ASHA ANNUAL REPORT – 2023-24

ASHA SOUTH INDIA TRUST

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Contents

About

Asha was founded in the summer of 1991 at the University of California, Berkeley by a group of students interested in helping their country. Asha Chennai took root in 2002 as a separate chapter and has grown since then to include more than 15 highly committed volunteers. We are actively executing about 10 projects which together support more than 170 schools, run 10 libraries, 7 RTCs and provide scholarships for over 100 students. Asha Chennai is registered as a separate charitable trust, Asha South India Trust to ease the operations.

2023-24 has been an exciting year at Asha. In addition to our Primary and Middle School Support, Explore and RTC programs, we launched Asha Computer Education (ACE) which is our biggest Government collaboration so far. Asha signed the MoU with Government of Tamilnadu to train 50 government teachers to teach a 1-year Computer science curriculum to government schools this year. The program got off to a great start has only gained momentum over the months with government teachers participating with enthusiasm. The success of this has been greatly appreciated by Government authorities and we plan to expand on this program this year which has already benefitted 2000 children directly! We plan to conduct Asha Impressions for our ACE schools this year and look forward to the quality of work children will put forward.

Asha conducts oral and written assessments every year. This year however, we also conducted Computer assessments at 40 schools. With the availability of enough computers, we hope to expand this assessment to all the schools supported by Asha in the coming years.

Asha opened a new RTC in Periyapalaym in March, 2023. We have over 60 children learning computer courses for free here. Other RTCs have also been functioning at full capacity and we issued completion certificates to more than 500 students this year during the two terms.

As a part of Asha's joyful learning endeavor, 1600 students were taken on excursions to Birla Planetauim, Anna Library, Marina Beach in Chennai, Keeladi museum, Gandhi Museum Palace and Kalaignar Nootrandu Library in Madurai. We funded the Annual day celebrations at 57 schools, took over 100 Asha teachers on excursions and wrapped the year with Asha Impressions at World Trade Center, Amazon, Chennai.

Since elections and exams took up lot of time at government schools, our teachers were involved with paper corrections and computer science training towards the school year end. Rightstart, Asha's 5 day annual teach training event was held at IIT, Madras and was attended by 160 teachers from all our projects. With this fresh start, we are all set to embark on another year of our journey of improving the lives of children in rural India through better education and learning opportunities.

Asha Chennai in Numbers

| Primary and Middle School Program	Basic Exposure to Computer Science	Rural Technology Centre	ACE	Libraries	Arogyam (Nutrition Support)
Supporting 170 schools in TN and 15 in UP	300 schools	7 centres supporting 11 schools in TN	Supporting 52 schools in Thiruvallur	10 in TN	9 hamlets in TN
More than 160 teachers and staff	16 teachers	11 teachers	52 govt teachers trained	10 teachers	9 support staff
Reaching 12000 students in TN and 3000 in UP	30000 students benefitted	600 students studying at the centers	1,800 students benefitted	Reaching 300 students	Helping 600 children

Our Coverage

Asha Chennai has its operations in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
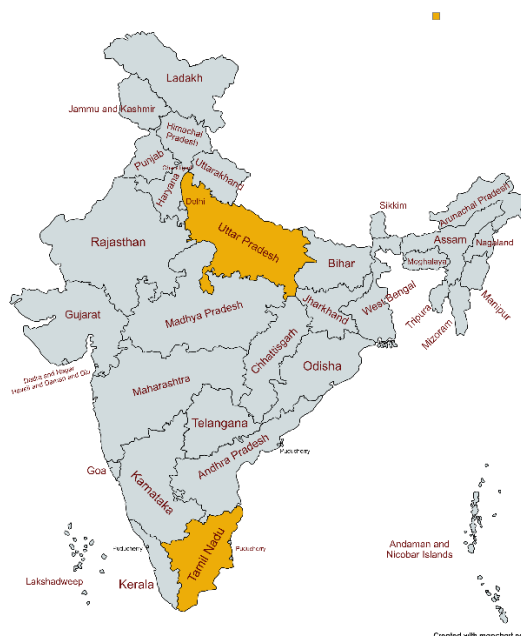
In TN, we have projects in Thiruvallur, Thiruvanamalai, Villupuram, Thiruvarur, Thoothukudi, Kanchipuram, Chengalpattu, Chennai, Thirunelveli and Thenkasi .
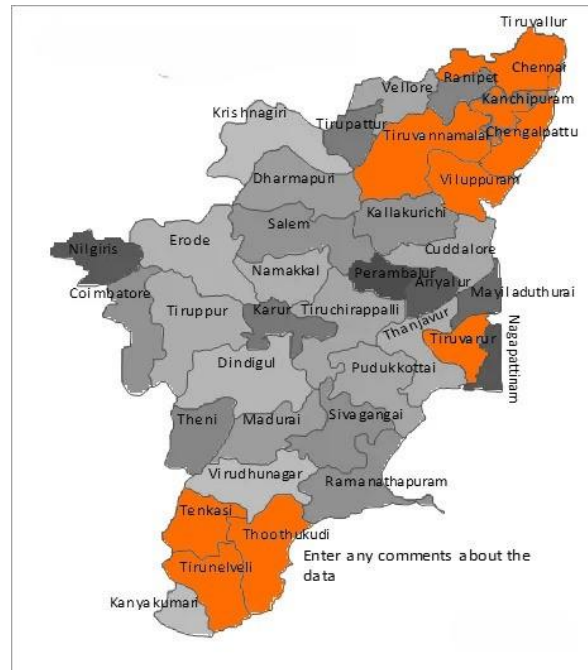
In Uttar Pradesh, we operate in Mirzapur and Rajatalab (Varanasi).

Asha Projects

At Asha, we see ourselves as catalysts for social change, working toward the goal of equitable education in rural India. Our programs are designed to ensure that quality education reaches all, regardless of caste, economic background, or other barriers. This vision has gained the support of citizens, school staff, and government officials alike. Our efforts focus on improving the quality of education in government schools, primarily across rural Tamil Nadu and now in Uttar Pradesh. While our programs are consistent across regions, we have structured our teams by geographic location for efficient operations. These projects are described below.

Project Name	Project History
[Project Sangamam-Thiruvallur](#)	We launched this project in 2004-05 in the Thiruvallur district and have since expanded to support around 90 primary and middle schools across the Poondi, Ellapuram, Kadambathur, and Thiruvalangadu blocks of Thiruvallur, as well as the Sriperumbudur block of Kanchipuram district. Dedicated computer teachers are currently working in all these schools, and we have also placed regular teachers in approximately 15 schools and implement the KaradiPath program in 30+ schools. We also run five Rural Technology Centres (RTC) in Thriuvallur in Kanakamma Chathiram (Thiruvalangadu Block), Seethanjeri (Poondi Block), Thomur (Poondi Block), Kannigaiper (Ellapuram Block), and Periyapalayam (Ellapuram Block). Explore and ACE programs were also launched here and 75 of the ACE schools are in this district.
[Project Sangamam Rajatalab & Mirzapur](#)	Asha has a long presence in the areas near Varanasi in UP. The Asha team in Rajatalab near Varanasi reached out to Asha Chennai to also replicate our government school support work in the schools there. We are currently supporting 12 school there and are also beginning to work with 4 schools in the Mirzapur area.
[Project Pearl](#)	Project Pearl supports about 25 primary and middle schools, two balwadi(s) (pre-primary educational centers) and four community libraries in the remote villages of Thoothukudi, Thirunelveli and Then Kasi districts. Two RTCs are running in Kalugumalai and Kayathar are run in Thoothukudi district. Explore program has also started here with 2 teachers. KaradiPath program is being implemented in 5 schools.
[Project Thulasi](#)	Project Thulasi started with a Tuition centre at Seeyapoondi a remote village in Villupuram district. It also started supporting government schools in Villupuram and Thiruvannamalai districts. It is currently supporting about 25 primary and middle schools. Four libraries are also being run as part of the project. Explore program has also started here with 2 teachers. Spoken English through KaradiPath curriculum is being taught in 6 schools.

Project Cauvery	Project Cauvery was started to replicate our computer science education and technology aided education in the schools around Mannargudi in Thiruvarur district. We are currently supporting about 12 schools with 4 teachers.
Poorna Vidhya	Through this project we work with four Chennai city Corporation schools and six schools in the Gooduvancheri area of Chengalpet Dist. While computer teachers go to all these schools, we have also appointed regular teachers at four of these schools.

Besides these government school projects that deal with specific Geographies, we also have the following projects that handle a specific program across Geographies.

Projects that aid the School Improvement	
Project RightStart	It is economical and effective when training is given to all the teachers from our different projects together at one place, and hence started this annual exercise of teacher training. It is grown in strength and participation over the years. These training sessions are provided by recognized experts in the different fields of education. We also have term-wise training for all projects. Further each project has teacher meetings where some training also happens in their local areas.
Project Asha Kanini	Technology and Education Initiative efforts to improve the processes happening in the classrooms at the government schools. As a part of this initiative we are developing and packaging contents to be used in classrooms, developing software to make the process easier, conduct assessments at schools, analyze the assessments to identify areas for improvements, developing a curriculum for teaching computer science for primary and middle schools, online English training for teachers etc.
Project Sugadharam	Many of the schools that Asha Chennai supports do not have adequate toilet facilities. If toilets are not there, children are sent home to nearby fields when they need to use toilet. This becomes an even bigger problem for middle schools. Problems and lack of facilities in the toilets also make it unhygienic for the children. Asha has worked with donors to repair/renovate toilets where we can or build a new one where that option does not exist.
Rural Technology Centres	Rural Technology centers are a joint initiative of IIT Madras and Asha to take good quality technology education to high and higher secondary school in remote rural areas. The RTC teachers provide basic education in the associated high or higher secondary school and more advanced courses are offered for free to interested students at our centers.
Project Arogyam	Even within the poorer rural areas that we serve, there are areas which are particularly bad in terms of their poverty and nutrition for the children. In such areas we augment the food provided by the schools through the free breakfast and midday-meals with nutritious food served typically in the evening.

Other projects	
Asha Scholarship	Asha Chennai identifies children from under-privileged background going to different schools and colleges, and matches them with donors to give scholarships that cover their tuition fees, books, uniforms, etc. About 80% are the students are from in and around Chennai, while the rest are from other parts of TamilNadu.
Project Manigal	Project Manigal aims to promote education as a tool to change the marginal status of the gypsies. We work with Narikoravas settled in two colonies in Chennai at Indiranagar and Kottur.

Asha Programs

1. Primary and Middle School Support

This is our oldest program which we have been implementing since 2004 and which currently serves 170 schools in Tamilnadu and 15+ schools in UP. When the program started in 2003-04 timeframe, the primary focus was to provide regular teachers to schools without adequate number of teachers. Around 2014 we started sending computer teachers to the schools to teach computer science as well as teach other subjects using innovative contents on the computers. The computer teacher program in 100 of these schools is supported by Amazon. We adopt the school and work improve the quality of education at the school.

Over the span of a year, Asha supports the schools in all of the following ways.

- Teach computer science at all the 180+ schools. We have developed an 8-year CS curriculum to teach at these primary and middle schools. Our teachers teach this curriculum.
- Appoint additional teachers to work alongside the government teachers in schools where there is low teacher-student ratio.
- Running the Karadipath program in collaboration with Karadi Tales to improve English language. This was implemented in 37 schools.
- Distribution of stationery materials like note books, chat papers, pens, pencils, geometry boxes etc.
- Distribution of uniforms to students when possible.
- Support the school in Celebrating annual days by providing snacks and prizes.
- Taking students on excursion.
- Conducting competition like Asha Impressions to provide exposure to children.
- Conduct assessments to measure the progress of the schools in Math, English and language as well as in Computer Science.

Computer Education and Asha Impressions

Computer Education

Since 2014-15, Asha Chennai has been teaching computer science to primary and middle school students in Tamil Nadu. There is no state board curriculum for computer science, and the textbooks used by private CBSE schools felt outdated and uninspiring. Recognizing the need for a more engaging approach, we developed our own curriculum.

One of our primary approaches to supporting government schools is through the effective use of technology to enhance education. With the decreasing cost and growing accessibility of computers and the internet, even in remote areas, technology has the potential to transform classrooms. It serves as a powerful tool to engage students, encourage parents to keep their children in school, and create a more dynamic and motivating environment for teachers.

