

MAKKALA JAGRITI: HELPING CHILDREN PURSUE THEIR DREAMS

RALPH ALEX ARAKAL | DC

Bengaluru can boast of witnessing a pioneering initiative by Makkala Jagriti (even before the Right to Education Act in 2009 was introduced) to equip underprivileged children and youngsters with the necessary skillsets to access opportunities in the mainstream.

Founded in 2003, the NGO started with sponsoring school education for children from marginalised communities in and around Adugodi. But they soon realised that the impact of their programmes lasted for a very short time.

To extend their outreach, the team decided to set up a learning centre in the city to offer a free learning environment for students from government schools and anganwadis in the neighbourhood. As students from surrounding areas were more interested in attending classes at the centre than their own schools, Makkala Jagriti was encouraged to start more such learning centres. Makkala Jagriti Holistic Development Learning Centres (HDLC) soon gained popularity and the team started working with 29 schools in the state – 14 in the city and 15 in Koppal and Gagad districts. "As early students showed keen interest, more children enrolled with us through the word of mouth publicity. The government recognised our efforts and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in 2008 with the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA). The arrangement enabled us to reach further," said Nishita Khajane, Deputy Manager for Networking and Communications, Makkala Jagriti. Now, MJ learning centres are at 125 different locations across the state.

As it offered research-based and feedback-oriented designs for teaching, Makkala Jagriti soon grew into

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an education-focussed organisation. The Early Childhood Care and Education programme offers classes for children till six years of age, while its flagship HDLC programme strives to create a spark among children aged six to fourteen. Named SPICE (Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative and Emotional) model, it helps children become confident with a highly developed emotional quotient. The programme also focuses on enhanced academic capabilities, physical well-being and teaches children to be creative and socially responsible citizens without fear.

The NGO has stepped up its reach, involving the youth through its Yuva Jagriti programme. The youngsters are offered support and opportunities for non-formal learning, which helps them integrate with the local community better.



Members of the Makkala Jagriti Holistic Development Learning Centres talking to students

—DC

The programme tries to fill the gaps with skill sets and knowledge. It also helps them identify mainstream opportunities and to actively pursue their passions and interests.

The latest addition to the NGO's initiative is Yuva Cafe, where an open, friendly and conducive space for youth is created to explore their passion and interests. Two such cafes at Malleswaram and Ulsoor in Bengaluru work based on various consultation meetings and discussions held with the beneficiaries. "The youngsters present changing models of learning according to their requirements. We conceptualise their ideas in a flexible manner with the help of experts and volunteers from different walks of life. This is what drives the initiatives," Ms Khajane said. Makkala Jagriti also encourages peer group support programmes to teach youngsters the life skills and professional and personal development, communication skills and basics of computers to prepare them for mainstream opportunities. They are offered hands-on



Our work with children organically grew into working with adolescent and teenagers, as they became transformational role models back in their community. The power of such change agents leads to the birth of exclusive space for youth – Yuva Cafe

— JOY SRINIVASAN,
FOUNDER, MAKKALA JAGRITI

training and exposure trips. "This makes them confident and motivates them to pursue their dreams. The youth feel motivated to take ownership of their lives, reflect upon their paths and reach their goals," said Ms Khajane. The organisation, founded

by Mrs Joy Srinivasan, a graduate of Women's Leadership Trainer of Mayyam (India) and an accredited professional member of the Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science, has more to offer for youngsters in the years to come.