



**MIRRA CHARITABLE TRUST**

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2018-2019**

Visit our website @ <http://mirract.com>

## About Mirra

A Chennai-based charitable trust, Mirra was registered on 2 July 2009 (Regd. No. 797 of 2009). Mirra is in its tenth year now.

Mirra was born out of a dream of creating an all inclusive space for children to go beyond disabilities, so that they may both give and receive such beautiful things as ideas, openness, dignity, joy and education. The main objective of Mirra is potential realization, empowerment and inclusion of children with autism, learning disability, and other special needs into mainstream schools and community at large. Educate, Empower and Embrace are the three main pillars that drive every initiative at Mirra – driven ably by a nine-member team.

## Our Mission

We believe that inclusion is the natural way of the universe; it is a truth in existence. Experiencing this truth and implementing it in the field of education and in life is our mission.

## Our Primary Programs

- ✓ Pratikriya (remedials)
- ✓ Aikya (inclusion)
- ✓ Vinithi (training and workshops)
- ✓ Payirchi (skill development towards a vocation).

The services we offer are aimed at reaching out to parents and children in a variety of ways.

## Message from our Founder Trustee, C.A. Satish

It gives me great pleasure to present the annual report of 2018-19. This year too has been an exciting experience. We continued to venture into new areas to explore all possibilities in our journey with our children towards empowering them. All this would not have been possible without the active support of our team, parents and all our well wishers.

## Highlights

- ✓ Reached out to about **80 students** through **7000 hrs** of remedials programs
- ✓ Continual **parent empowerment**
- ✓ **Yoga, Play and Arts based therapy** formalized
- ✓ **740 hrs of consultation** to 2 mainstream, 1 special school and 1 international school at Bhutan
- ✓ **4th batch of Shraddha completed** –**38 educators** enabled and empowered through Shraddha
- ✓ **MEI** initiated
- ✓ **3 Arts-based workshop** on Mural Arts, Spray Painting and Humdrum
- ✓ 1st Batch of **students of AEMP graduated** and 4 students have taken up advanced level
- ✓ Mirra **launched its own website** <http://mirract.com> in-house with the active involvement from PBAEMP students
- ✓ **Piloted pre-voc skills** for house-keeping, cooking, sewing, paper bag making and gardening
- ✓ **5 events** organized for students and parents

## Pratikriya

This year, we reached out to about 80 students through our remedial programs - the youngest being 2.8 years and the oldest 20 years of age, and about 40 students through assessments and home programs. The sessions with the children are individual sessions. The services include physical therapy, communication and thinking, functional application of science and math in daily life, functional English, computer skills - basics of coding and Photoshop. Parents get empowered to continue the work done in the session at home as they get to observe and participate in the sessions. Presence of the caregiver in the session is mandatory at Mirra.

The fourth and fifth batches of **Chinese massage** sessions with parents happened this year. Chinese massage (qi gong), an eastern technique of massage, is taught to a select few parents at Mirra. The technique relies on the positive energy transfer from mother to child happening in the least invasive and most reassuring way. Checklists in the form of questionnaires and easy-noting formats also form part of the orientation so that recording of pre- and post-massage outcomes are documented.

This year **Yoga** was offered to students and parents individually. The children attend yoga sessions in order to facilitate their customised goals. The main objective of yoga was to develop self-awareness, decrease anxiety and improve balance of body and mind. Both children and parents have been diligently practising at home. This year yoga was offered to parents free of charge as part of the initiative to empower parents.

**Play therapy** has been taken seriously this year as a tool to promote communication, self-regulation and thereby emotional development. While it has been the predominant mode of intervention for children below 7 years, play was also used with older children to address a wide range of objectives, including anxiety, imaginative play, breaking rigidity, creative expression, etc.

**Arts-based therapy** - The arts have played a major role in facilitating learning this past year. Learning has been fun using the arts. Visual arts, rhythm, melody, role play and drama were used very consciously towards facilitating communication, motor, emotional regulation and cognitive skills.

**Do It Yourself (DIY)** – This year DIY programs in science involving parent and child were initiated. This year, the theme of DIY has been measurement and different aspects of measurement dealing with capacity, weight and length across various environments. This includes understanding our own body measures, measures used for cooking, measures used for distance, time - tying up with real-time life skills.