The availability of high-quality digital educational resources has surged in recent years. Asha Chennai has developed Asha Kanini, a platform that enables teachers to easily access curated digital content aligned with their lesson plans. Additionally, we create our own resources, such as digital lesson plans, to fill gaps where existing content is insufficient.

Beyond integrating technology into regular subjects, it is crucial for students to develop digital literacy and computational thinking skills. We've designed a curriculum to teach these concepts to students in classes 1 to 8. Both Asha Kanini and our computer science curriculum have been developed with scalability in mind, allowing them to be expanded to schools across the state with government support.

Our curriculum covers both digital literacy (how to use a computer) and computational thinking (programming and problem-solving with computers). It is designed to be adaptable even in schools with minimal infrastructure or unreliable internet access. In fact, many of the schools we support rely on the laptop that our teacher brings to class.

We believe that computer science cannot be effectively taught with just pen and paper; hands-on experience is essential. That's why our curriculum emphasizes Learn-by-Doing. Every lesson is designed as an activity that the children will complete on the computer and in the process learn the concepts involved in the activity.

Project Work

Our computer teachers introduce 1st and 2nd standard students to the basics of using a computer. By 3rd standard, students begin learning Tuxpaint, a child-friendly painting software. In 4th and 5th standards, students explore computer organization and start using OpenOffice, a popular free software suite that includes word processing, spreadsheets, and presentation tools. For 6th to 8th standard students, the focus shifts to using the internet and learning programming through Blockly and Scratch.

A key aspect of our pedagogy is the practical application of what is taught. Each year, students are required to use their knowledge to create and submit projects. Children from 4th and 5th standards prepare presentations using OpenOffice, while those in 7th and 8th standards develop programs in Scratch. These projects are team-based, with Asha teachers mentoring and guiding the students throughout the process. Selected projects are showcased at Asha Impressions, a platform for students to present their work.

Teachers provide guidance on how to present projects to judges, including tips on the types of questions they might encounter and how to respond effectively. For younger students in classes 4 and 5, this experience can be particularly challenging as they are not yet accustomed to presenting their work to an audience. However, it becomes a valuable learning opportunity for both students and teachers.

Project work encourages deeper learning than traditional instruction alone, while also serving as a means to assess students' progress. The primary goal of project work is not assessment; it is a powerful teaching tool. We dedicate nearly an entire term to project development. Projects complement instruction-driven learning by fostering goal-oriented education, especially in subjects like Computer Science, where mastery of every feature is not essential. Instead, students build the confidence to navigate and learn new tools on their own.

Additionally, project work teaches students collaboration and motivates them to produce high-quality outcomes. Asha Impressions further enhances this by providing selected teams with the opportunity to present their work, helping students develop communication skills and gain the confidence to address larger audiences.

Asha Impressions 2024 at Amazon Chennai

Asha Impressions is a competition organized annually to showcase the projects done by students in schools supported by Asha. We generally hold two Asha Impressions, the main one in Chennai for the teams from Thriruvallur, Villupuram and Chennai and another in Kayathar for teams from Thoothukudi.

We usually try to have the main Asha Impressions around the time the schools close. Amazon Chennai team offered to host the event at their office in World Trade Centre, Perungudi on 16 April,2024.

Children from Class 4 and 5 create presentations using Open Office and children from Class 7 and 8, develop Scratch programs. These projects are developed in teams and with the help of the Asha teachers who mentor them. This year we received 500+ presentations and 130+ programs for the Asha Impression competition held in Chennai. The volunteers then selected the best 17 Presentations and 11 Programming projects for the Asha Impressions competition.

The event was held in two locations within the Amazon office. There was a big conference room where the presentation competition was held and a smaller conference room where the programming competition was held. For all the children seeing the Amazon office housed in a 28 storey building from where they could see the sea some 2 Kms away was like a nice excursion. They enjoyed their outing. They were fascinated by the lift, by the coffee machine, by the hand-dryer in the toilet, etc. The volunteers from Amazon also played wonderful hosts, allowing the children to enjoy themselves. The grand staircase from the 18th to the 20th floors was a main selfie point. The lunch was also enjoyed by the teachers and the students alike. You may read the full report here.

Regular Teacher Program

Government guidelines recommend one teacher for every 30 students, but even this standard is often unmet. Additionally, headmasters and headmistresses are burdened with administrative duties, limiting their ability to teach. This 30:1 ratio is also inadequate for multi-age classrooms, which are common in small rural schools. The activity-based teaching methods employed in government schools further increase the demands on teachers. One of the most pressing needs in these schools is the provision of a sufficient number of teachers. Appointing teachers not only supports the schools directly but also allows us to monitor classroom activities and ensure that the educational materials we provide are being effectively utilized.

Asha's Regular Teacher Program

Through Asha's Regular Teacher Program, we provide additional teachers to schools with low teacher-student ratios, working alongside government teachers to address the immediate need for teaching support. However, while this helps alleviate the shortage, it does not entirely solve the root issues of subpar educational outcomes. These challenges stem from an inadequate curriculum, ineffective teaching methods, and insufficient goal-setting and monitoring practices.

Asha's Efforts with Asha Kanini

To enhance teaching effectiveness, Asha teachers visit schools to teach subjects like Math, English, and Science using Asha Kanini, a specialized educational app developed by Asha Chennai. Asha Kanini helps teachers select appropriate content for their lessons and use it effectively to improve student learning. Available on both Windows and Android, Asha Kanini is designed with the unique challenges of rural schools in mind. It consolidates free educational content from the web, mapping it to the appropriate lessons for each class. Additionally, Asha has created original content to fill gaps, providing comprehensive lesson plans that guide teachers in delivering high-quality education.

KaradiPath

At Asha Chennai, we have long sought ways to make a meaningful impact on English teaching in our schools. While we have been consistently training our teachers in English, with weekly spoken English sessions led by mentors and bi-weekly assignments, the improvement among students has been gradual.

In 2019, we explored the Karadi Path program, which takes a unique approach to teaching English, similar to how a mother tongue is learned—through communication rather than as a traditional subject. Using stories, music, and activities, Karadi Path fosters language acquisition in a more natural, engaging way. Unfortunately, the onset of the pandemic delayed our plans to implement this program.

However, we piloted Karadi Path in 10 schools in 2022-23 in just Thiruvallur. This was scaled up to 36 schools in our Sangamam, Pearl and Thulasi projects in 2023-24. We plan to scale it up to reach all our supported

schools in the coming years. We believe this approach offers greater potential than traditional methods to accelerate language learning for our students.

Karadipath Schools this year

During the academic year 2024-23, we taught Karadipath in 36 schools in Sangamam, Thulasi and Pearl projects.

Sl.No	School Name	Sl.No	School Name
	Thiruvallur	20	PUPS Kanakamma Chathiram
1	PUPS.Old Thirupatchur	21	PUPS Chinnammapet
2	PUMS.Ramancheri	22	PUMS Athipattu
3	PUPS.Thomur	23	PUMS Veeraraghavapuram
4	PUMS Othappai	24	PUPS Kuppamalchathiram
5	PUPS Allikuzhi	25	PUPS Pattaraiperumbudur
6	PUMS.Athivakkam	26	PUPS Sadhurangapet
7	PUPS.Kannigaipair		**Thiruvannamalai/Villupuram**
8	PUPS.Anna Nagar	26	PUPS Kamagaram
9	PUMS Neiveli	27	PUPS Nallan Pillai petral
10	PUPS New Thirupatchur	28	PUMS Kattuchithamur
11	PUPS.Ammambakkam	29	PUPS Kolathur
12	PUPS Thandalam	30	PUPS Karikalampadi
13	PUPS Ariyapakkam	31	PUPS Kaniyampoondi
14	PUMS Soolaimeni		**Thoothukudi/Thirunelveli**
15	PUPS Guruvoyal	32	PUPS Karadikulam Colony
16	PUPS Arkammpat	33	PUPS Govinthanpatti
17	PUPS Boochiathipedu	34	PUMS Nagalapuram
18	PUPS Thiruvalangadu	35	PUPS Nallatinputhur
19	PUMS Manjakuppam	36	PUMS Karadikulam

This year we had 9 dedicated Karadipath teachers and 11 regular teachers who also took Karadipath sessions during the year. In 2022-23, the program reached 502 students across 10 schools. For the 2023-24 academic year, it has expanded to cover 1,973 students in 36 schools.

Each Karadi Path level typically consists of 72 sessions, which we aim to complete within the academic year. We typically start classes 2, 3 and 4 in level 1. They move to level 2 in the next year and then on to level 3. In the long run class 2 will be in level 1, class 3 in level 2 and class 4 in level 3. In 2023-24 the original 10 schools had both level 1 and 2 classes. The new 26 schools had only level 1.

Karadipath Training

During the Rightstart program, Karadi Path trainers provided comprehensive one-day training to our Asha teachers. Training sessions were also conducted at our projects separately. Mr. Arokiya Selvaraj and Ms. Aswini conducted Level 1, 2, and 3 training sessions at the Sangamam office for Sangamam's Karadi Path teachers. Mr. Abhishek led Level 1 and 2 training for Pearl project teachers, while Mr. Karan conducted the same for Thulasi project teachers.

At the beginning, Mr. Arokiya Selvaraj visited our teachers, followed by Ms. Aswini, who started observing classes at Sangamam. Mr. Karan is visiting Thulasi schools, and Mr. Abhishek is overseeing Pearl schools. They observe classes, provide demo lessons, and encourage teachers to conduct effective sessions.

Assessment

For Karadi Path, assessments are conducted through a mobile app at the beginning, middle, and end of the sessions. These tests use the same set of questions and are aligned with the Karadi Path curriculum. At Asha, we have compared the English assessment results between Karadi Path and non-Karadi Path schools and have observed a improvement in English performance among students participating in the Karadi Path program. You may read the full analysis here.

Students across all schools are enjoying the Karadi Path classes, as they are learning English in a fun and engaging way. In some schools, children who are usually quiet in other classes, are enthusiastically singing, dancing, and responding to Karadi Path commands. Our Asha Karadi Path teachers practice the sessions at home, even involving their own children in learning English. As a result, our teachers have improved their pronunciation and knowledge, and have greater confidence in teaching English.

Assessments

Oral Assessment

We conducted oral assessments at all the Asha supported schools in Tamilnadu and UP in Nov 2023. More than 180 schools and 15000 students from classes 1 to 8 were covered in this assessments. Oral assessments provide us the metrics to tell us how our projects are doing and start measuring the impact we are having and fine-tune our actions so as to improve the outcome.

Asha Chennai conducted the Oral assessments at all the supported government schools. The schools covered are listed below.

Project Sangamam (Thiruvallur/Kanchipuram Dists) – 91 Schools.

Project Pearl (Thoothukudi/Thirunelveli/Then Kasi Dists) – 28 Schools.

Project Thulasi (Viluppuram/Thiruvannamalai Dists) – 25 Schools.

Project Poorna Vidhya (Chennai/Chengalpet Dists) – 9 Schools.

Project Manigal (Chennai Dist) – 2 schools.

Project Cauvery (Thiruvarur Dist) – 12 schools.

Project Sangamam Rajatalab (Varanasi Dist of UP) – 11 schools

Total – 178 Schools.

You may read the full report here.

Written Assessment

After the oral assessments in November, we conducted written assessments at all our projects between February to March. The assessments were conducted on a large scale covering over 180 schools and 15000 children. In such large scale assessments, consistency is most important. We conducted training for our teachers at all projects (online/offline). The question papers were set by lead teachers and volunteers and shared with the project coordinators.

Children from standard 1-8 appeared for the assessments this year. The written assessments provide us tools to understand the gaps in education and guides us in our efforts towards bridging these gaps. The answer papers collected from one project was sent to another for correction in order to ensure impartially. The grading and data entry was wrapped up by April. Based on this, we provided detailed reports to every school.

Computer Science Assessment

Asha has been revamping the assessment framework for our various CS programs in the 2023-24 academic year. This has been impacting the outcomes of our programs. Here is a detailed report on the same.

Training government teachers in 50 schools to teach a one-year curriculum under our ACE program. At our 7 RTCs, we teach 6 month courses to 6th to 12th std students in digital literacy, programming and more advanced topics.

