



SMART India Foundation

SMART VOICE

APRIL 2026 EDITION



EDITORIAL

Values in Action – Our Impact

In this April edition of **Smart Voice**, we are shifting our focus from the "why" to the "how." While our professional social work values give us our direction, it is our daily activities and the results we achieve that truly define our success. This month, we are proud to showcase the hard work happening on the ground and the tangible progress we are making together as a team.

Professional social work is a practice of action. It isn't enough to simply believe in social justice; we must actively work to create it. Every workshop held, every family visited, and every resource distributed is a step toward a more equitable society. At Smarts India Foundation, we take pride in the fact that our activities are driven by a high standard of professional excellence and a deep commitment to the communities we serve.

The results we are seeing this month are a direct reflection of our foundation's core values. When we operate with integrity and competence, the outcomes speak for themselves. Whether it's an increase in community participation or the successful launch of a new initiative, these wins belong to all of us. They prove that when we combine "smart" strategies with a heart for service, real change is possible.

As an internal team, seeing these results should give us immense pride. It confirms that our professional discipline is paying off. These activities aren't just tasks on a checklist; they are the building blocks of a better future. By staying focused on high-quality execution, we ensure that Smarts India Foundation continues to be a trusted name in the social sector.

Let's use the stories and data in this issue to fuel our momentum for the months ahead. Use this as a moment to celebrate our collective achievements and to stay hungry for more impact. Thank you for turning our values into reality through your tireless efforts. Let's keep moving forward, delivering the results that our community deserves.

-Team Smart India Foundation

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Articles

BEYOND CHARITY: UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK IN INDIA

“What! Why social work?”

I still remember how casually people used to ask that question when I said I was doing my Master’s in Social Work. Sometimes it came with genuine curiosity. Sometimes with confusion. Sometimes with silent judgement.

“Will you get a job after MSW?”

“Why not MBA?”

“So you want to do social service?”

“How much salary will you get?”

Anyone from an MSW background in India would have heard at least a few of these questions. Even after years, I still hear them in different forms

Over time, I realised something important. Most people are not trying to disrespect the field. They simply do not understand what social work as a profession actually means. For many, the term “social work” immediately creates the image of charity — helping poor people, volunteering somewhere, distributing things, or sacrificing your life for society without expecting income. Somewhere along the way, social work and charity became mixed up in public imagination. But they are not the same. Maybe this confusion is one of the biggest identity struggles faced by social workers in India.

More Than “Doing Good”

A teacher educating children is doing good for society. A doctor treating patients is doing good. A government officer implementing welfare programmes is also contributing to society.



Akhilesh Ramesh
Project Manager
WASH Institute

Still, nobody asks them why they chose “charity.”

They are seen as trained professionals with skills, education, systems, and responsibilities. Social work also belongs in that space.

When I use the term “professional social worker,” I mean people trained through education, fieldwork, internships, research, practice exposure, and continuous learning. This is not simply about having good intentions or emotional concern for people.

The field itself emerged from larger social questions around poverty, inequality, labour exploitation, health, welfare, and human dignity. In India, it gradually evolved from philanthropy into a recognised area of education and practice. From one institution in the early days to hundreds of colleges across the country now, the field has expanded a lot over the decades.

Still, public understanding has not grown at the same pace.

Part of the reason is that social workers usually work quietly inside systems. They are present in hospitals, NGOs, government missions, CSR foundations, schools, disaster response systems, research projects, and community programmes. But very rarely are they visible as a recognised professional category in mainstream conversations.

People see the programme.

They see the campaign.

They see the event.

But they rarely see the people behind the process.

What MSW Actually Teaches You

Another common misunderstanding is that MSW is an “easy course.”

I used to smile when people casually assumed social work education was just classroom theory mixed with volunteering. Most serious MSW programmes are emotionally demanding, field-oriented, and intense in ways that are difficult to explain unless someone experiences it.

A large part of the learning happens outside classrooms.

Fieldwork visits, community interactions, rural camps, presentations, research, outreach programmes, institutional placements, documentation work, workshops,

and internships slowly shape your understanding of people and systems.

Some of my strongest memories from MSW are not from exams.

I still remember travelling for fieldwork placements and trying to understand communities completely different from my own background. I remember the pressure of presentations and internal evaluations happening one after another. I remember organizing events, sitting through meetings, handling responsibilities as student conveners, and learning how teamwork actually functions under pressure.

I also remember moments of confusion.

There were times when many of us were still trying to understand where exactly we fit into this huge sector. Some classmates were clear about mental health practice. Some wanted HR careers. Some were interested in community development. Others were exploring research or public health.

