

RightStart 2023 Report

RightStart, our annual teacher training programme took place from May 8th to May 12th 2023. Here is a detailed report.

Click [here](#) to see all the photos from RightStart 2023.

Organisation

Like RightStarts in the past few years the RightStart 2023 was also organized inside the IIT campus. Teachers were provided accommodation in the IIT hostels and the training sessions were held in the Vanavani auditorium.

This time based on requests from the teachers we decided to organize RightStart in early May instead of the usual late May. When we approached IIT to make the arrangements in early April, we recollected why we had decided to have the program in late May a number of years back. IIT closes down only by May 13th this year. Students may not have vacated their hostel rooms before that date. So there was some uncertainty about whether we will get the rooms required. The Dean of Students and Chairman Council of Wardens was helpful and confirmed to us about the availability of the room one week before the event.

Participants

The following teachers participated in RightStart 2023.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Project Sangamam | 50 teachers, 1 coordinator and 1 system admins. The coordinator and system admins assisted with the organizing. 17 of the teachers had to commute every day from their place. |
| Project Pearl | 18 teachers and 1 coordinator. |
| Project Thulasi | 16 teachers, two librarians, one system admin and one coordinator from Project Thulasi came for the training. |
| RTC | 9 RTC teachers from Sangamam and 4 from Pearl came for just the fourth and fifth day sessions. |
| Poorna Vidhya | Six teachers. |

Project Manigal Four teachers.

Cauvery One teacher.

On the whole 78 women and 10 men stayed at IIT hostels. 28 of them commuted every day. Here is a photo of some volunteers with the Thulasi teachers.



Trainers and Sessions

We had planned 2 days of Maths training, one day Science session, one day of English training through KaradiPath methodology, and half a day on technology and science. On the fifth day afternoon there was a felicitation function as well.

May 8th morning – Karadi Path Methodology

Asha has been working with KaradiPath for the last one year. Ten schools in Thiruvallur are implementing their methodology. We are able to see the progress that the children are making. We wanted to expand the program to cover more schools this year including some in the Pearl and Thulasi projects. We will probably take it to more schools in the coming years. Therefore we felt that a training for all the teachers will be useful.



Karadi Path teaches English through activities, songs and stories like one typically learns their mother tongue. Mr. Udhaya Kumar and Mr.

Arokiya from Karadi Path came for the training. They introduced their approach to teaching language and also went through how all of their different modules work from their Level one program contents. Teachers got a good introduction to the same.

Maths Training on 9th and 10th May

Ms. Meena Suresh has been working with Asha Chennai in training the teachers and other aspects of improving the quality of Mathematics education for several years. This time on the first day she focused on the topics for classes 1 to 5. On the second day she covered some of the topics for the middle school curriculum. In particular she went into fraction operations, decimal conversion, Integers and some algebra. She showed how the standard kits can be used. Ms. Kalavathi also assisted Ms. Meena Suresh in the sessions.



Teaching English as a Second Language on 9th May

On 9th May, one of our volunteers, Vidhya Arun, who has been trained in the US for teaching English as a second language talked about some of the pedagogical approaches that are important in any teaching and especially with teaching English as second language. These included, teaching for multiple intelligences, anti-bias education, providing positive describing feedback etc. Specific to the topics, she also talked about not just focusing on reading and writing but also on listening/comprehension and speaking.



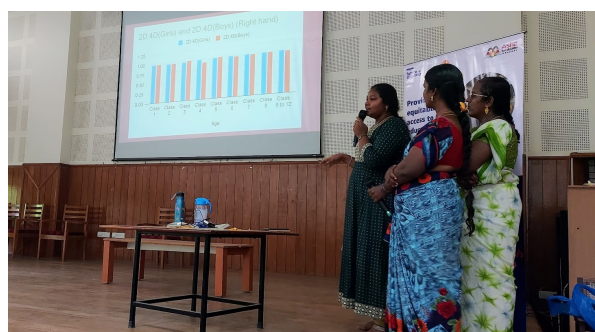
Scientific Method on May 11th

Purva attempted something different this year too. The goal of the session like last year was to get the teachers to appreciate what is scientific method! Last year they had been taught how to measure various quantities like length, weight, volume, temperature and time. Further in October training, the teachers were taught how measurement of length is applied in various contexts.

This time she further dove into measurement of length. She had given teachers 10 research topics or rather 10 hypotheses to verify using measurement of length. These included things like,

- How the ratio of the lengths of the index and ring finger changes with gender, age etc.
- How the ratio of the arm-span to height of a person varied with gender, age etc.
- How the thickness of the toe and finger nails vary with gender, age, profession etc.
- Is there a pattern to the ratio of the lengths and circumferences of various body parts (like the length of your nose, circumference of your neck etc.).