Material Distribution

Stationery Material Distribution

Every year Asha distributes stationery materials for schools and students. This includes things like charts, plain papers and mats for school as well as notebooks, pens, geometry boxes etc. for the students. This was distributed to students in our schools in Sangamam, Thulasi, Poorna Vidhya and Cauvery projects. Read the detailed report here.

Asha usually augments the materials provided by the government at all the schools that we support. This includes materials for individual students like notebooks and geometry boxes as well as materials that we provide for schools like A4 paper, Chart paper, sketch pens etc.

Here is the list of items that we provided-

Sl No.	Material	Given To	Grade
1	Chalk, Color pencils, Sketch, Crayons	School	
2	Charts	School	
3	Black Chart	School	
4	Mats	School	
5	White Paper (Ream)	Student	
6	Unruled long size note	Student	Middle school
7	Long size scale	Student	Middle school
8	Pen	Student	Grade 4-8
9	Eraser, Sharpener, Pencil, Scale (Small)	Student	Grade 1-4
10	Tables book	Student	Grade 3-5
11	Two lines, four lines	Student	Grade 1-5
12	Checked note	Student	Grade 1-5
13	Geometry box	Student	Grade 5-8

Uniform Distribution

Asha Chennai provided a nice uniform for all the students in Sangamam, Pearl and Thulasi projects. The uniforms were distributed to the students in Sangamam and Pearl projects in August.

Providing an additional set of uniforms from Asha is something we take up if we have additional funds in some projects. Like student excursions etc., these are not essential but will help a lot in making the school a more welcoming place for the children. The uniforms given by the government for most part is adequate but not of a very good quality. They barely last one year. We had last distributed uniforms in early 2020 just before the Corona outbreak. Some of the schools wanted to distribute it after the new year starts. Thanks to the Covid, they could distribute the uniforms only when the schools reopened in Oct 2021. The children are still wearing it now.

This showed us the importance that the schools and the parents place on this uniforms. We decided to do the same this year. As there were extra funds available for Project Sangamam we decided to do it there. Qbrik, a company run by one of our volunteers, decided to fund the uniforms at Pearl and Thulasi. With this most of our rural projects were covered.

We decided on the following,

- T-shirt and shorts for class 1 to 5 boys.
- T-shirt and skirts for class 1 to 5 girls.
- T-shirt and pants for class 6 to 8 boys.
- Chudidhar set for class 6 to 8 girls.

At all the projects we placed orders for about 5% less than the strength of the schools in 2022-23. We did that with the idea that we will place an order for some extra sets after the first distribution. We can order for the specific sizes which are required in larger number. But this year the enrolment at the govt schools were quite bad and the number of students had dropped back to the pre-pandemic levels. It doesn't look like we will need to place order for any extra set of dresses. At Sangamam the total strength this year is about 5200 against 5500 last years. At Pearl the strength is about 2540 against 2700 last year. You may read the detailed report [here](#).

Joyful Learning

Annual Day Celebrations

This year the education department asked the schools all over Tamilandu to celebrate annual day functions. Therefore, most of our supported schools celebrated the annual day. Asha sponsored prizes for children and snacks for them as well.

This year Annual Day celebrations started off a little early owing to the requirement from the Government of Tamilnadu. The schools were asked to finish the celebrations by 14 Feb, 2024. Most of the schools made

an effort to complete within the deadline provided, however, many could not. The Annual days at various schools were spread across February and March. Some of them were conducted even in April.

Another change this year was that, as the government requested the schools to conduct the annual day functions, a large percentage of the schools conducted them. Usually less than 1/3rd of the schools conduct one. This year more than 2/3rds of the schools conducted them. Asha supported annual day functions in more than a hundred schools this year.

As every year, Asha volunteers and coordinators have participated in the Annual days at our various projects. We organized prizes, snacks and beverages for all the events. Prizes were given for attendance, sports and cultural competitions. Children were provided steel tiffin boxes and plates as prizes.

Read the full report [here](#).

Student Excursion

We organized multiple excursions for students from schools supported by Amazon. These excursions were organized at all our projects.

The number of excursions organized is not mainly dependent on the funds in hand. If we take more than 2 or 3 buses full of children, managing them becomes difficult. Therefore, in a weekend, at one location, we organized excursion for 2 or 3 buses full of children. Each excursion means a lot of effort on the part of the coordinators and volunteers.

Since the excursions need to be legally organized, we take permission from the school authorities with Asha/Amazon funding the same. We mainly covered schools supported by Amazon. In some areas neighboring schools that were supported directly by Asha was also taken for the excursion.

All the 4th and 5th std students were taken for the excursion. Even in the past we have organized the excursion mainly for 4th and 5th std students. Most of our schools are primary schools. Class 1 to 3 children are too young to manage or to even remember and enjoy the excursion.

We provided snacks or breakfast in the morning and snacks or dinner evening. Proper lunch was provided in the afternoon. We paid for the buses and all the tickets. No money was ever collected from any of the children. Drinking water was also provided in the buses.

Children from Sangamam, Pooravidhya and Thulasi were taken to the Birla Planetarium where they saw the 3D show which greatly thrilled them. They were then taken to the Sky Theatre where the show was met with loud cheers and lot of clapping. The children played in the park for a while and then had lunch. The children visited the Anna Centenary Library and then went to the Marina Beach/ Besant Nagar Beach. The beach is always a hit with the children, where the get time to play, eat ice-cream, and buy some trinkets or souvenirs.

The children from Thoothukudi went to Madurai and visited the Keeladi museum, Gandhi Museum Palace and Kalaignar Nootrandu Library. Government teachers, Asha staff and volunteers accompanied the children on all the trips.

2. Explore

The Explore initiative is our broader outreach program to reach out to a much larger number of schools extending the geographical areas that we serve. While we cannot adopt the schools and provide all the support that we provide in the "Primary and Middle School support" work, we engage with the schools and provide access to the schools to the scalable initiatives of Asha and support them in implementing this. Our scalable initiatives include Asha Kanini software for teaching all curricular subjects and our CS curriculum.

Asha has been implemented the Explore program at 300+ schools spread across 4 districts in Tamilnadu. This provides 5 independent one hour activities to the students every year to expose them to different aspects of computer science. While the original Amazon Explore program was focused on programming activities, Asha expanded it to include activities related to digital literacy as well. For this we have specifically selected a few activities that conveys the idea of computer science as well as is interesting to the students. These activities are listed here.

In these schools Asha also installs Asha Kanini and encourages its use by the government teachers.

Each Computer Science (CS) Trainer is allocated between 10 and 30 schools with a strength of about 3,000 students in classes 6-9. The teacher visits each school in rotation and does one of the activities. The teachers are able to do 4-5 sessions per class in the school over the year.

The children are doing the activities well. There is a very good reception for this program both from the children and from the school teachers and HM. To visit a new school every day, establish the relationship with the teachers in the school and operate right away is a major challenge. So is the long travel to unknown places within their area (which can be several 100 sq kms!). The CS trainers are doing their job very well.

Class Chats

Another initiative under the Amazon Future Engineer Project which is implemented along with the Explore program is Class Chats. In class chat a volunteer from Amazon with talk to a class of students (typically 30 to 50 students) over video conference. They typically talk about their journey to Amazon in terms of their studies, work etc. They also provide details on what exactly they are working on. These give children an idea of what it means to be doing that kind of work (software engineer or other types of work), and the kind of

preparation required to get that kind of job. Further it also exposes them to technology. We have conducted 16 class chats last year. They have been good successes so far. Children have been engaged and interacted well with the volunteer. Volunteers have been able to keep the attention of the children.

3. Asha Computer Education (ACE)

This year, Asha signed an MoU with the Government of Tamilnadu to train government school teachers to deliver computer science education to students from classes 6-9 at 50 to 60 schools as per mutually agreed programme design and schedule. The tecahers will also schedule classes in the respective schools to engage the students for 1 hour a week for delivery of the course. Asha Computer Education (or ACE) program was inaugurated on 19th OCt 2023 by the CEO Ms. Saraswathi and DEO Ms. Mohana. Our team came up with the name ஆஷா வழி கணினி கல்வி-Asha Computer Education – ACE, since it perfectly captures the essence of this project.

ACE program has been successfully inaugurated and started in 52 schools. About 1800 students spread across these 52 schools are being taught the one-year curriculum. They are being actively assisted by trainers from Asha. A textbook for the curriculum was released and the teachers are using the same. Each of the schools have completed about 15 lessons this year.

ACE Inauguration

The ACE – Asha Computer Education program in partnership with the government of Tamil Nadu was inaugurated on 19 Oct, 2023, Thursday. The inauguration function was held at Govt High School Thirupatchur. Ms. Mohana, the District Educational Officer for Thiruvallur was our chief guest. It was also attended by the BEOs of Poondi Block Ms. Patricia Porkodi and Mr. Poovaraghava Moorthy. Ms. Mohana distributed laptops provided by Amazon to the teachers and launched the training program. The Chief Educational Officer of Thiruvallur District, Ms. K. Sarawathy visited the training program time along with DEO for high and higher secondary schools Mr. Suganandan , spoke to the teachers and distributed the laptops

to the teachers as well. The inauguration was followed by training of the 52 government teachers. You may read the full report [here](#).

Teacher Training Sessions

The first training program was conducted by Asha's volunteer, Mr. Rajaram. He talked about the growing importance of making our students digitally literate and confident in using computers and some of the pedagogical techniques that will play an important role in the implementation of the ACE program. Asha strongly supports the idea of Learning by Doing and Project work. This shift in pedagogy needs to be emphasized, as it forms the crux of the entire efforts of Asha's computer science initiatives.

The trainings are focused on the curriculum and lesson plans of our 1-year curriculum. We also distributed the laptops meant for the schools during the training sessions. After that the teachers were able to teach the students in parallel. Our teachers also started visiting the schools to assist the teachers, and clarify any doubts the government teachers had in the implementation.

At the start we were apprehensive about undertaking this training. This is the first time Asha was training government teachers. However, our concerns were quickly dispelled when we saw the motivation in the teachers. The teachers were very keen to learn computer science and were very comfortable working with our trainers. This has given us a lot more confidence about the success of the program in the coming year and a half.

As the MOU got signed only by early Oct, we have planned to stretch the program across two academic years.

Oct 2023	Identify the schools and train the teachers.
Nov 23 to Sept 24	Teach the 36 weeks of lessons. As this is the first year, this provide us the leeway to see if some of the lessons are taking longer to implement.

Oct 24 to Feb 25	Children will work on their projects and submit the same.
Feb 25	Assessments will be conducted to evaluate the learning of the students.
Feb/Mar 25	Evaluate these projects, train the selected teams to present their projects on a stage and hold Asha Impressions to recognize the best teams.

Output of the program will be evaluated by the following-
- Attendance record of the students in each school for the computer science classes.
- Record of Asha teachers visits to the schools.

Outcome of the program will be evaluated by the following.
- Assessment of the students.
- Projects submitted by the students.
- Satisfaction survey of a sample of the school HMs.

The MOU commits Asha to employ similar standards of evaluation and monitoring of the output and outcome of our other programs.

Below are the dates when the trainings for government teachers have been conducted so far-

Session No.	Training Date	Training Location
1	19-Oct-23	Thirupatchur
2	26-Oct-23	Thirupatchur
3	01-Nov-23	Tiruttani
	02-Nov-23	Thirupatchur
4	03-Nov-23	Vadamadurai
	09-Jan-24	Thiruttani
5	11-Jan-24	Thirupatchur
	07-Mar-24	Thirupatchur
6	20-Jun-24	Thirupatchur
	20-Jun-24	Thiruttani

We have completed 6 days of training for all the 52 government teachers.

ACE Classes and Trainer Visits

Asha teachers have been visiting the schools on a regular basis. The teachers have completed 196 visits to various ACE schools in the previous months. Asha coordinator, Mr. Rajaraman has also visited the schools to monitor progress of the project. You may read the report [here].

Asha Computer Education Teachers' Manual

Asha has created a 1-year curriculum for government teachers to teach Computer Science to any class from 6th to 9th std for one year. This was available in a digital form in our website as well as through Asha Kanini. However, many of the teachers in the ACE program expressed the need for a physical manual for these lesson which they can thumb through even without a computer. Volunteers and teachers at Asha got together to create the Asha Computer Education Teachers' Manual.