That uncertainty is part of the journey too.

MSW is not only about helping people. It slowly teaches you how systems, institutions, behaviour, communication, and relationships shape society. Sometimes you learn this in classrooms. Many times you learn it outside.

And honestly, this field is not for everyone.

The Career Question Nobody Escapes

At some point, every MSW student faces the same practical question: “What next?”

This is where many students become anxious because career pathways are not always explained clearly during college life. Unlike engineering or MBA routes, opportunities here are less visible.

But opportunities do exist.

Over the years, trained social workers have moved into areas such as:

- Public health
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- Education
- Mental health
- Child protection
- Gender programmes
- Livelihoods

- Rural and urban development
- Sustainability
- Governance
- Climate resilience
- CSR
- Behaviour change communication
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Research and documentation

Almost every social issue eventually involves people, behaviour, institutions, communication, or participation. That is where social workers often contribute meaningfully.

The roles are equally diverse.

People from social work backgrounds today work as project coordinators, programme managers, trainers, researchers, consultants, counsellors, documentation professionals, behaviour change specialists, community mobilisers, and monitoring and evaluation staff.

Sometimes the designation may not even mention social work anywhere. Still, the orientation towards people and systems often comes from that training background.

My own journey eventually brought me into the WASH sector, where I currently work as Project Manager at WASH Institute. Even here, a large part of the work involves communication, institutions, behaviour change, coordination, participation, capacity building, and working with multiple stakeholders. Technical systems alone are never enough. Human systems matter equally.

The Part We Don't Discuss Honestly

At the same time, the field also has uncomfortable realities.

One of the biggest problems is the romantic idea that social workers should endlessly sacrifice because they are “serving society.”

This mindset still exists in parts of the sector.

Many young professionals are overworked and underpaid during the early stages of their careers. Some organisations expect people to manage serious responsibilities without proper compensation or professional boundaries.

I have personally seen skilled professionals handling programme coordination, reporting, field operations, and community systems while receiving salaries that did not match the workload at all. Passion alone cannot sustain people forever.

The sector also needs professionalism inside its own institutions.

Young people entering this field should understand this clearly. The work can be meaningful, but it is also demanding. Emotional burnout is real. Field pressure is real. Funding uncertainty is real. Organisational politics exists here too, just like in any other sector.

At the same time, there are deeply fulfilling parts of this journey that are difficult to explain from outside.

Sometimes it is the feeling of seeing a community process slowly work after months of effort. Sometimes it is watching field teams grow into confident leaders. Sometimes it is the relationships built through years of shared work.

The field can frustrate you and teach you at the same time.

What Actually Helps People Grow

Over the years, I have realised that degrees alone do not build careers here.

Attitude matters a lot.

The people who grow steadily are usually willing to:

- learn continuously,
- adapt to new contexts,
- relocate when needed,
- work with different kinds of people,
- communicate clearly,
- build relationships,
- document properly,
- and stay grounded even while handling responsibility.

Networking also matters more than many students realise. Alumni networks, former colleagues, field contacts, and mentors often become important support systems later in life.

In fact, my own first major opportunity came through alumni connections.

Good institutions help, but eventually people build careers through consistency, relationships, and learning from the field itself.

Why This Conversation Still Matters

India is changing rapidly.

Climate issues, mental health concerns, urbanisation, migration, public health challenges, ageing populations, water stress, unemployment, and social inequalities are becoming more interconnected every year.

Many of these problems cannot be solved only through infrastructure or policy documents. They also involve behaviour, trust, participation, institutions, communication, and people's lived realities.

That is where social work continues to remain relevant.

But maybe the field also needs to speak more confidently about itself.

Not with superiority.

Not with self-pity.

But with clarity.

Because this is not “time pass volunteering.” It is not free labour. It is not just emotional goodwill. It is serious work involving people, systems, institutions, and change processes that are often slow and complicated.

Maybe the future of development work in India will depend not only on technical expertise, but also on people who can understand human realities with patience, professionalism, and empathy.

That part often remains invisible.

But it matters more than we think.

**Opinions are personal.*

PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORK FIELD PRACTICE: THE STRENGTH BEHIND EFFECTIVE SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

A significant percentage of professional social workers in India, especially in Kerala, are actively engaged in the government sector as well as in non-governmental organizations. Departments such as Women and Child Development, Social Justice, Health, Local Self Government Institutions, and even uniform services like the Police and Excise Departments increasingly rely on trained social work professionals for various responsibilities. Alongside these, numerous NGOs and community-based organizations also employ professional social workers in diverse capacities. Most of these roles involve extensive field-level engagement and direct interaction with people and communities.