Teachers guided by various mentors collected and analysed data over the couple of months leading up to RightStart. They presented the results from their studies as charts or in the form of a presentation.



The presentations were interesting. It was interesting to see the challenges that the teachers had to tackle to collect the data and the analysis they had done on them. However the presentations took longer than we anticipated. Purva didn't have sufficient time to tie up all the various studies and explain to the teachers about what they had done. This was kept for a later session.

May 12th Morning – Technology and Science

Professor Abhijit Deshpande from the Chemical Engg. Department with his RuTAG (Rural Technology Action Group) team conducted this session last year as well. The session this year was also similar with a new set of technologies including,

- Battery operated modular e-cart.
- Combined Paddy Harvester / Thresher



- Combined Groundnut Harvester / Thresher
- Spray Dryer for Jaggery Powder
- Boiler for Lantana Camara furniture making.

They were asked to understand the need for the technology and how it serves its purpose. But beyond that they were asked to identify the science topics that relate to this technology. The teams then had to present these about the technology that they had chosen. The teachers participated well and felt this was a good way to teach science and relate it to real things they see and use.

Time was a bit of a challenge for this session as well. Abhijit had wanted the teachers to do some actual calculation like the pressure inside the pressure cooker, the force applies on the groundnuts etc.

May 12th Afternoon – Valedictory Function



Like last time this show was left to the teachers to do what they wanted on the stage. There were several songs, dances, skits etc. Teachers from all the projects performed on the stage. The teachers had a fun time. Some of the

volunteers participated as well. After this cultural show, we came to the final part of the RightStart, the service awards.

Service Awards for Long Term Staff of Asha Chennai

An important event that we started in 2019 was to give service awards to teachers who have completed 5, 10 and 15 years with Asha. It provides us a platform for us to sincerely thank them for their contribution to Asha. This year too, 7 people had completed 5 years and 2 people had completed 15 years! This year there wasn't anyone that completed 10 years service. The tremendous contribution by each of these employees to Asha was appreciated.

5 Year Service Awards

There were 8 teachers who crossed the 5 year mark! These are,

- Thamodaran from Thulasi
- Ramadoss from Thulasi
- Jayalakshmi S from Poorna Vidhya
- Nehasahasini US from Manigal
- Mathumitha K from Sangamam

- Murugan P from Pearl
- Nadhiya B from Sangamam

The stewards from each of the project spoke about the awardees.

15 Year Service Awards

We are proud that we have teachers and staff who have been with us for more that 15 years! In addition to these Deivanayagi and Srinivasan are staff who have completed 15 years already.

M.Malliga Malliga started working with us back in 2004 during our Tsunami relief work. However till 2012 her role in Asha was part-time. She assisted us with the coordination of several projects like FirstStep, Poorna Vidhya etc. In recent years she has been coordinating the work for Asha Scholarships and Poorna Vidhya. She has also been the main person organizing RightStart.



V. Maheswari Maheswari started working with us in 2008. She started working for the Poorna Vidhya project. She is one of the teachers to have undergone training by Lakshmi. She then moved to the Manigal project when they needed a teacher to go regularly to the Gypsy colony at Indira Nagar. She has been with the Manigal project pretty much from its inception. Several times the previous steward of the project, Mrs. Saraswathi, has told us how the project cannot run without her.



And for some fun ..

We organize the RightStart training in IIT partly because it is easy to manage with the accommodation and the training venue close to each other with easy commute between the two. But we also do it because it is a wonderful venue. Teacher can live their lives without care for the 5 days. IIT is a very safe space and teachers can walk around seeing the deer and monkeys! We further organize one day of sightseeing commonly for all the teachers to take them to some popular sights in Chennai. Here are the teachers and staff having some fun.



Financials

The expenses for RightStart2022 were met from Asha Chennai's internal funds. As Amazon is funding more than 50 of our teachers and staff about 40% of the costs were allocated to the Amazon project.

Here is a breakup of our expenses against the budget.

| | Heads of expenses | Budget | Actuals | Notes |
|----|---|-------------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1 | Accommodation and food for outstation participants | 1,70,000 | | |
| 2 | Resource persons and facilitators Honorarium and travel expenses | 15,000 | | |
| 3 | Local travel for teachers/staff who will be commuting every day | 80,000 | | |
| 4 | Travel Expenses for Outstation Participants | 88,000 | | |
| 5 | Lunch and tea for all participants, volunteers, helpers and trainers. | 31,000 | | |
| 6 | Local sightseeing for outstation participants. | 16,000 | | |
| 7 | Materials for participants and during sessions | 25,000 | | |
| 8 | Certificates and Trophies | 18,000 | | |
| 9 | Cost of Venue | 20,000 | | |
| 10 | Documentation, Administration and Misc | 17,000 | | |
| | | | | |
| | Totals | Rs 500,000 | | |