This is a dynamic manual that through QR codes provides the richness of a digital version in a printed form. This manual was printed by Asha and presented to government teachers on 7 March, 2024. On behalf of the Chief Educational Officer of Thiruvallur District Mr. Ravichandran received the first copy and his PA, Mr. Nagalingam, distributed these to the teachers. We also gave copies of these to the State Projects Director, IAS Ms. Aarthi. The manuals were given to the ACE teachers/schools, Asha trainers and Leads. You may view the album [here].

4. Rural Technology Centers (RTCs)

We are currently operating 7 RTCs Kanakamachatiram, Seethanjeri, Kannigaiper, Thomur, and Periyapalayam in Thriuvallur and Kayathar and Kalugumalai in Thoothukudi distircts. The goal of RTCs is to provide essential computer science education to all students at the associated government high and higher secondary schools and provide the students opportunity to learn more at our centers which will work in the evenings and Saturdays. At our RTCs, we teach 6 month courses to 6th to 12th std students in digital literacy, programming and more advanced topics. We have also developed a good assessment mechanism to test the learning of the students and broadly the outcome of our efforts. Students are assessed through their Project work, NorthStar Assessments and teacher inputs.

Our RTC teachers visit the 12 associated high and higher secondary schools and teach all children in classes 6 to 9 the basics of digital literacy and programming. Then interested children (including children from other schools) are given the option to take one of several advanced courses at the center for free. These centers function between 4:30 to 7:30 pm on school days and all day on holidays.

RTC Courses

Here are the set of courses being offered at our RTCs. Note that the courses offered by each RTC will change from term to term to give the opportunity for all students to take these advanced courses.

Basic Digital Literacy   This is the first course and teacher the children how to use the computer and the Internet. We teach them the basics of the Windows Operating system, teach them how to use usual office software (text document, spreadsheet and presentation). We also teach them how to search on the Internet, exchange emails etc. Their project work is a presentation.

Basic Programming	Here we teach them programming using Scratch. They learn standard aspects of programming as a sequence of steps. They learn conditionals, loops, subroutines, variables etc. They also learn specific aspects of Scratch like controlling the looks, motions, sounds etc. of sprites. Their project is an involved program in Scratch.
Web Development – 1	This is based on Code.org module in CS Discoveries. This will teach them how to create a static webpage using HTML and CSS. Their project work will be to create a detailed web page with several sub-pages.
Javascript Animations	This is also based on Code.org module in CS Discoveries. They will learn to use Javascript within their Applap programming environment. They will gradually transition from block based to text based programming. Their project will be to develop an animated game in the environment.
Physical Programming	This is also based on Code.org module in CS Discoveries. They learn to read the sensors in the AdaFruit Circuit Playground Express card. They also trigger sounds and led lights in the board. They use the Applab programming environment. Their project is a detailed program using all the features of the board.
Media Editing	This is an advanced course created by Asha. There are many tools for editing photos, audio files, and videos, and for creating videos, collages, documents etc. These are found to be useful in a wide variety of careers. We hope to introduce students to these kinds of operations through free and online tools. Their project work will be a well edited video or a collection of things around a theme put together using Canva or Presi.

We are planning to introduce more courses over the next few months. These include-

Web Development – 2	This takes off from where Web Development -1 course stopped. It teaches them how to develop a client-server webapp. It teaches them JavaScript, node, expressjs and a little bit of MySQL to implement the backend. Their project will be a full-stack web application.
Intro to Robotics	In this course the students will learn how sensors and actuators can be used together to make a Robot perform something. We may use the Circuit Playground Express cards that we are currently using to teach physical programming to move the students to the next stage of building their own Robots. We are currently evaluating the options available in terms of hardware to use for the course.'
Artificial Intelligence	Code.org offers a mini-module on Artificial Intelligence which teaches the students how deep learning works. We plan to add to it practical knowledge of how to use Chat GPT, Dall-e, Bard and other popular AI tools. We further plan to teach the students how companies are using the AI tools and integrating it with other things that they are doing using prompt engineering.

Thomur RTC Inauguration

Asha has partnered with IITM Pravartak and opened Rural Technology Centre (RTC) in 4 locations in Thiruvallur and 2 places in Thoothukudi districts of Tamil Nadu. These were already functioning at the start of the year. On 21 July, 2023, Friday, we opened our 7th RTC in Thomur, Thiruvallur.

Periyapalayam RTC Inauguration

Asha Chennai's 7th RTC (Rural Technology Centre) was inaugurated at Periyapalyam on 2 March, 2024. The center was inaugurated by our coordinator, Mr. Rajaraman in the presence of the RTC teachers, coordinators in Thiruvallur and children. The RTC has been functional since Friday, 1 March, and children have been attending in good numbers. The RTC is managed by our teacher Ms. Poonkodi who had been teaching at the Kannigaiper RTC before.

RTC Impressions

RTC Impressions, a competition held amongst our 6 RTCs (Rural Technology Center), is held at the end of every term. It was held on 5th August 2023 at IITM ICSR auditorium and on 7th February, 2024 at IIT Madras, Research Park. As a part of their 6-month long courses, the students develop a detailed project. The best student projects are presented and prizes awarded to the best among them at the RTC Impressions events.

RTC Impressions – August 2023

On August 5, 2023, a vibrant gathering of young learners took place at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM), hosted by the Centre for Industrial Consultancy and Sponsored Research. This event was a platform for children across various educational batches to showcase their skills and knowledge through a series of presentations.
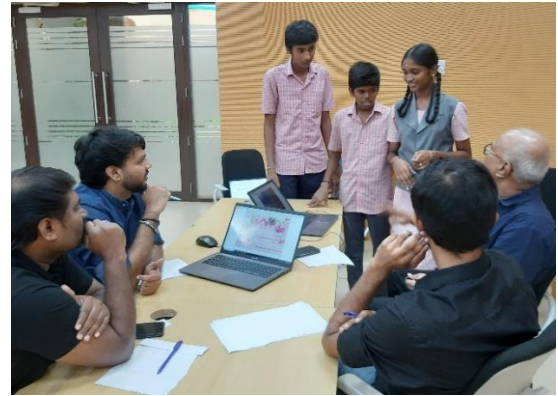
Participants from the Digital Literacy batch demonstrated their progress, while students from the Programming batch exhibited creative projects built using Scratch, a visual programming language. In addition, advanced course batches presented their work on a variety of subjects.

The children's presentations covered a range of topics, including spreadsheets, mystery box, prepositions, folk dances, and the Chola Empire. Under the Programming category, students showcased a series of engaging and interactive games such as Dora the Explorer, Huddles, Find Out, and Snakes and Ladders, all developed using Scratch.

The event was graced by the presence of Prof. Pijush Ghosh from the Department of Applied Mechanics, who served as the chief guest. Alongside him, a panel of esteemed judges from both academia and the corporate sector evaluated the children's projects, providing feedback and encouragement. You may read the full report here.

RTC Impressions – February 2024

For this RTC Impressions, 181 projects were submitted by 388 students from 6 RTCs in Thiruvallur and Thoothukudi! 15 presentations, 12 Scratch programming projects and 12 Advanced Computing projects from the 6 RTC's were selected by the team of volunteers. 75 students, 14 teachers, 9 judges and staff/volunteers from Chennai were a part of this program. The event was also attended by government officials from TN Education Department representing the Clubs program and the Special Schools.

For some of our students, this is the first opportunity of having travelled outside their villages/ towns. Presenting before a group of judges was also a very unique experience that RTC Impressions offers these children. All the judges and guests were thoroughly impressed by the quality of work done by these students. The enthusiasm of the children coupled with the varying range of projects presented, made the event a big win! You may read the detailed report here.

RTC Distribution

Twice a year, course completion certificates are issued to students who have completed their courses at our RTCs. The event is held at a small scale in the RTCs and Asha volunteers, teachers, students and their parents participate in the distribution.

RTC Student profile

Many of the students in our RTCs have come through our other programs. Seeing Asha through their eyes gives a fresh perspective on our work.
[Here](#) is the profile of 7 students currently doing courses in our RTCs.

"Earlier I did not know what a computer is. When I joined the government school, through Asha, I was taught about computers, which has been very useful. I have enjoyed it a lot. Since I learnt this, it has been very helpful in using other devices too. I like coding. When I used Scratch in the school, I got to know about coding."

SIVANPRIYAN

"When I was in Class 9, the RTC teacher took permission from the HM and came to our class and introduced to us about the RTC. They told us that they would be opening a computer class. I always thought that I wanted to go to a computer class, I should not stop my learning. Suddenly, these teachers came to our class and told us about this. Then I thought I will attend these classes. When I saw the board outside which said 'ASHA', I was very happy to know that I will be learning under Asha again. Just like the Asha teachers at school, the RTC Miss also talks to us in a very caring manner."

Bharkavi

5. Sugadharam

Under Project Sugadharam, Asha undertakes the construction and repair of toilets in schools that we work closely with through our other programs – esp. the primary and middle school support. This initiative is critical in improving health and hygiene among school children and within the broader community.

In many of the schools we support, existing toilet facilities are inadequate, forcing children to resort to open defecation during breaks. The situation is exacerbated by increasing urbanization, which has diminished the availability of open fields near schools. The absence of proper sanitation facilities is particularly detrimental to girls in middle and high schools, often leading to higher dropout rates when they reach puberty. The lack of toilets also poses significant challenges for teachers, making their working conditions difficult and uncomfortable.

This year, Asha has made significant strides by constructing 3 new toilets and repairing 7 existing ones across various schools. The specific details of these improvements are outlined below:

Sl. No.	Project name	School Name	Student Count	Type of work	Start Date	End Date	Cost of Construction
1	Pearl	PUMS Kayathar South	324	New toilet	Apr-23	Jun-23	3,71,076
2	Pearl	PUMS Karadikulam	165	New toilet	Feb-23	Apr-23	3,71,208
3	Pearl	Pups Karadikulam Colony	71	Repair		Jun-23	60,279
4	Sangamam	PUPS Gandhigramam	34	Construction and repair	Mar-23	Jul-23	3,58,200
5	Thulasi	PUPS Gengavaram	100	New toilet	Jul-23	Aug-23	3,49,072
6	Pearl	PUPS Salaiputhur	23	Repair	Jul-23	Jul-23	58,000
7	Pearl	PUMS Panikkarkulam	79	Repair	Aug-23	Aug-23	58,000
8	Sangamam	PUPS Allikuzhi	85	Repair	Oct-23	Nov-23	75,000
9	Sangamam	PUPS Palayanur	50	Repair	Nov-23	Dec-23	57,000
10	Sangamam	PUPS Thomur	42	Repair	Jan-24	Feb-24	83,000

You may read the detailed reports here
- 3 Toilets repaired in Thiruvallur
- 4 Toilets inaugurated in Thiruvallur (1) and Thoothukudi (3)

6. Arogyam

Malnourishment and stunting are major problems in India. More than one third of the world's malnourished children live in India. Among these, half of the children under three years old are underweight. The World Bank estimates that India is one of the highest-ranking countries in the world for the number of children affected by malnutrition.

One of the major causes for malnutrition in India is economic inequality. Due to the low economic status of some parts of the population, their diet often lacks in both quality and quantity. In some of the poorest villages that we work with it is common to see that most of the children would have come to school without having eaten anything in the morning. They will be unable to focus on what is being taught as it gets closer to lunch hour.

In order to improve the situation, we started a separate project named 'Arogyam'. Under this project we provide nutritious food to students of Asha supported schools and minischools (during Covid). In January 2021, we decided to start a nutrition program in 7 of our schools – 2 in Thoothukudi and 5 in Thiruvallur as a part of our mini-school effort. In 2022, the Tamilnadu government rolled out 'The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Breakfast Scheme' under which breakfast is being provided to primary school children from 1st to 5th standard studying in Government schools on all school working days. With this new roll out, the breakfast requirement is being taken care of, along with the mid-day meals. We recognized that our intervention was not needed at large.

However, the poorest of the poor hamlets are still in need of our nutrition intervention. Over the year, we decided to scale back on out nutrition program from 11 centers in June 2023 to 6 places in Jan 2024. This year, we have been continuing to support these 6 areas. There has also been a small change in the format. Earlier, our staff would go to the schools and distribute nutrition. However, now the children assemble in certain points around the village where they do their homework or some small classes are taken by the teachers, after which nutrition is distributed. Currently, we are carrying out this program at Old Thriupachur, Thozhudhuvakkam, Annanagar, and Vazhavandhan Kottai (Katchur) in Thiruvallur, Nagalapuram in Thoothukudi ,and Koovachipatti in Thirunelvelli. The project benefits nearly 260 children in these hamlets.