## Aikya

This year saw Mirra working with two mainstream inclusive schools, Christwood School and TATVA, and one special school, namely Swabodhini School for children with special needs.

This past year, Mirra's support to **Christwood** included

- ✓ Observation and assessment of children flagged for assessment
- ✓ Formulating a structured program for the children with needs in the school and for the students supported by the school in their outreach programs (the Bridge Programs)
- ✓ Providing training for teachers on managing behaviours in the classroom
- ✓ Training of Kindergarten teachers to understand child development for years 3 to 6
- ✓ Identify and screen children at risk for special needs
- ✓ Meeting with teachers to provide strategies to modify instruction
- ✓ Empowering parents of children identified with special needs by meeting and counselling on the course to be followed
- ✓ Exploring differentiated assessments with allowances provided for students during summative assessments, etc.

Mirra's engagement with **TATVA** this past year involved

- ✓ Classroom and remedial observations of specific students from Grades 1 to 7 who were found to be struggling with academic skills
- ✓ Informal assessment of a few of these students
- ✓ To learn how the primary stakeholders may work together successfully to support the learning of children in school
- ✓ Working with the special education coordinator in formulating structured remedial plans for children identified as needing assistance, understanding methodology and practice in remediation
- ✓ Teacher workshops and training on "Perception and Learning" and "managing behaviours in the classroom"
- ✓ Facilitation of drum circle to emphasise the importance of using the multi-arts in learning.

Mirra's focus at **Swabodhini** this year was in ensuring that the system established were followed and in slowly weaning off support. Having worked with the organisation for one and a half years on setting up systems in the area of special education in the pre-primary, primary and pre-vocational streams, relating to building a curriculum, its implementation, training of teaching and non-teaching staff, etc., this year was spent in ensuring these systems were followed through reviews of the process and continuous training of the educators. The visits to Swabodhini were once a month. Mirra's engagement with Swabodhini is over.

**International:** Ms Lakshmi Satish from Mirra went as a consultant of Perkins International with a three-member team led by Ms Namita Jacob to Bhutan as part of the Transition to School project of Perkins International to train 32 participants and help parents and the school in easy transition.

The main objectives of the training program were as follows:

- ✓ To understand the principles and practices that promote successful inclusion
- ✓ To learn how the primary stakeholders may work together successfully to support the learning of children in school
- ✓ To have strategies to address a range of challenges that children could have in accessing the curriculum;
- ✓ To develop detailed plans for appropriate accommodations across subjects for at least one term for the five children who will join ELC
- ✓ To ensure shared understanding and clarity in the process of evaluation and reporting.

The participants included parents, caretakers, primary school teachers, heads of schools, teachers from Early Childhood Centers, College of Education and staff from Bhutan Foundation. The training session was followed up by a series of meetings with the parents of the five children and the school to work on the specifics of transitioning.





## Vinithi

### TRAINING

Shraddha and MEI are the two training programs conducted by Mirra.

**Shraddha:** Mirra conducted its fourth batch of Shraddha this year. Shraddha is a Saturday-only certificate course aimed at empowering teachers, parents and special educators to reach out to a multi-ability group of children. This year the group comprised four mainstream teachers, an art facilitator, one Principle of a Pre-school, a school administrator, four parents and an assistant teacher. With every passing batch, the course content undergoes changes and updations. These are possible because of the richness of discussions amongst the teams, their feedback and inputs on implementation of strategies and skills learnt.

**MEI :** MEI, the first of the series of Early Intervention workshops by Mirra, was held on March 2, 2019. The focus of this workshop, aside from emphasizing the need for early intervention, was on the importance of play and movement as a means of acquiring the necessary skills. There were activities which involved movement, play, sound and rhythm and games. The parents participated with much enthusiasm and came forward to play and create games and also had fun interacting with each other.

### WORKSHOPS

This year there were three workshops at Mirra - all relating to the arts. Two workshops, namely the spray-painting workshop and the mural workshop were the initiative of AIMS Media as part of the AEMP program.

