



# Mirra Half-yearly Newsletter

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JUNE – DEC 2020

## Our Mission

We believe that inclusion is a 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.

Facebook: [facebook.com/mirract](https://www.facebook.com/mirract)

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/mirracharitable/>

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 eleventh 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 Service Offerings

- ✓ Pratikriya (remedials)
- ✓ Aikya (inclusion)
- ✓ Vinithi (training and workshops for parent and staff capacity building)
- ✓ 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, Satish C A

At the outset, we at Mirra offer our deepest condolences to families who have lost their dear ones due to COVID 19. We pray for their peace.

This has been a challenging year for all of us in many ways. However, we have all tried our best to stay above it. At Mirra, the pandemic has not deterred us from doing our work; in fact, it has made us stronger in our resolve to be present to our children and families. We have evolved strategies and approaches to continue to connect with our children and maintain a continuum in the learning.

I am sure you will agree that we are all learning that uncertainties will be a way of life. There may be no “returning to a normal”. We need to be proactive and work around these uncertainties together to ensure continuous progress for our children.

We assure you that Mirra’s endeavour in empowering our children and families will continue with renewed vigour.

Wishing you all a happy and blessed 2021.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ Around 3000 hours of remedial support
- ✓ Continued learning through **online sessions**
- ✓ Online mode has helped to **reach children across the globe** – other parts of India, Singapore, Dubai and US
- ✓ **Home visits of therapy sessions** organised with parental consent for children belonging to the Early intervention group.
- ✓ **Degham** – Our virtual aerobic sessions began in all earnest in July 2020 to address the physical dimension of wellness.
- ✓ **Fireless cooking** sessions being conducted virtually to encourage children to participate in healthy cooking and eating at their homes.
- ✓ **“Maitri”** – building a social world initiated in collaboration with Snehadhara Foundation
- ✓ **10 webinars/workshops/events** hosted by Mirra
- ✓ **Consultancy for Christwood School** has taken an online mode
- ✓ Theme based songs taught to **Swarathma** Students and their final song rendition collated into a video by our Multimedia students
- ✓ **11 paid projects** executed by Mirra Multimedia students between June and Dec 2020
- ✓ **Art Practices for Inclusion (API)** held for our PBAEMP students
- ✓ Our First batch of Multimedia **complete their PBAEMP** course (Advanced level that includes learning and working on live Projects)
- ✓ Greater momentum and focus on **parent empowerment and parent wellness**
- ✓ Events such as **Sensory exhibition** on our Senses, **Science Day** on Sound, **Kalakriti – The Stage** (our cultural event) conducted virtually
- ✓ **Santulan** conducted through a virtual program in two batches – For junior and senior kids
- ✓ **16 webinars/workshops** attended virtually by Mirra Staff

## PRATIKRIYA – REMEDIAL PROGRAM

This year, we reached out to about 60 students through our remedial programs - the youngest being 2.5 years and the oldest 24 years of age, and about 30 students through assessments and home programs. The sessions with the children are individual sessions and we have piloted certain group sessions to facilitate communication and expression amongst the children. 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. We also focus on yoga, play and arts-based therapy, collaboration with other organizations in building a social world and believe in creating a bonding with nature for our children through various initiatives. 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.

## Highlights

- ✓ **Online Sessions** to continue the learning process and our engagement with the children and parents
- ✓ **Assessment and reviews** being done virtually as an outcome of these changes times.
- ✓ **Home visits of therapy sessions** organised with parental consent for children belonging to the Early intervention group.
- ✓ **Fireless cooking** sessions being conducted virtually to encourage children to participate in healthy cooking and eating at their homes
- ✓ **Swarathma** -our musical journey for our students interested in learning and singing songs mentored by parent volunteer Ms. Vidhya began in June 2020 in the virtual mode and their journey is well catalogued in Mirra YouTube channel.
- ✓ **Degham** - Early morning physical training sessions conducted virtually over the weekends
- ✓ **Arts Practices for Inclusion(API) for PBAEMP:** The 11 sessions for the PBAEMP students had as their objectives: being aware of themselves - physically and emotionally and caring for themselves; appreciating others and acknowledge themselves as a team; being open to giving and receiving from each other; being empathetic to each other; to have fun and be ok with making mistakes. Of these, two sessions happened both with the students and their parent and focussed on enabling an environment where both work simultaneously and together with joy and respect for each other.
- ✓ **“Maitri” – building a social world** ,in collaboration with Snehadhara foundation- Bangalore, where students share learning spaces and best practices including the Arts from both the organizations on an online platform. The objective of Maitri is enabling children to acquire tools needed to navigate the daily practicalities of life, establishing friendships and building relationships.
- ✓ **Sensory Exhibition (SEE 2020)** was a virtual presentation on various ways of engaging our sense organs through multitude of activities right at home with easy to access materials
- ✓ **Seventh Science Day on “Sound”** conducted on a virtual platform covering concepts such as pitch, timbre, loudness, echo. Students learnt these concepts by doing experiments based on instructions and demonstrations from the facilitator.
- ✓ **Santulan 2020**, where our students come together to learn and have fun in small groups, was conducted in two batches virtually for junior and senior students
- ✓ Mirra hosted its **first cultural event – “Kalakriti – The Stage”**. Several students exhibited their talent through various art forms.
- ✓ **Virtual science Kit** designed for “Sound” Module

## AIKYA – PROMOTING INCLUSION

- This year the consultancy for **Christwood School** has taken an **online mode**. The focus has been on
  - ✓ Streamlining the bridge programs
  - ✓ Enabling teachers to engage all students in the learning and manage behaviours in the classroom
  - ✓ Parent workshops for Kindergarten and early primary aimed at empowering parents to enable holistic and joyful learning in the children
  - ✓ Continuous weekly training of teachers and bridge program facilitators has ensured that the teachers are empowered to engage a diverse classroom of multi ability learners.
- A session on “**Neuro diverse children & interventions**” on November 30 for students in 2<sup>nd</sup> year PG in Semester (Applied Psychology under TISS-BALM). The learning objectives of the session were many - to blend theory, practice and skills application (individual/ group sessions); to understand clients problems and ground realities; learn to plan interventions as a professional; and write case histories and reports. The pedagogy was delivered via case vignettes and discussions.