7. Manigal

The gypsy community is one of the most marginalized communities economically socially and educationally. Their children were often staying away from the mainstream school system. Due to low levels of learning and their nomadic style, their children drop out early from the school system. Project Manigal has been giving special attention to the education of the gypsy children for the past several years in two Government schools located at Indira Nagar and Kottur in Chennai. The goal of Manigal project is to promote education as a tool to change the marginal status of the gypsies. To use schooling as a tool to keep children in a safe environment and away from work. To break the barriers that prevent them from accessing the educational.

In Kottur, Primary school, the gypsy students attend their respective classes for half a day and then learn from Asha project teachers in the other half. Around 15 slow learners and migrant children are also taught by Manigal teachers along with gypsy children.

At Indra Nagar school too, students from classes 1 and 2 were integrated with regular classes. 5th students attend their regular classes for half a day and spend half a day with Asha teachers. The four desktops donated by Asha are used by the project teachers for teaching school children the activities and videos given in the Kanini App, in batches. Craft classes were held for the gypsy and other school children.

The efforts of Project Manigal since past several years is bearing fruit and more and more children are getting enrolled in school. Most of them are completing the primary school and some are completing high school. Parents are coming forward to enrol the children on their own and schools have reported improvement in the learning levels of children.

8. Asha Scholarships- Empowering Underprivileged Students

While many of Asha-Chennai's projects focus on supporting schools that serve underprivileged children, we recognize the importance of also assisting those attending other schools and colleges across the city and in rural Tamil Nadu. Beyond financial support, Asha volunteers play a crucial role in mentoring these students, offering guidance and encouragement.

The Asha Scholarships project is designed to cover school or college fees, as well as the cost of uniforms and books for children from 1st standard to college, with exceptions made for LKG and UKG students in special cases. The primary criterion is that the children come from underprivileged backgrounds.

This year, Asha Chennai awarded scholarships to 104 students, helping to alleviate part of their educational expenses. The selection process targets students from Class 10 to 12, as well as college students, who are rigorously screened to ensure they meet the criteria. Scholarships are disbursed in three installments, with Asha closely monitoring the progress of each beneficiary to ensure their continued success.

Asha Chennai launched Support-A-Child program to support Asha Scholarships students. Under this project, one can sponsor any number of children supported by Asha-Scholarships project. The contribution would cover the education expenses for the number of children chosen (including school fees, books and uniforms). The intention of Asha Scholarships project is to empower the children to complete their basic education and become fully functional adults.

9. Asha Libraries

Sangamam Project

Asha runs two libraries in Thiruvallur at Seethanjeri and Anna Nagar. The Seethanjeri library is run by Ms. Kanaga and Anna Nagar library is run by Ms. Nivetha. The libraries are open from 5.30-6.30 PM from Monday to Saturday. The children spend time doing their homework, reading or doing some activities during their time there. Around 30 to 40 students come to both the libraries on a daily basis. Sundal or peanuts are distributed to the kids during their time there.

Anna Nagar Library

Seethanjeri Library

Pearl Project

We run four libraries under the Pearl project –

1. Lakshmi library at Koovachipatti run by Ms. V.Valarmathi
2. Siluvaikani library at Kayathar run by Ms. Anitha
3. Vishwanathan library at Nagalapuram run by Ms. Sukirtha Mery
4. Vishwanathan library at Suriyaminikkan run by Ms. Muthuduraichi

Children come to the library every day and spend their time doing homework for the first 30 mins. After that the teacher may engage them in some simple experiments, card reading practice, reading and telling Tamil songs or stories, English book reading, learning on Asha Kanini or watching short educational videos on the laptop.

Vishwanathan library at Nagalapuram

Siluvaikani library at Kayathar

Lakshmi library at Koovachipatti

Vishwanathan library at Suriyaminikkan

Thulasi project

The Thulasi Library Project was conceptualized and designed by Mr. Gershon Gurin Podlish from Boston, USA. With his guidance and the funding support of Asha for Education's Chennai chapter, the project began in 2017 in a single village in Seeyapoondi. Over time, the library initiative expanded to other localities, becoming an integral part of Asha's Thulasi project. Since 2022, Asha Boston has been providing support for this initiative.

Seeyapoondi

From the inception of the library in Seeyapoondi, Mr. Ramadhas has served as its librarian. Balancing his role as both a farmer and librarian, he sought the assistance of his wife, Sangeetha to run the library. She has been instrumental in bringing books to the Panchayat Union Primary School in Seeyapoondi, facilitating reading sessions for the students.

Kilpennathur

The Kilpennathur library was originally managed by the Consumer Rights Protection Group. After they approached Asha for support, Asha took over its management. Since then, we have been seeking someone to take on a steady role within the library. The school next to the library has been actively involved, with the headmaster encouraging students to utilize the library's resources. Currently, Akinesha Akee serves as the librarian here.

Su. Pola Kunam

In October 2023, we established a library in the picturesque village of Su. Pola Kunam, nestled near a hillock. This library, located within a primary school, serves the students of the primary, middle, and high schools. Meena is the librarian who is currently managing this facility.

Kaniyampoondi

Kaniyampoondi is a small village in Thiruvannamalai district. The highly motivated headmistress of PUPS Kaniyampoondi played a key role in convincing the local community to establish a library here. A graduate from a neighboring village now manages this library.

Program

For the 2023-24 year, we have implemented the following core activities across all four libraries:
- Reading sessions
- Weekly crafts
- Educational games
- Weekly science experiments

Looking ahead, we plan to emphasize oral Tamil skills and help is improving the reading proficiency in Tamil.

Lead Teacher System

Abinaya, a former librarian at Kilpennathur, excelled at conceptualizing and running the library program. She has now been appointed as the Library Lead. In this role, she visits all the libraries, trains the staff, shares ideas, and provides weekly reports. Her dedication and expertise have greatly contributed to the success of this program.

10. Asha Kanini and Software initiatives

Asha Kanini project started back in 2014-15 as a way to include teaching of computer science to students as well as finding a way to leverage use of technology to teach all subjects better. As it completes 10 years, many of its original purposes have been achieved.

1. Computer Science curriculum for classes 1 to 8 is mature and has been implemented in over 180 schools in TN and UP. Several variants of it have been created to serve specific needs. Government teachers are using a 2-year curriculum to teach digital literacy and programming which is an abridged version of this same curriculum.
2. Asha Kanini, a software to access the best quality content in a very easy manner when teaching any lesson in any subject for classes 1 to 8. This has been made available for the TN and the UP state board curriculum.

Besides these, the Asha Kanini team has served as the IT backend for improving the performance of Asha Chennai as a whole ranging from processing and viewing Assessment data to tracking assets in our control.

During the year 2023-2024, our team has undergone expansion, now comprising five members. Joining the development team are Balasubramaniam and Hemanath. Balasubramaniam is actively engaged in the development of the forthcoming iteration of the Asha Kanini application, while Hemanath fulfills an intern role, contributing to various developmental aspects. Additionally, Rohit, a member of the software team, assumes responsibility for hardware and asset management and makes regular visits to the Sangamam office in Thiruvallur at least once weekly. Gomathy manages the team and Dhanasekar also works on the Asha Kanini v4 related tasks.

You may read the detailed report here.

The team at Asha Chennai, Mylapore

11. Learning to Teach, Teaching to Learn: The Dual Role of Asha Educators

One of the core principles of Asha's educational approach is "Learn by Doing," which emphasizes hands-on experience and practical application. Recognizing that teachers may not always have specialized knowledge in subjects like Computers, Math, English, or Science, Asha is committed to providing continuous professional development opportunities. This ensures that our educators are not only equipped with the necessary skills but are also trained in pedagogical methods that make learning engaging and practical for students.

To bridge any gaps in subject matter expertise and to cultivate innovative teaching strategies, Asha conducts comprehensive training programs throughout the year. One of the cornerstone initiatives is the "Rightstart" program, a five-day intensive workshop held annually before the start of the academic year. Teachers from all our districts come together in Chennai for this session, which serves as a platform for collaborative learning and professional growth. During Rightstart, experienced trainers deliver in-depth sessions on a range of subjects, ensuring that our teachers are well-prepared for the upcoming school year.

In addition to Rightstart, Asha organizes specialized training in computer science during December. These sessions are designed to keep teachers up-to-date with the latest developments in technology and pedagogy, enabling them to deliver contemporary and relevant lessons.

Moreover, our commitment to continuous improvement is reflected in the ongoing content development and training activities that our teachers engage in at Asha's offices throughout the year. These initiatives not only enhance subject knowledge but also foster a culture of lifelong learning, empowering teachers to inspire and educate with confidence and creativity.

Teacher Recruitment and Assessments

At Asha, the recruitment of new teachers typically takes place before the start of the academic year, with the goal of having them on board in time for the Rightstart program—a five-day training session designed to help teachers get acquainted with each other. Given that our teachers work in different locations; they rarely have the chance to meet face-to-face. Programs like Rightstart and the monthly meetings are crucial in fostering team spirit and camaraderie among them.

During the Rightstart program, new recruits are introduced to Asha's values and our unique teaching pedagogy. This year, we welcomed 25 new teachers into the Asha family. We are also proud to report that

our average attrition rate is just 9.26% most of which is also due to family/personal health reasons, reflecting the commitment and satisfaction of our educators.

All Asha teachers undergo an annual teacher assessment at the beginning of the year. These assessments help us gauge their current knowledge levels and identify areas where further training is needed. We have been conducting these annual assessments in Maths, English, Science and other subjects (a combined 3-hour test) for several years now. We further conducted an assessment in computer science as well this year. This was conducted as an open Internet assessment which was a new experience for the teachers. These evaluations ensure that our teachers continue to develop their skills, benefiting both them and the students they teach.

RightStart 2024

RightStart, our annual teacher training program, took place from 13th to 17th May at IIT Madras. All our teachers as well as some from partner organizations participated in the program. We had our usual Math training by Mrs. Meena Suresh and team and a training session by Karadi Path. We also had new sessions by LeapForWord in English through syllabification, Dealing with learning challenges by Madras Dyslexia Association and on child rights and handling abuse by Ms. Paripooranam.

As every year, we received necessary permissions from IIT Madras to host the event at IIT campus and the training sessions at the Vanavani auditorium. Support from Prof Kamakoti, the director of IITM, helped smoothen this process greatly. This year we held the event from 13 – 17 May, 2024 during which 120 participants stayed at the campus for which arrangements had been made in advance. Teams from Thiruvallur, Thoothukudi, Thiruvanamalai, Thiruvarur and Pondicherry came by bus to the IIT campus on May 12 (late night) and early morning on 13 May.

The 159 participants this year included teachers, project coordinators and system admins. Five teachers from Gandhi school in Pondicherry and one more person associated with them also expressed interest in attending the training this year.

The Asha volunteers, Mr. Rajaraman, Mr. Venkat, Ms. Komalavalli, Mrs. Kasturi, Mr. Sundaram, Mr. Bhaskar and Mr. Sriram were also present during the training sessions. You may read the full report here.

A part of the reason for organizing the function at IIT campus is that this provides a break from their usual life. They all get to enjoy the IIT campus for these days without other cares. The teachers see the deer and monkeys of the campus and enjoy themselves.

Science and Math Training

In addition to our RightStart teacher training in summer, we have additional training in Maths and Science in Sept/Oct holidays. These are held at the project sites themselves. This time, the training sessions were held at PUP School Thirupatchur, Thiruvallur, our Asha office at Seeyapoondi and PUM School Kayathar South, Thoothukudi.

The Math training sessions are conducted by Mrs. Meena Suresh who has been a trainer with Asha for close to a decade. Since 2020, Ms. Purva Bhatter has been guiding our teachers with creating the lesson plans and providing training in Science. Teachers were taught how to use practical tools to explain the concepts of Science. In particular, she taught about various properties of matter from shape and size, or electrical, magnetic and optical properties. Our teachers immensely enjoyed it. One teacher even remarked that if she was taught Science in such an interactive manner, she would have loved to study more of it as a child. During this time, Purva also visited three middle schools in our Pearl project and taught the children there about magnetism.