Anju S Ram
District Coordinator
Vimukthi mission, Alappuzha

The ability of social workers to perform effectively in such demanding environments is largely shaped by the field-based training they receive during their academic journey. From the beginning of their professional education, social work students are exposed to real-life social settings through observation visits, rural camps, concurrent fieldwork, internships, and block placements conducted across different semesters. These experiences help students connect theoretical knowledge with practical realities and prepare them to work professionally in complex social situations. Professional social work education equips individuals with scientific methods and intervention strategies that can be applied according to the needs of different situations. The major methods of social work — social case work, social group work, community organization, social welfare administration, social research, and social action — enable trained professionals to address issues at

individual, group, and community levels in a systematic and ethical manner. This multidisciplinary training is one of the reasons why social workers are often entrusted not only with direct social interventions but also with responsibilities related to supervision, coordination, counselling, programme implementation, administration, and management in various sectors.

Today, there is an increasing recognition that the service of a social worker is relevant in almost every sphere where human interaction exists. Whether it is addressing the problems faced by individuals in an organization, resolving group conflicts, mobilizing communities, conducting research, implementing welfare-oriented programmes, or advocating for social justice through collective action, professional social work plays a crucial role in creating meaningful and sustainable change.

It is also important to understand that social service and professional social work are not the same. Social service can be undertaken by anyone with compassion and willingness to help society. However, professional social work is a specialized discipline that requires proper academic qualification, professional training, field exposure, ethical understanding, and evidence-based practice skills. A professional social worker is therefore not merely a volunteer, but a trained practitioner capable of scientifically analyzing social issues and implementing effective interventions.

Field practice remains the backbone of professional social work because it transforms classroom learning into socially relevant action. It develops empathy, communication skills, critical thinking, leadership, and professional competence among social workers. More importantly, it enables them to understand the realities of society from close quarters and respond to them with sensitivity and accountability.

In a rapidly changing world marked by social inequalities, mental health concerns, family conflicts, substance abuse, poverty, and community-level crises, the role of professionally trained social workers has become more important than ever. Strengthening field practice and recognizing the contributions of professional social workers are therefore essential steps toward building a more inclusive, humane, and socially responsible society.

FIELD WORK:THE CORE

Fieldwork in social work is an essential, supervised, and experiential learning component where students (or trainees) apply theoretical classroom knowledge to real-life situations within agencies, communities, or organizations.

Fieldwork is where the abstract theories of the classroom meet the messy realities of life. It's not just about observing; it's about being present, actively engaging with individuals, families, and communities, and learning to apply your knowledge in context. You might be helping a child navigate the foster system, connecting a homeless person to resources, or advocating for policy changes that affect vulnerable populations. Through these hands

on experiences, you develop critical skills like active listening, empathy, ethical judgment, and cultural awareness—things that are impossible to truly master from a textbook alone. Plus, it forces you to confront your own biases and assumptions, fostering self awareness which is essential for effective social work.

Casework, group work, community organization, social action, social work research, and social welfare administration – will give a complete picture. We can explain how fieldwork is essential for mastering each one, showing how teamwork, for example, is crucial for group work and community organization. Fieldwork isn't just an academic requirement; it's the heartbeat of social work education. It's the crucible where classroom theory transforms into compassionate action.



Jisna Mary N.S
Mphil (Social Work)
Skill Development Centre
Coordinator
GVHSS Pazhanji, Thrissur

By choosing specializations that align with your passion, embracing the guidance of experienced mentors, and committing to lifelong learning, you don't just become a skilled professional; you evolve into a catalyst for social change. True social work is about bridging the gap between potential and progress, both within yourself and in the communities you serve.

Community Programmes



HOUSEHOLD SURVEY, KANJOOR PANCHAYAT

On April 10, 2026, the interns conducted a field visit in Wards 11 and 12 of Kanjoor Panchayat to carry out household surveys on environmental issues faced by residents. The survey mainly focused on waste and water management problems in the locality. Before the visit, the interns received detailed administrative insights from the Panchayat President, Mr. Sebastian Paul, who explained the demographic composition and major concerns of the area, including drug peddling, improper waste disposal, and unsafe water resources. An interaction with a local self-government member further enhanced the team's understanding of the residents' challenges.