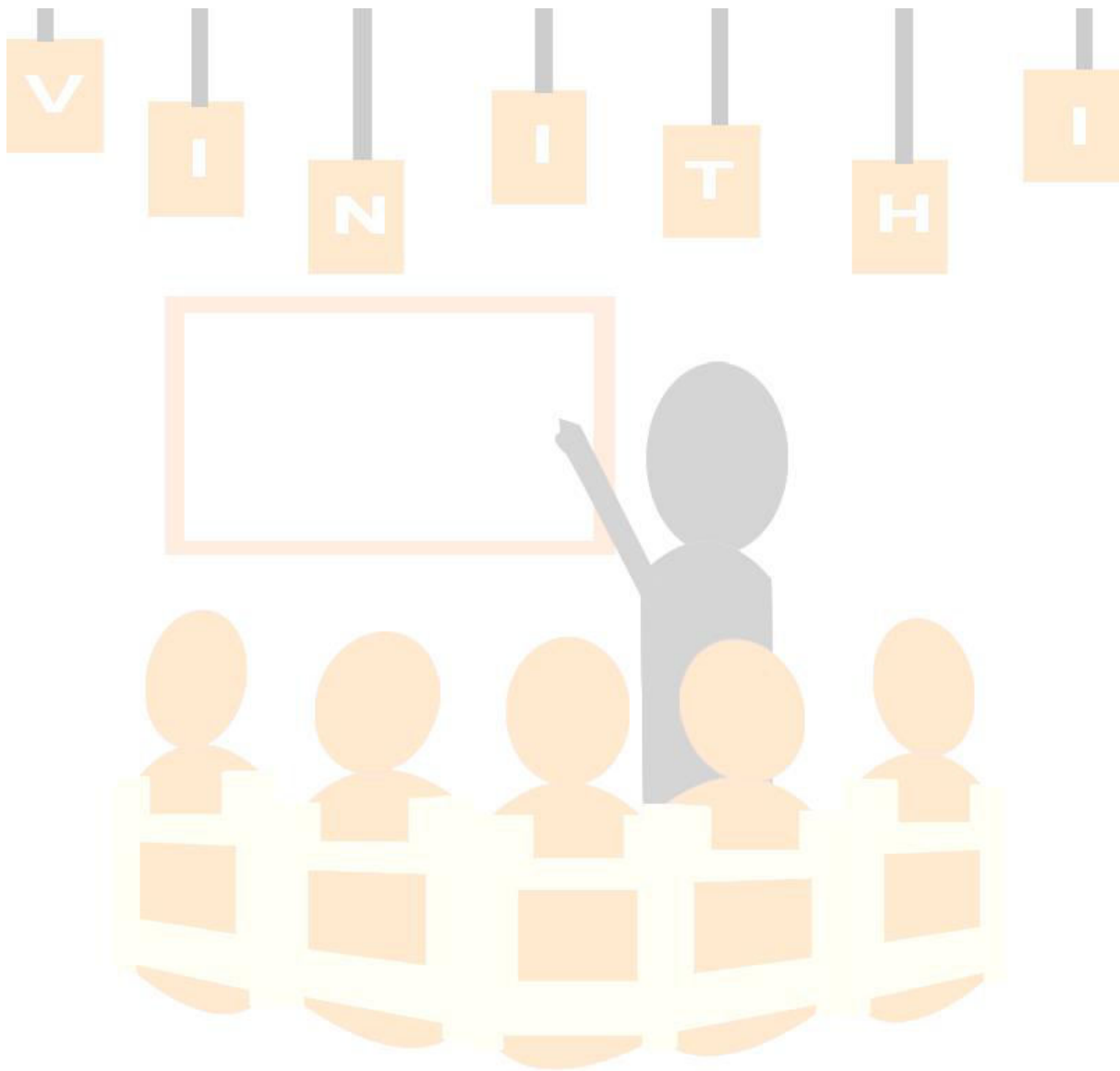
In collaboration with AIMS Media, a **Mural Art workshop** was organised for Mirra's students and their parents at its premises on 13th March 2019. Each parent-child group chose a picture that would be made into a mural. They began by tracing the picture on the canvas board. The children then worked on rolling the clay and arriving at the needed shape. With the help of the parent, this was stuck on the canvas board. They painted using different types of brushes. They used their imagination to make the mural more appealing.

In collaboration with AIMS Media, **spray painting workshop** was organised for parents and children at Mirra. Following a presentation and demonstration from Mr. Vinoth of AIMS Media, each parent and child started working on their spray painting. They explored using brushes, sponges, sprays and created wonderful paintings.. Every object around the room was used as a prop for painting, be it leaves or cups or stencils. The final paintings that came out from each team was unique and showcased their creative quotient.