Computer Science Training – Dec 2023

The second biggest event for Asha Chennai teachers, the CS training, commenced on December 20, 2023. Unfortunately, teachers from the Thoothukudi district were unable to attend due to flooding. However, educators from all our other project sites including Rajatalab, and Mirzapur UP, were present in full force. The training focused on Asha's CS curriculum on the first and third days. The second day was dedicated to integrating technology into teaching other subjects, utilizing Asha Kanini content, and enhancing overall computer literacy. Ms. Ramapriya, a teacher from Singapore, led a session on the importance of active learning and engaging students through sensory-based art experiences. This hands-on approach not only enriches art education but also lays a strong foundation for learning subjects like math, science, and computer science.

Teacher's Excursion

December is an eventful month at Asha. Teachers from all our projects went on a tour during the school vacation. The planning related to the tour starts month ahead with deciding the places to visit, booking tickets and planning the itenarary. The required arrangements are coordinated amongst the Volunteers, Chennai administrative teams and the Project coordinators and leads. This year, teachers from our Thulasi project went to Mysore and Coorg. They also visited the Tibetan Buddhist Golden temple (Namdroling) during their tour. Teachers and staff from Thiruvallur and Chennai area travelled to Kochi. They visited Fort Kochi, Cheriyan Beach, Athirappilly Waterfalls, Hill Palace etc. It was a good break from the daily routine, and a refresher to start the new year.

In addition to their formal training and meetings, our teachers often seize the opportunity to bond outside the classroom during events like Rightstart, Asha Impressions, or RTC Impressions. During these gatherings, they often take the initiative to visit nearby places such as temples or beaches, sometimes with the children and sometimes just among themselves.

This tradition has played a significant role in fostering a sense of safety, joy, and camaraderie among the staff and the children. These shared experiences strengthen relationships and create lasting memories, enriching the Asha community.

Teacher Uniforms

Every year, two new sets of uniforms are distributed to all Asha teachers. This year, two sets of saris for women and shirt and pant for men were distributed. T shirts with Asha branding was also distributed amongst the Asha staff.

Highlights of the Year

Pearl Asha Impressions - 24 June, 2023

Asha Impressions is a competition showcasing the best projects done by students in the schools supported by Asha, which is held at Chennai. Children from Thoothukudi were not able to travel for the main event held at Chennai. Hence, another Asha Impressions was held for the children at Thoothukudi, Pearl Project.

Amazon Carnival – 13 July 2023

The Amazon Carnival was held at Amazon office in Chennai. Amazon's CSR initiative, Amazon Future Engineer (AFE) is a computer science and STEM education program that seeks to afford all young people the opportunity to explore their potential. As AFE completed 1 year, Amazon invited their partners and the children to spend a fun day at their office. This event was held at multiple locations like Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mumbai as well. It was an opportunity for the children to interact with the Amazon team and also for Amazon employees to know how children benefitted from their program.

Thomur RTC Opening – 21 July 2023

Asha opened its 7th Rural Technology Centre at Thomur where students learn computer courses for free. RTC Thomur is run by Mrs. Vijetha, and the RTC is paired with GHS Thomur. This year around 69 students have been enrolled for various courses at the RTC.

Uniform Distribution – July 2023

We distributed school uniforms in all schools supported by us. This year, we chose red color t-shirts with grey shorts for boys and red t-shirt with grey skirts for girls for the primary classes. For middle school, we chose white kurta, grey dupatta and grey bottom for the girls and red t-shirt with grey pants for the boys.

NEP Event – 28 July 2023

On the 3rd anniversary of the New Education Policy, the Ministry of Education conducted a conference to showcase what various institutions were doing in this regard. IITM was also requested to showcase its effort. As one of the 15 booths put up by IITM, Asha was also given a booth to showcase our efforts. Volunteers Mr. Rajaraman, Mr. Venkat and Rohit, one of our software engineers travelled to Delhi for the event.

Chandrayaan Live telecast from RTCs – 14 July 2023

RTC teachers ensured that the children were able to watch the landing of Chandrayaan live from their remote villages.

Toilet Inaugurations – June 2023

Sugadharam is Asha's initiative aimed at building toilets in schools that either lack this facility or where the toilets are in bad shape and need repairs. This year, new toilets were constructed and repair work was taken up at various schools under the project. New toilets were constructed at PUPS Gandhigramam, PUMS Kayathar South, PUMS Karadikulam, and repair work was taken up at PUPS Karadikulam colony. The construction was completed in June 2023.

RTC Impressions at IITM – 5 August 2023

RTC Impressions is a half yearly competition where groups of children from the RTCs present their project work. This includes presentations by the Digital Literacy batch, programming projects in Scratch by the Programming batch and other projects from our various advanced course batches. Children presented on topics like spreadsheet, mystery box, preposition, folk dance, Chola empire etc. Under the Programming category, the children used Scratch to create interesting games like Dora the explorer, Huddles, Find Out, Snakes and Ladders etc. The chief guest for the event was Prof Pijush Ghosh from Department of Applied Mechanics. The other judges were from academia and corporates.

Teachers' Uniform Distribution – August 2023

New sets of uniforms were distributed to all our teachers in August.

Stationery Distribution – August & September 2023

In partnership with Amazon we distributed stationery materials at various supported schools towards the end of August. Materials have been selected to fill gaps in what is provided by the government to meet the needs of both the schools and the children. The materials included Geometry boxes, pens, pencils, notebooks, etc. for the children and chart papers, plain A4 papers, mats etc. for the schools.

ACE Inauguration – 19 October 2023

The ACE – Asha Computer Education program in partnership with the government of Tamil Nadu was inaugurated on 19 Oct, 2023, Thursday. The inauguration function was held at Govt High School Thirupatchur. Ms. Mohana, the District Educational Officer for Thiruvallur was our chief guest. It was also attended by the BEOs of Poondi Block Ms. Patricia Porkodi and Mr. Poovaraghava Moorthy. Ms. Mohana distributed laptops provided by Amazon to the teachers and launched the training program. The inauguration was followed by training of the 52 government teachers.

Oral Assessments – November 2023

We conducted the oral assessments at nearly 170 schools supported by us covering around 15,000 students. The assessments are based on Pratham's ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) and subjects covered are Math, English and Tamil. Here are some photos from the assessments done across our projects Sangamam, Pearl, Thulasi, Poorna Vidhya, Rajatalab and Kaveri.

Mr. Rajaraman on Zee Tamil - 10 Dec, 2023

Naya Bharat Sunhera Amrut Kaal is a program documenting the impact of digital literacy in creating economic empowerment in India through digital education. Organizations which have been working towards this cause are featured in this program. Zee Tamil invited Mr. Rajaraman Krishnan, the coordinator of Asha Chennai, to be interviewed as a part of this program. The interview, hosted by RJ Vijay, was recorded in Mumbai sometime in August and was aired on Zee Tamil on 10 Dec, 2023.

Cyclone Michaung Flood Relief – Dec 2023

Intense rain brought in by Cyclone Michaung in Dec 2023, caused a lot of destruction all over Chennai and its neighboring districts. Many of Asha students also have been impacted by the floods. Water had seeped into their houses and in poorer hamlets, the kuccha houses had been destroyed. Asha took up flood relief work to help our students tide through these difficult times. We distributed provisions, mats, and blankets or in some cases, a little money to help them manage the sudden expenses.

Amazon's Make a Wish Come True – 5 January, 2023

Through Asha, Amazon fulfilled the wishes of over 300 students under our Sangamam project in Thiruvallur. The wishes of children ranged from toys to clothes, watches to saris for their mothers. Some asked for cricket bats, some for carom board, and some for Barbie dolls. Amazon teamed up with Bhoomi foundation to organize the gifts for these children. This drive covered 300 children in 9 schools of Thriuvallur.

RTC Impressions – 7 Februray, 2024

RTC Impressions, a competition held amongst our 6 RTCs (Rural Technology Center), was held on 7 February, 2024, Wednesday at IIT Madras, Research Park. 75 students, 14 teachers, 9 judges and staff/volunteers from Chennai were a part of this program. The event was also attended by government officials from TN Education Department representing the Clubs program and the Special Schools.

Periyapalayam RTC Inauguration – 2 March, 2024

Asha Chennai's 7th RTC (Rural Technology Centre) was inaugurated at Periyapalyam on 2 March, 2024. The center was inaugurated by our coordinator, Mr. Rajaraman in the presence of the RTC teachers, coordinators in Thiruvallur and children.

Student Excursion – March 2024

Over 1600 children have been out on excursion with Asha this year. The excursions are carried out on Sundays so as to not disturb the working days at Government schools. The excursion is organized with the full support and partnership of the school and the education department.

Written Assessments – March, 2024

We conducted written assessments at all our projects between February to March. The assessments are conducted on a large scale covering over 180 school and 15000 children. Children from standard 1-8 have appeared for the assessments this year. The written assessments provide us tools to understand the gaps in education and guides us in our efforts towards bridging these gaps.

Asha Computer Education Teachers' Manual – 7 March, 2024

Asha has developed a comprehensive one-year curriculum for government teachers to teach Computer Science to students from 6th to 9th grade. Many teachers in the ACE program expressed the need for a physical manual they could reference even without a computer. Asha volunteers and teachers collaborated to create the Asha Computer Education Teachers' Manual. The manual was printed by Asha and presented to government teachers on March 7, 2024.


Computer Assessment – March, 2024

We picked 40 schools on the basis of availability of enough computers to take the computer assessment. This is to check the curriculum preparedness of the children. Children in classes 5 and 8 took the test in a rigorous manner this year. All the remaining 120+ schools as well as 4th and 7th students in these selected 40 schools took the assessment in an informal manner like they did earlier.

Asha Impressions at Amazon – 16 April, 2024

Asha Impressions was hosted by Amazon at their World Trade Centre, Perungudi office on 16 April, 2024.
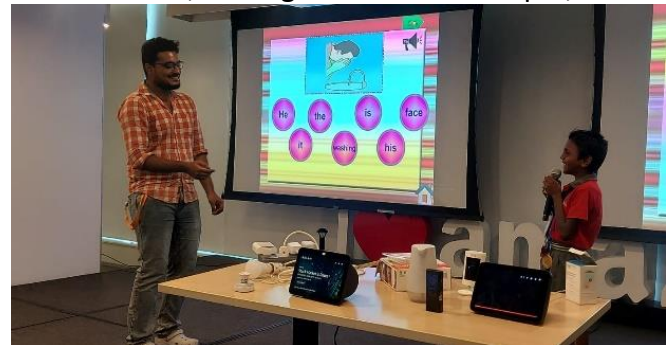
RightStart 2024 – May 13-17, 2024

RightStart, our annual teacher training program, took place on 13th to 17th May at IIT Madras. This is a five-day training event which is attended by all Asha teachers.

Amazon Computer Donation

Amazon donated 500 laptops to Asha Chennai. These will be used for our ACE project as well as all the other schools we support. The laptops were received by our volunteer Mr. Venkat at Amazon's Bengaluru office on 13 May,2024.

Asha Chennai Financials

Asha Chennai had a good year in 2023-24 financially. We raised a total of Rs 6.27 Crores and spent a total of Rs 5.01 Crores which leave us with a balance of about Rs 6 Crores. With all the projects continuing to do well on the ground, this gives us a good balance to plan the upcoming year effectively.

Here is a breakup of the funding by source. Indian donations (from CSR funds and individual donations) and US donations (mostly individual donations) accounted for about Rs 1.95 Crores each. We got a significant allocation from Asha central funds this year and couple of our projects were funded by Asha Austin and Asha Boston chapters. These together accounted for about Rs 1.45 Crores. Through IITM Pravartak, we received about Rs 70 Lakhs from various corporate donors. Other foreign donations that came directly to Asha India through Benevity and Give amounted to about Rs 17.5 Lakhs and we received interest credits of a little less than Rs 2 Lakhs. Note that administrative expenses of Rs 5.5 Lakhs were entirely covered by interest income and Asha volunteers' contributions.

