordinator



Sanchita Jain
Project Coordinator



Amand Rishi Anand
Community Coach



Vedanti S Naik
Youth Champion



Santoshi Hemant N
Community Coach



Pavina Laxman S
Youth Champion



Kezia Rego
Asst. Manager HR

MeWe Sports

HR

CCAP



Sejal Shet Desai
Counsellor



Priti Gajanan More
School Health Facilitator



Pallavi Prabhakar Hande
School Health Facilitator



Madhuri Rameshrao Kokande
School Health Facilitator



Shubhangi Vinodrao Yesankar
School Health Facilitator

SMHPP

IMPRESS



Deepika Kashinath M
Health Asst.



Shraddha Pravin D
Health Asst.

PRESENCE



Deeksha Gujar
Project Coordinator

NAMASTE



Yogesh Kumar
Research Associate -
Detection & Monitoring

METROPOLIS



Anikesh Johari
Public Engagement
Coordinator



Mahadevaro Janardanji B
Senior Research
Coordinator

Voices from the ground



Community voices from iHEAR, Bhopal



Simranpreet's Story : Pregnancy & mental health series

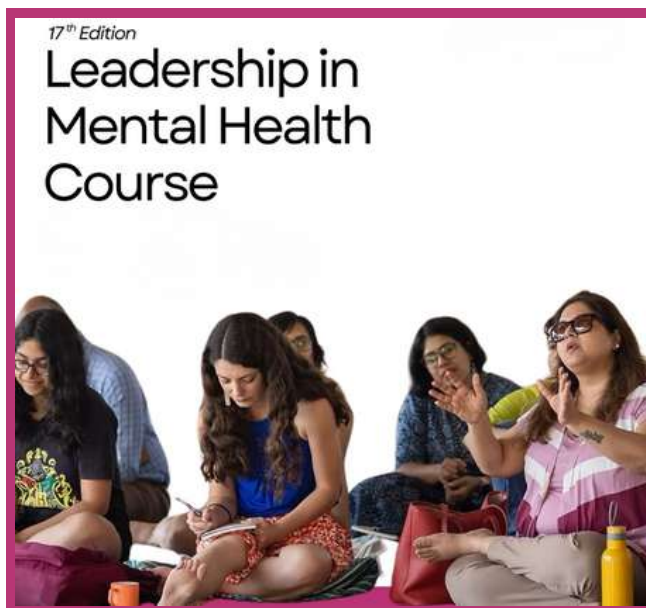
Director by: Munmun Dhalaria
Producer: Prof. Shahirose Premji
Funding support: Queen's University's Vice-Principal Research (VPR) Visiting Artist-in-Residence Fund



Checkout the blog by Dr. Keshini Saggarr, one of the alumni of LMH course 2024-25 cohort, as she shares her fervent learnings from the course.



What Stayed With Me: 5 Lessons from the Leadership in Mental Health Course, 5 Months Later



Leadership in Mental Health (LMH)

2025-26 Cohort Applications are Open!

The 17th edition of Sangath's flagship program is kickstarted with live applications. The LMH is designed to empower mental health leaders across low-resource settings

LMH Course 2025-26 dates are here!



What's NEW in this edition-

Scholarships Available

For the first time ever, we're offering scholarships for deserving applicants. Take this chance to access this transformative experience regardless of financial constraints.

Brand New Organizing Committee

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the previous LMH organizing committee—Dr. Vikram Patel, Dr. Urvita Bhatia, Dr. Abhijit Nadkarni, Yashi Gandhi, and Shreyas Kamat—for their inspiring leadership and unwavering commitment in shaping the journey so far.

With great excitement, we now welcome the new LMH organizing committee—
Co-Directors- Dr. Ravindra Agrawal & Dr. Reetabrata Roy
Co-ordinators- Sweta Pal, Snigdha, Kimberley Monteiro, Dr. Rohit Shah, and Adarsh Ratnakar

This dynamic cohort brings fresh energy, ideas, and vision to carry forward and strengthen the mission of the LMH program. We wish them the very best as they lead the next chapter!

🔗 Visit the official [LMH website](#) to apply, view fee details, and explore scholarship guidelines.

Early-Bird Registration – Save on Fees

Apply before July 31, 2025 to receive exclusive early-bird pricing.

Sangath Culture Corner

What does it mean to be seen?

By- Muskan Pradhan, Project Assistant, iHEAR

For me, it meant moving through spaces without the weight of explanation. It meant not having to justify my identity, my neurodivergence, my pace. It meant encountering care not as a performance, but as a structure.

Quiet. Consistent. Present.

iHEAR is a space that makes room for softness, slowness, contradiction. And in that space, I found something I hadn't expected to find in an institution: the possibility of kinship. I met people who would become anchors.



One of them, Rajan, would become my queer sibling. I found the first member of my queer family!! Maybe it's evidence that in a world where systems often fragment queer people from their roots, a workplace like this can become the soil where a new family takes root.