On 7 August 2018, Mr Rzhude David did a **Humdrum** workshop with parents and facilitators. He took them on a well-structured journey in understanding time and sound and their relationship in creating rhythm and music. He helped demystify rhythm and gave the audience the confidence that they could even compose their own music as can children if the lessons are practiced meticulously. Children and adults experienced rhythm in a way like never before as they beat their hum drums, exploring rhythm and pitch. They were led sometimes by the facilitator, Mr Rzhude David, the inventor of the hum drum, and sometimes by the children who were drumming in complete ecstasy.

The humdrum kit comes with a music guide and two hum drums. The follow up workshop began by the learners committing themselves to practice lessons with their loved ones.

They got acquainted with the metronome and used their hands to get the hang of the rhythm. By the second day, vocal sounds were added to the beating and tiny steps were taken in creating notations. All the participants sang their own beats and some courageously resonated others creation. By the end of the workshop the unknown symbols were becoming known and keeping time was a key aspect while every participant practices the lessons for 21 days.



## Payirchi

The Ability Enhancement Multimedia Program: Our first batch completed their 18-month diploma program, the Learning Phase, and some of them have moved on to the next level (Project Based AEMP)

where their learning is further enhanced in addition to gaining experience on real time projects. Their convocation happened on 23 January, 2019. The convocation address by Rakesh Dhasmana of AIMS Media is accessible in the following link: <https://youtu.be/FQ1RCnNXnEI>

Mirra launched its own website <http://mirract.com> in-house with the active involvement from PBAEMP students. The students were involved in creating logos, updating the contents of each page by adding text, images, hyperlinks. They also created collages and video for the header.

This past year saw us exploring pre-vocational skills in housekeeping, cooking, sewing, paper-bag making and gardening. Pilot programs with two to five students in each of these areas were conducted. Based on these a structured program will be designed for facilitating pre-vocational skills for the next academic year.





## Events

### SEE

In the fourth chapter of SEE (Sensory Experience Exhibition), we at Mirra explored nature with our parents and children. About 35 children and their parents and a few grandparents attended this two day event held at Mirra on 31 August and September 1, 2018. Children explored all their senses – smelled and tasted different types of leaves, seeds and roots, and their products; some made their own snack by grating, depoding, stringing, peeling, pounding and scooping. They danced around wearing garlands, bracelets, headbands they made using flowers, fruits and seeds. They walked on coconut shell stilts or bamboo stilts, stamped clay, sat on a stone mat, played and made shapes with wet sand; hammered away with wood and tools like professional carpenters; painted using hands, leaves, stones, fruits and vegetables. Every child found something they were fascinated by. The therapeutic benefits of engaging with nature are immense. The 'Aha' moment for most parents was that sensory integration can happen by simple engagement with nature and her products every single day and at no cost.

### SCIENCE DAY

The theme for the 5th science day, held on 19 January 2019, was Electricity. The day began with a presentation explaining the definition, sources and uses of electricity. The safety aspects while using electricity was emphasized. Working models demonstrating the sources of electricity helped the students to reinforce their understanding. Concepts were explained through movement and games. Experiments pertaining to open and closed circuits, conductors and insulators, how graphite in a pencil can be used to light a bulb, a simple electric bell and electromagnets were constructed. Every student got the opportunity to perform and try out the experiment by themselves. The students were attentive, focused and were ready to explore and infer the results. They drew the circuit diagrams and noted their observations. The students were asked to make any model demonstrating the application of electricity and showcase the same by end of the month as a follow-up action.

### FIELD TRIP

On the sunny Sunday of 23 September, 2018, the children of Mirra accompanied by their parents arrived at STEPS for a day of joyful activities. This plot of 2 acres, located in Sithallapakkam, Chennai, is a haven of fun and engagement for kids and adults. This area contains a herb garden, a playground, two sheds and a mini forest (in the making). The activities included climbing on ropes, walking on a single rope, walking on suspended logs and balancing on a slab of wood. The activities were performed by the children with a lot of zeal! They each took their time on the equipment and explored it enough before proceeding to the next. Children participated in a seed ball making activity and also how to grow microgreens; a scrumptious snack was provided to finish the day.