## VINITHI – TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS FOR PARENT AND STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING

- ✓ A session on “**Diversity in learning and development** – a peek into neuro-diversity in Early Childhood” was conducted as part of the Online Master Trainers Training Programme in Early Childhood Care and Education by The Tamil Nadu Forum for Crèche and Child Care Services (TN-FORCES), Chennai. Mirra facilitated one session on engaging children who are diverse in a multiability classroom. Through the session, the facilitator from Mirra highlighted the following: teachers must attempt to look at the diversity in the classroom –understand why it is so – is it beneficial or not. Strategies to make learning in a neuro-diverse classroom possible were shared.
- ✓ **Parent wellness and capacity building of parents of teenagers**, “We Got This, Wednesdays” – Online meetings and structured offline discussions have been the mark of this group this year. **Four** meetings have happened online wherein the importance of self-care, fun and games have been the focus. The need to care physically and emotionally for self, to seek help as well as offer it, to work as a team to problem solve, etc. have been some of the focussed conversations during the online meetings. Off line meetings include structured discussions about concerns regarding sexuality, aggression, building hobbies and leisure in teenagers. The group has become quite independent and has come together beautifully and should sustain the momentum.

## VINITHI – TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS FOR PARENT AND STAFF CAPACITY BUILDING (CONTD.)

- ✓ An introduction to **Oromotor massage** and techniques to help facilitate oromotor functions was held in conjunction with Ms. Rashi Shetty, Speech therapist in Chennai for Mirra Parents so that they can learn how to make brushing, eating and drinking foods and fluids manageable for children with needs.
- ✓ A series of periodic events on different topics such as
  - Benefits of **Storytelling**
  - **How to have fun** with our Children
  - Virtual Get Together of Parents (**Vaanga Pazhagalam**) in our Early intervention group were all attempts to stay connected and focused on the job at hand -engaging with our children during the troubled times.
- ✓ Staff Capacity building initiatives include
  - **ISL course** conducted by Chetna Trust
  - **API Supervisor training** and **API faculty training**
  - **Creating a L.I.F.E Plan and Livelihood options** by Amaze Trust
  - **Early intervention summit** by Kidsens Connect
  - **Early Intervention and Sensory Issues** by Temple Grandin
  - **Understanding puberty in Autism** – Bhoomi listening circles by Cristelle and Dr. Janaki
  - Understanding **puberty in the adolescent boy** by Akhila Vaidynathan
  - **Jellow** online workshop by IDC, IIT Mumbai
  - **TEFOS- The Executive Functioning Online Summit** - Conducted by Seth Perler, was held over a week discussing and offering strategies to effectively develop executive functions in individuals.
  - Importance of **Play Therapy** by Lucy Bowen
  - **Traditional game and its impact on child development** - By MDA
  - **Sensory Processing Explained** - A credit course offered by Sensory Spectacle detailing the senses of our body and how to engage them effectively.
  - **Ayurvedic Principles and Food** -A talk by Dr Prasad of Sunetri in Kerala to understand the relevance of our traditional systems and how to incorporate in daily living.
  - Training session on **Inquiry Based Learning** and **Project Based Learning** by Chetana Education
  - **“Cyber Laws and CyberSecurity”** by Dr. Pavan Duggal, Founder and Chairman of International Commission on CyberSecurity Law organised by AIMS Media
  - The EMPOWER Conclave - an online event to discuss existing Assistive Technology (AT) solutions and brainstorm and seed ideas for future solutions

## PAYIRCHI – SKILL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Development of life skills is considered a key part of the programs at Mirra. In addition to life skills, skills imparted at Mirra are aligned towards pre-vocational skill development so that the students are ready to get trained on an appropriate vocational skill. Activities are designed to enable the students to achieve proficiency on the required pre-vocational skills. Currently, we focus on Multimedia skill development through our Ability Enhancement Multimedia Programme in collaboration with AIMS Media.

Successful completion of **projects by our PBAEMP students**. Projects executed by our students from June 2020 to Dec 2020 include

- Corporate profile videos
- Logo designs
- Social Media Advertisements
- Academic Videos
- Event consolidation videos
- Story boarding
- Book illustrations
- Wedding invites
- ✓ **Successful completion of the PBAEMP course** (2-year program focusing on learning and working on live projects) by our first batch of students
- ✓ **Workshop on “SketchUp Pro”** conducted by external faculty for our PBAEMP students
- ✓ **Individual student Portfolio** created showcasing the skill and ability of our PBAEMP students
- ✓ Plan laid out for functioning of “Atulya”, the brand with which our students will be executing projects post Multimedia program. Mirra will provide **business incubation support for “Atulya”**.
- ✓ Second batch of **Learning Based AEMP** in progress
- ✓ **Program design of Malarchi**, a certificate course focusing on transition from one stage to another and achieving independence in all facets of life, designed and ready for launch in January 2021

## 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