When people are brought together through shared values, identities, and care, they don't just collaborate, they form support systems that often last far beyond the boundaries of a job. I didn't just find colleagues at iHEAR. I found people who've held me through overwhelm, reminded me to eat, fed me when I was sick and called me family before I knew I needed one. There is also something political about working with a team that understands that

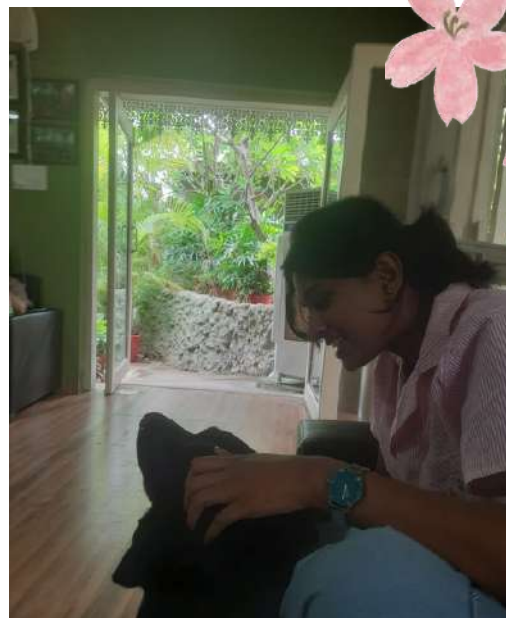
There is also something political about working with a team that understands that access needs are not exceptional, they are everyday. That disabilities are not a problem to be managed but a reality to be moved with. That queerness is not only a demographic to be represented but a way of existing next to each other.



My supervisor, Aiswarya, supported me in ways that challenged how power usually moves in workplaces. They didn't treat access as an exception or care as extra labour. Instead, they built conditions where I could work without masking, move at a pace that suited me, and be trusted without needing to prove myself first. I was encouraged to follow what sparked my interest, bring in creativity, and rest when I needed to. That kind of support, especially early in a career, reminds you that care can be a structure, not just a sentiment. They consistently showed me what it means to lead without control and to build work cultures that make room for all of our identities.

What I found at iHEAR wasn't perfection, but permission. Permission to exist without shrinking. To show up with my experiences and narratives, as they are. To not have to educate in order to be understood. These things should be the baseline. And yet, they remain rare.

I continue to work with iHEAR not out of obligation, but because in a world that often asks too much of us, this is a space that offers enough.



I continue to work with iHEAR not out of obligation, but because in a world that often asks too much of us, this is a space that offers enough.

Enough isn't just being kind.

It's structure, it's accountability, it's care built into the way we work.

It's not just the absence of harm, but the presence of support.

And in a world where most systems ask us to shrink, enough can be the radical act of being allowed to take up space.



Sangath Culture Corner

Helping, the Right Way

By Robinson Isaac, Director – HR

Lately, my watchlist has been full of crime thrillers, action, plots with unexpected twists, I felt like giving my brain a break.

For a change of pace, I turned to an animated movie, after a long gap, I chose Despicable Me 4, just for some light-hearted fun. And while the minions delivered their usual chaos and laughter, one scene had me laughing... and then thinking.

The Scene That Sparked a Thought

In the movie, four minions are turned into superheroes, each with their own quirky powers. One of them gains the ability to fly like a Superman. So, there he is, zooming across the sky looking for people to rescue.

Cut to a high-rise building where a worker is cleaning windows on a suspended platform. Suddenly, the platform snaps. He's now clinging for his life, panicking, mid-air. He shouts for HELP!

Our super minion hears the cry, swoops in dramatically, and approaches the man.

"Can you help me?" the man pleads.

"YES!" says the minion in his usual chirpy style, then grabs the window wiper from the man and starts cleaning the glass... while the poor guy is still hanging.

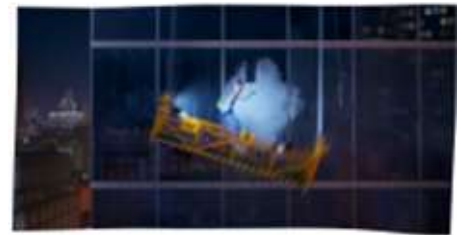
I laughed at this scene, but then paused. Because honestly, I couldn't help but think...

How often do we do the same thing in real life?

When our good intentions miss the mark.

The minion thought he was helping.

Yet somehow, the crisis was left unresolved.



We've all had moments like that-

- A colleague asks for support, and we start doing what we think is helpful without checking what they really need.
- A new employee is struggling to fit in, so we send them links to organization policies, when they just needed someone to sit with at lunch, give a walk-through and a little reassurance.
- Someone on the street approaches us asking for money, and we quickly hand over a packet of food, not realizing they might actually be trying to buy medicine or provide for someone else. We responded with what we had, not necessarily what they needed.



Watch the scene here

Helping Starts with Listening

The first step to being helpful isn't action, it's Attention.

- Ask before acting: What kind of support would be most helpful for you right now
- Listen actively: Not just to the words, but the tone and body language behind them.
- Stay present: Sometimes just sitting with someone in silence is more powerful than offering a plan.

And just as importantly...

Be Clear When You Ask for Help

That worker on the skyscraper shouted, "Help me!" and assumed the minion might understand his problem.

We all do this. We assume others will figure out what we need. Clarity helps people help us better.

So, the takeaway is to understand that...

We all want to be helpful. And we all need help sometimes.

Help isn't about swooping to act. It's about understanding before acting.

It's about being clear when asking, and intentional when offering.

Sangath Culture Corner

Team Moments



COINCIDE SPRING cohort celebrated completion of 700 assessments at Rewari Office



Sangath Goa Central team participated at - Workshop on Creative Thinking & Problem Solving



First Quarterly Staff Meeting of the year - Sangath Goa



ARG Research Coordinator, Devika Gupta, completed her PhD



PRESENCE's Nawalgarh, Rajasthan team receiving appreciation from Col 3 Raj Ban NCC, Sikar

HAVE FUN

Joyful Moments



Sangath

Healing Minds. Inspiring Lives

Sangath QR Newsletter is prepared by Sangath Central Communications
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