### NAMMA GREEN SCHOOL

Namma Ooru Foundation, an organisation that focusses on environment-related projects like waste management, community building, conserving water bodies, ground water recharge, increasing green cover, reducing carbon footprint, certified Mirra as "Namma Green School". NOF said about Mirra, "It was in April 2017 that Mirra embarked on its journey to Go Green. What strikes you at Mirra is the adamance with which they go about managing their waste! While the wet waste is composted the dry waste management leaves one spellbound. Just about everything is repurposed,

reused. Be it the fallen leaves, the Bamboo that had to be trimmed, the coconut shell that usually travels a long way and ends up in the landfill. Most of the teaching aids, material are from things that would have otherwise been junked. The management and staff at Mirra are high on creativity coupled with a will to recreate and reuse. Recycling Nazis! “

Dr. Raja Samuel, Principal of MSSW who unveiled the Namma Green School Accreditation aptly spoke about embracing nature with all its imperfections, looking at the recycling practices followed at Mirra.

## **SANTULAN**

Mirra finished the year with Santulan - a two week-long group summer program for children – in two batches, for children aged 7 years and younger and for 8 years and older. Through the year Mirra follows the one-on-one model in its remedial program, wherein the facilitator, child and parent work together. During the two weeks of Santulan, the learning happens in small groups of five. About 32 children signed up for this program this year.

During Santulan, the children went through three stations each day - Movement, Language and Communication and The Arts.

In the Movement Zone, children explored obstacle courses in the form of spider-web and tyre paths; manipulated rubber bands on a simple screw board; did exercises with components of cross patterns, sequence and rotation exercises; used props like textured balls and hoops in creative dance; enjoyed visual treats as they explored playing with lighted balls, played with the lighted sand box, a DIY kaleidoscope and marbles in a maze of 8. The older children tried their hand at simulated movement activities using Kinect games on Xbox 360. The little ones had a cool day as they finished with ice pack toss, chiselling ice with spoons to find a hidden treasure and ice skating using their hands. Both groups explored yoga in a fun ways.

In the Arts zone, children had fun making dolls out of socks, dream catchers using bangles, string and beads, putting together a collage of the sea using sand and paints, painted their hearts out using shaving foam, bubble wraps, paints and brushes, kneaded with such attention as they prepared to make objects with white clay and prepared calming sensory bottles to carry home. Visual art seemed to catch the attention and interest of every child. Engagement and participation was complete, even if touching wet paints was uncomfortable.

In the Language and Communication zone, children learnt to work and have fun as a group, communicating and collaborating with each other be it during games such as carrom, playing cards and dumb charades or during role play and simulation. Shopping and going to a restaurant role play had them interact with each other, making decisions, handling money and waiting for their turn. The older children participated in mock elections. The little ones explored language sensorially - listening to the sounds of the environment, feeling objects from feely bags, singing and listening to the rain songs as they experienced rain from water sprays. They had great fun playing “Housie” and setting up their own house. Some of them had interesting conversations around their objects of interest and did a lot of pretend play. On a day that the children played with “no agenda”, they all established their own boundaries, chose their favourite objects and had fun with their friends.

## Our goals for next year

In our **Pratikriya** remedial program, we would like to do the following in the next academic year:

- ✓ Explore outdoor play at parks and play gyms and indoor sports cabins and the role of martial arts training
- ✓ Pilot small group formats to foster play, facilitate communication and social skills
- ✓ Continue building more reusable working models for science and other areas
- ✓ Explore and use AAC devices for communication

In our **Aikya** program we would like to

- ✓ Meet schools that our children go to and engage actively with them
- ✓ Create inventory of professionals, recreational spaces and learning environments that practise inclusion
- ✓ Support one school as a CSR initiative

In our **Vinithi** program of training and workshops, we would like to

- ✓ Conduct workshops on Sexuality education, Play as a medium of learning, Parent empowerment and enablement
- ✓ Create more awareness on disability and inclusion through blogs
- ✓ Explore offering online training courses

In our **Payirchi** program, we would like to

- ✓ Research into each of the vocational areas and come up with a first draft curriculum of pre-voc skills
- ✓ Explore Vocational pursuits in the areas of weaving and kitchen activities
- ✓ PBAEMP – Identify opportunities and projects for PBAEMP students in the areas of website creation, design of invites, photo shoot, photo editing and design of newsletters

## Gratitude

We are extremely grateful to our patrons and well wishers for their support. Our patrons have supported us whenever we have needed help with sponsoring a child or an event or have needed specific materials to facilitate learning.