Funding (By Source)	INR
Asha Wide and Chapter Funding	14,465,355
Indian Donations	19,533,705
US Donations	19,725,282
Others (bank int credits)	186,476
Pravartak	7,000,000
Non Asha FCRA Donations	1,759,489
Total	**62,670,307**

Funding (By Source)
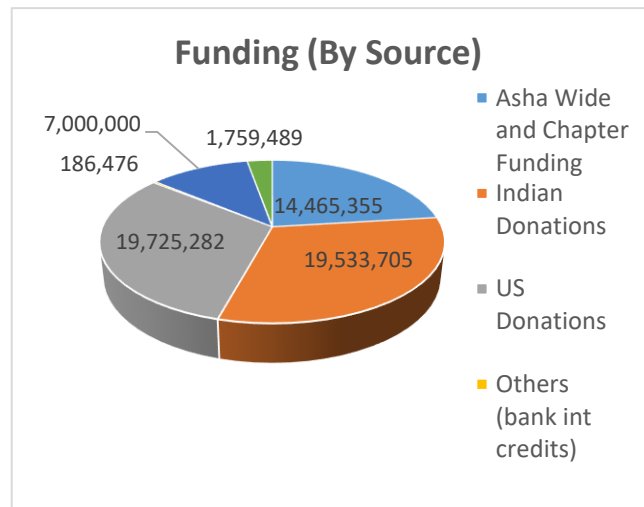
Here is a historical view of our donations and our expenses. Both of these have grown significantly over the years. After remaining more or less flat from 2007-08 to 2013-14, both the donations and expense started growing significantly. During the Corona years of 20-21 and 21-22, both of these took a downturn. However, we have now recovered from that have continued our growth trend in the last 2 years.

Donations V/s Spending
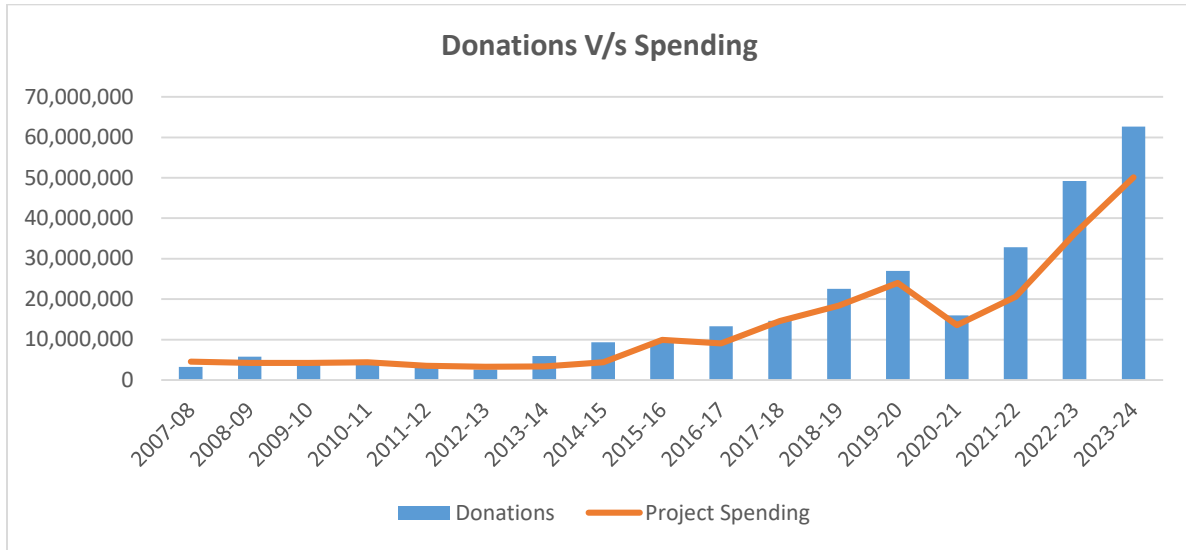
We hope to continue this upward trend with the tremendous support we have been receiving from all our supporters!

Plan for the Coming Year

Asha Chennai is poised at an interesting point. ACE our major scale initiative has started very well. The teachers are all motivated and are teaching their classes well. The reception to the Computer Science class from the students in the schools is very good. Minor infrastructure problems are there but they are not serious enough to derail the program. Asha hopes to significantly increase the impact of what we do through such scale initiatives. Therefore, broadly our main scaling up will be in the ACE and RTC programs and other programs will only see minor incremental growth where it makes sense. Here is the plan for the next year explained by program.

We received 500 used laptops from Amazon of a good quality in May 2024. This will help us stock all the schools in most of our programs with adequate number of computers. In particular, the schools under our primary and middle school support, ACE program and our RTCs will all receive adequate number of computers. It has given a great start for our new year.

Primary and Middle School Support

We have over the years found that for a project area to function well, it requires a minimum number of teachers. This enables meaningful monthly meetings where the teachers can train each other, onboarding of new teachers by old teachers, allow for a coordinator etc. From this point of view our projects Sangamam, Pearl and Thulasi are already at a good size. Our projects Cauvery and Mirzapur with just 4 and 2 teachers respectively, needed to certainly increase in size. It would be good to also increase our projects Rajatalab and Poorna Vidhya with 7 and 9 teachers.

Other than that we are hoping to continue expanding the KaradiPath program. From the 36 schools covered in 2023-24, we are planning to expand the coverage to about 56 schools. Besides this we are not planning any major change to this program. As a trial we also hope to start implementing the Leap for Word program in a few schools to understand it fully so that we may also include that in our offering down the road.

Explore and ACE

Explore program will be retained at about the same level of around 300 schools and 30000 students being covered. ACE is where the maximum expansion is planned. Currently 52 government teachers from as many schools in Thiruvallur district are being trained to teach computer science in ACE v1. They are in turn reaching about 1800 students in these schools. We are planning to on board another 50+ teachers in ACE v2 and cover a similar number of students. Further this will also cover schools in other districts we serve, namely Villupuram, Thiruvannamalai, Thoothukudi and Thirunelveli.

Another qualitative change in the ACE program that we are planning to introduce is that we are making this a 2-year curriculum. ACE v1 was introduced as a one-year curriculum. However, as it was launched only by late Oct, we converted it into something like a 1.5 yr curriculum with some 6 lessons added in programming as well. However, ACE v2 is designed as a proper 2-year curriculum. The first year of the curriculum covers digital literacy and the second year programming. Each year with have its project work. These courses have borrowed ideas from the basic digital literacy and basic programming courses of the RTCs.

While ACEv1 and ACEv2 will continue in parallel in 2024-25, we are also in discussion with other groups within the government education department to see if we can introduce a CS curriculum in the Schools of Excellence, in ADW hostels etc. We hope some of these push us further towards making the Asha way of teaching computer science a standard in government schools.

Rural Technology Centres

At the Rural Technology Centres, Asha Chennai offers its most advanced courses. Therefore, it serves as a testing ground for our new curriculum/lessons, assessment methods etc. The lessons we design for the different courses of the RTCs have percolated into all our other programs as well. RTCs also in a certain sense forces us to continue adding new courses. Quite a few of the students who started at the Kanakamma Chathram and Seethanjeri RTCs in January 2022 and still continuing without any gap. This forces us to keep coming up with at least one new course every term! This also keeps the teachers learning and they have to be at least one course ahead of the students to be able to do this!

The media editing course was created as a collaborative effort of volunteers, our software engineers and the RTC teachers. We are working on the same model for the two new courses – Web Development 2.0 and Robotics. Our software engineering team is also working on this along with the RTC teachers.

The RTC centers will also grow in terms of numbers. Two new RTCs are planned to be launched in July at Kilpennathur in Thiruvannamalai and at Nallatinpudhur in Thoothukudi districts. We hope to launch 3 more RTCs at Thirutani,

Asha Kanini, Content work and Other Software initiatives

Asha Kanini v4 is being developed and should soon see the day. The existing Asha Kanini v3 is using very old version of software like node, expressjs, react etc. We needed to upgrade it for a few years now. We finally started on that work in 2023-24 and will be wrapping that up in 2024-25. Another important requirement which came up was to make the mapping process easy when migrating from one version of a textbook to another. In

v3, we needed to remap all the packages to the lessons in the new textbook. In v4, we have provided the ability to pick mappings for the lessons in the old version of the textbook and assign it to different lessons in the new textbook. When the changes are minor, this will tremendously speed up the process of mapping to the new version of the textbooks.

Once a Windows version of the new Asha Kanini v4 is available, we will start the mapping process to remap all the contents to the latest versions of the TN and UP textbooks. We will also upgrade Android version to the latest API version and support the v4 functionality in Android.

In terms of content we have started a process of creating discrete set of 1 hour (meant for one period) activities for Maths, English, Science and Logical Reasoning. This is primarily for our computer teachers to use during their visits to the schools. Our computer teachers will teach our CS curriculum for a little more than half the times they teach a class in a school and will teach regular subjects during the other half time. This doesn't give them enough time to cover the entire curriculum in any of the subjects. These activities provide them an activity which is not in a sequence (i.e. can be done independent of what else they have done with this class) and builds conceptual clarity for a topic that is there in their curriculum and/or appropriate for their age. This exercise will be completed with lesson plan for each activity by the end of this 2024-25 academic year.

The software development team has started the process of developing software for teacher work reporting. We will be starting this for the ACE and Explore programs as we had to submit detailed output data to Amazon for which we were using Google Forms. Converting to our own software will also help provide a dashboard to track the progress of the whole project and if things are not keeping pace in some school dive into the details for the school. Once these are completed we will also develop trackers for overall teacher schedule management, reporting for our Primary and Middle School teachers and also the RTC teachers. These will also be completed by the 2024-25 academic year.

Other Programs

We plan to continue the other programs like Scholarships, Libraries, Manigal, Arogyam etc. at the same level as last year. We will continue providing scholarships for about 110 students. We hope to start three more libraries, one each in Thulasi, Pearl and Sangamam project areas. Manigal will continue to support the educational needs of tribal children in the two hamlets. Arogyam will continue its scaled down support in 6 hamlets.

Sugadharam project has started the construction of new toilets at two schools in Thiruvallur District at Palavakkam and Kannigaiper. Depending on the funds available we may take up additional schools after this.

Empower Change: Join Hands with Asha-Chennai

The heart of Asha-Chennai is its vibrant community of volunteers and donors. Each of these individuals plays a crucial role in driving our mission forward, whether through monetary donations, volunteering their time, or both. Their unwavering support is the foundation of our success, and we hope you, too, will be inspired to join us in making a lasting impact.

At Asha-Chennai, we offer multiple avenues for you to contribute, each one ensuring that your involvement makes a tangible difference in the lives of the children we support.

- **Donations**

Your financial contribution can transform lives. Visit our [Donate](#) page to explore the various methods of donating and become a vital part of our mission.

- **Support-A-Child**

Through our Asha Scholarships Project, you can sponsor a child's education, covering expenses like school fees, books, and uniforms. You'll receive regular updates on the child's progress and opportunities to connect directly with the student, witnessing firsthand the difference you're making.

- **Volunteering**

Not all contributions are financial. Many choose to give the gift of time, engaging in activities that align with their interests and skills. At Asha-Chennai, there are no rigid hierarchies—just a friendly, passionate group working together for a common cause. Join us, and contribute in ways that suit your schedule and passion.

- **Moral Support**

Sometimes, a simple word of encouragement can work wonders. If you believe in our cause and the work we're doing, let us know. Your support and kind words fuel our drive to continue making a difference.

> *By contributing in any way that resonates with you, you become a crucial part of a movement dedicated to uplifting the lives of children through education. Your support truly matters.*

Asha Event Calendar - 2024- 25

At Asha-Chennai, every event we organize is a step towards empowering the underprivileged and creating a brighter future through education. Our event calendar is a reflection of our commitment to making a meaningful impact across various domains. Throughout the year, we host a range of activities designed to uplift both educators and students. This calendar is more than just dates and events—it's a journey of growth, learning, and making a difference. You may view the detailed event calendar here.

Event List
June, 2024
New term begins at all schools
Toilet Construction at Palavakkam and Kannigaiper to continue through to August.
Computer Science training will be organized for each project, encompassing both new and existing teachers
Pearl Asha Impressions to be held on 14 June, 2024.
Distribution of used laptops from Amazon to our schools
Planning out the scope of all projects of Asha Chennai and allocation of funds for the same.
Inauguration of new RTC at Nalatinpudhur.
July, 2024
Completion of audit of both our Asha Trust accounts and Asha South India accounts
Purchase and Distribution of new laptops.
Purchase and Distribution of stationery materials.
Purchase and Distribution of uniform kits for teachers
RTC Impressions
Launch of KaradiPath program at new schools
August, 2024
Remaining student material distributions from July
ACE V2 to be launched in Thiruvallur, Thoothukudi and Thrivanamalai
Inauguration of new toilet blocks at Palavakkam and Kannigaiper
September, 2024
Black board painting at schools
End of Term I – With exams taking precedence, our teachers reduce their visits to the school and take up content work and other training activities
Annual teacher excursions
Asha for Education global conference to be held at Silicon Valley US on Sept 28th and 29th
October, 2024
Training sessions in Math and Science are conducted across all our projects for Asha teachers
November, 2024
Oral Assessments at all supported schools in UP and TN
Launch of a year-end fund-raising campaign
December, 2024
CS training at Thiruvallur for all teachers
End of Term II

January, 2025
Student excursions at all projects. Over 1600 children from nearly 80 schools had been taken out on excursion with Asha last year. The excursions are usually carried out on Saturdays or Sundays so as to not disturb the working days at Government schools. The excursion is organized with the full support and partnership of the school and the education department. Fun and frolic
Semester completion at RTCs with project submissions and assessments
Government teacher training sessions to continue

February, 2025
Student excursions continue at all projects
Written Assessments at all our projects
RTC Impressions for term I of 24-25
Launch of new RTCs and the start of new semester at existing RTCs

March, 2025
Correction of written assessments
Annual day functions at all projects
Asha India Conference 2025
Computer assessments which will involve both written and practical questions
ACE v1 Asha Impressions – The first Asha Impressions for the ACE schools will be held this year.

April, 2025
Annual day functions continue
Submission of projects by all schools. Correction and selection of best presentations and programs.
Assessment reports to all schools
Wrap up of the accounts for 23-24

May, 2025
ACE V2 Asha Impressions
End of Term III
Asha Impressions in early May
Proposals for upcoming year. Start the process of planning for every project and for Asha Chennai as a whole for the year 2025-26.
RightStart by mid-May
Hiring of new teachers

Testimonials

Volunteers

Mr. R. Sundaram, Volunteer with Asha for 7 years," Asha Chennai made great strides during the year 23-24 tempting one to term it as an inflection point in setting out on a course of rapid computer education across the govt. schools. Not only did it implement CS Education in its own RTCs and Schools which it supports it introduced "Teach as You Learn" movement to impart computer skills to Govt Schools through its ACE Programs. To further deepen and enlarge Asha Chennai began talks with the govt to teach the most underprivileged children of Adi Dravida Schools."

Ms. Ramya Manoj, Volunteer/English Mentor for 2023-2024 "I strongly believe poverty can be eradicated from the face of this planet. If poverty is a pandemic, education is its antidote. ASHA has been diligently administering this among underprivileged kids. ASHA's contribution is monumental in that they pioneer in imparting digital literacy and English skills among Government school kids. The two most important skill sets that boost an individual's employability. I have been associated with ASHA, as a spoken English mentor, close to three years now. It has not only been a teaching experience, but a learning experience as well. I had the privilege of accompanying the team on their trip to Trivandrum. Visit to ISRO ll forever remain a cherished memory."

Donors

Deepak Umpathy, CEO, Crossbow Labs LLP,"The teachers of Asha are very enthusiastic in training, all the young children, that it makes me want to go and be a part of their initiative more often. I have seen the children are very excited to be finishing school and come to the regional training centers or the RTC's to spend a lot of time learning. Despite being in very harsh economic conditions the parents of the children have also been showing tremendous interest and support in traveling distances and facilitating such learning. I also had the privilege of judging some of the competitions that Asha holds as an annual event, to showcase the talent of the children from RTC's across Tamil Nadu and I have been immensely impressed at the level of skill, competence and forthcomingness the children exhibit in such events. Our team at Crossbow and I are looking forth to contributing more towards this endeavor."

Asha Teachers

Asha teacher, Sathya - "I had joined Asha as a Math teacher. Later, I was trained as a computer science teacher and took up teaching computers as well. I am happy about having a laptop to teach the class. I have witnessed an improvement in children as they receive hands on experience with the computers at school. Personally, I have travelled very little, but, through Asha I had the opportunity to go on a 3-day trip with other teachers. I enjoyed that a lot."

Saraswathi Devi, Karadipath Teacher from Pearl project, "When teaching English through the Karadipath program, we use very simple sentences, which the children are also able to grasp. When I play the songs, they keep requesting to repeat them over and over again. Children are very active during the class. Even after the session or class is done, they don't want to leave. Children enjoy the music a lot. When there are external visitors to the class, the HM requests me to play the songs from the Karadipath program since the children enjoy them a lot."

Asha Teacher, Meenatchi M, "I have been working with Asha for the last 1 year as a Kanini teacher. I teach at PUMS Beemanthoppu, PUPS Meyyur, PUPS Vempedu and PUPS Chithambakkam. All the schools I go to are remote rural schools. Students lacked computer knowledge. Now the students are learning and benefiting a lot. All students from Class I to Class VIII use Kanini. Students learn from Gcompris, Tuxpaint, Edu activate, Presentation etc. Classes like code.org, scratch are useful for the students. Classes like Blockly games, maze, turtle, etc. improve the learning ability of the students. Unplugged activity, group activities help them learn with interest when playing together. Thanks to Amazon and Asha for providing laptop and educational equipment."

Head Master

Asst Head Teacher at T.B.Puram, Mr. Vijay Kumar," I am a teacher at PUMS T.B.Puram. A computer science teacher has been coming to teach our students through Asha and this has been very helpful. Before this, we did not have computers, nor any CS teacher at school. After computers started, there has been an increase in enrollment at our school. The children who come to our school are from marginal backgrounds. They have never seen a computer directly. Through the efforts of Asha and Amazon, our students have had the opportunity to touch computers for the first time."

M. Sivakami, HM at PUMS Manjakuppam," Through the efforts of Asha and Amazon, our students have been able to learn computer skills. For the last 7 years, Asha teachers have been coming to our school twice a week to teach computers. They have also provided us with stationery items like books, pens, pencils and provided accessories for the computer lab. Asha also provides uniform and shoes. Due to Asha's efforts our students have been doing well in computers and have won 2 awards at the Asha Impressions at IIT. Asha has provided books and cupboards for our library. Through Asha's Karadipath program, our children are learning spoken English. Out students also go on excursions."

B.V. Lalitha, HM at PUMS Ammambakkam," Since 2011, Asha has been providing computer education at our school. They have provided us with computer teachers and 2 laptops. Every academic year, they provide our school with uniform, notebooks and geometry box for class 5. In order to encourage the children, they have also taken them on excursions. This year we have conducted Annual day at our school and Asha has provided snacks

and beverages for the occasion. They have also provided prizes for the children. The computer teachers teach classes 1-5. We have been getting a lot of support from Asha over the years."

Asha Student

Govardhan, Grade 10 student about Asha RTC, "I don't have the right words to say about Asha. When I go to the RTC, there is so much affection. Not only RTC teachers, even the Asha teachers at school, or the teachers who come as invigilators during our exams, they are not like teachers, they talk to us like close friends. We share our feelings, or have any doubts, we are able to freely share with them. We like Venkat Sir and Rajaram Sir a lot. They have been visiting us from years, and they remember us very well."

D. Purushoth, Asha student under the Amazon Explore Program," I study in Thiruvanlangadu in Grade 9. My father works at a sugar factory and my mother is a housewife. The computer teacher who comes through Asha Foundation has taught us a lot about computers. We have learnt coding and through Amazon robotics, we have learnt about Hour of code, Minecraft etc. When I use what I learnt in school at home, it makes me very happy. Through Amazon, Asha Foundation has provided our school laptops and I am very happy about it."

Snegha, Grade 5 student,"I study in Kuppathupalayam. My father is a farmer and my mother works under the MGNREGA scheme. Through Asha and Amazon, our school has been given laptops and Asha Kanini. I have learnt to type in Open office and make presentations. I have also learnt TuxPaint, TuxMath and Gcompris. We have also received uniform which we wear once a week. We have also received pen, pencil, books etc through Amazon. Thanks to Asha and Amazon for providing us with all these."

Chief Guest

Prof Kamakoti, the director of IITM, and a long term supporter and volunteer of Asha Chennai, as the *chief guest at our RightStart Felicitation Function* said "In 2003, Rightstart first started in my lab at IIT. During that period, we had very few teachers. Laxmi Ma'am from Olcott school guided us at the time and would involve in most of the coordination. Later in 2012, when I was a part of Vanavani school, we began conducting Rightstart as a school related event in which even teachers from here participated. For the last 20 years, except for the 2 years during CoVid, we have conducted Rightstart here due to the consistent perseverance of the entire team of Asha. Teachers trained earlier, are now coming as trainers here. We have built a good legacy here. Teaching little children is a challenge, but everyone here has that talent to teach well. What you learn at Rightstart, you will be using to teach your students. The youth of today are in your hands; if you shape them well, the country will do well too. The service you are doing is very important to the society which is why IIT will do its best to support you. An institute that is run by the tax payers' money should benefit the society. I don't see a better use than this for the society, in my opinion. I have to thank Asha for it.

Trainers and Judges

RTC Impressions judge, Ms. Poorva Bhatter, who runs an academic initiative of her own said this about the RTC Impressions event where she was a judge, "The most striking feature of the experience is the confidence of the students. They look in the eye and speak. They are absolutely comfortable with machines and programming, indicative of their involvement in learning. And, since they work on the programs on their own, the projects are demonstrative of their logic. The RTC seems to be holding the right nerve which is encouraging their learning and associated outcome. This is a great initiative."

Mrs. Meena Suresh, Math Trainer, at Rightstart 2024," I look at Rightstart as an opportunity to improve myself as well. I have visited the schools of teachers I am familiar with, but I really like all the teachers at Asha. I love their commitment towards children the most. All year round, I give trainings. I feel the teachers at Asha have much deeper sense of commitment than private school teachers where I train. We live this life once, and while we are at it, let us do something worthwhile. As teachers, we must leave a positive legacy behind. My proudest moments have been when my children come back to me. After so many years, I randomly meet my students in unexpected places and they still remember me. That is the kind of reward that every teacher gets. As teachers, you make a lot of difference in their lives."

Tribute

In Loving Memory of Ms. Datchayani

It is with heavy hearts that we share the passing of Ms. Datchayani, a beloved teacher at Asha, who left us on November 23, 2023. Hailing from Neyveli village near Poondi, Datchayani dedicated nearly five years to educating and uplifting the children of Thiruvallur. She worked in several capacities and was working at an RTC teacher at our Poondi Rural Technology Center for the last year.

Taking on the challenge of running the Poondi RTC single-handedly, she led her students to achieve remarkable success, winning several prizes during the RTC Impressions event this past August. Her unwavering dedication, even in the face of obstacles, was inspiring to all who knew her.
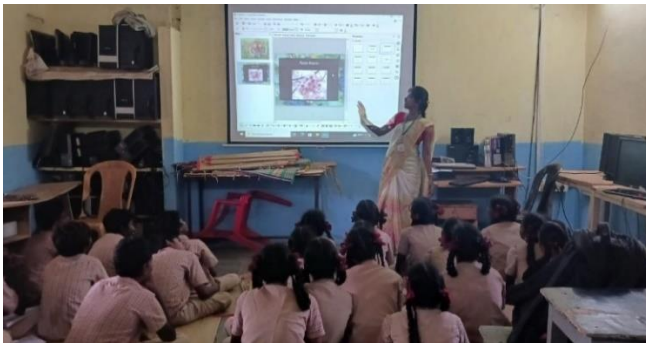
Datchayani was not just a teacher but a beacon of joy and warmth. Her cheerful demeanor, friendliness, and sense of responsibility made her a beloved figure among students and colleagues alike. To her students, she was more than just an educator—they affectionately called her 'Akka' (older sister), reflecting the deep bond she cultivated with them.

At just 26 years old, Datchayani's life was tragically cut short by a viral infection that led to further health complications. Yet, her legacy endures in the hearts of those she touched. Her smile, her commitment to the education of rural children, and the love she brought into her work will forever be remembered by the Asha family.

We honor her memory and express our deepest sympathies to her loved ones. May she rest in peace, and may her spirit continue to inspire us in our mission.