The interns worked in groups of three and covered most parts of Ward 11. Since a large section of the population belonged to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from economically weaker backgrounds, these demographic details helped the team prepare suitable Google Forms and conduct effective field engagement. Around 30 households were surveyed, enabling the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data through direct interaction with residents. The visit revealed serious water-related issues in the area. Public and community wells were poorly maintained and had not been cleaned for long periods, resulting in algae growth and a clear coating of chemical



residues from nearby factories contaminating the water. Several wells had also dried up due to extreme heat. Many households depended on ponds and piped water connections, but these sources were considered unsafe for drinking because of possible toxic contamination. Even after filtering and boiling, residents lacked confidence in the safety of the water, leading them to use it mainly for washing and cleaning purposes. The collected survey data was systematically organized to identify suitable solutions for the locality.



CHAMPANNOOR INDUSTRIAL AREA : A CASE STUDY

The field work commenced on 13-04-2026 at 10:30 AM with an orientation session led by Rev. Dr. Paul Kaiprambadan on environmental issues such as pollution and water scarcity. The session highlighted the importance of identifying social and environmental problems and understanding their impact on community life. Following this, Mr. Joy, President of the Environment Protection Committee, along with other council members, explained the major issues affecting the locality. Participants were then divided into five groups of four members each, led by MSW students Ms. Amritha, Mr. Robin, Ms. Anmol, Ms. Athira, and Ms. Athulya. Each group was assigned different areas for field study and community interaction. During household visits, the groups identified issues related to pollution, water scarcity, sanitation, and diseases affecting residents. These interactions helped participants better understand the living conditions and social challenges within the

community. Field activities continued until 3:30 PM, with a lunch break at 1:00 PM. The second phase of the field work was conducted on 16-04-2026 with the same group members. The participants visited additional households and interacted with more residents to gain deeper insights into the environmental, social, and health-related issues in the locality. Through observation and direct interaction, the team developed a broader understanding of the community's challenges. Overall, the field work provided valuable practical exposure and strengthened the participants' communication, observation, and social awareness skills. It also emphasized the importance of community participation and collective efforts in addressing environmental and social problems effectively



DIGITAL LITERACY SESSION

On April 14, 2026, the interns of Smart India Foundation carried out a meaningful outreach visit to Vincent DePaul Nagar, Angamaly, a residential area that houses elderly individuals. The society consists of a housing complex which

provides a free of cost residence to around 60 elderly and older adults above the age of fifty, including both couples and individuals who were living alone. The visit aimed to engage with the residents while addressing a growing need for digital awareness among older populations.

The interns undertook the task of conducting a session on “Digital Literacy and its importance” for the elderly residents. The session was conducted at the common prayer foyer of the complex. The session was attended by a majority of the able-bodied residents. Ms. Mariya Benny,



Program Manager, Smart India Foundation, Angamaly, initiated the session with a salutation and a brief introduction to what the session would comprise. Ms. Amrita Lenin, MSW final year student of Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery, conducted a verbal, interactive awareness session, wherein key areas highlighted were the major types of online fraudulent practices that take place primarily targeting elderly people. The session also provided tips on avoiding scams, identifying malicious calls, and protecting private information such as bank details to prevent cybercrime.



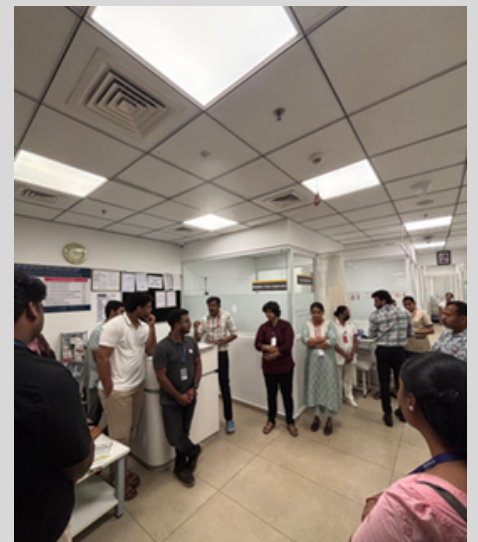
After the session, the interns were divided into groups of three and four and visited residents’ homes to provide hands-on guidance on using mobile phones efficiently. They assisted residents in tasks such as saving and accessing phone numbers, opening links, and sending media through

WhatsApp. The initiative improved the residents’ digital confidence while also fostering meaningful connections between the interns and the elderly community.



BLOOD DONATION CAMPAIGN

SMART India Foundation, in collaboration with Rajagiri Hospital, Aluva, organized a blood donation camp on 17th April 2026 at Rajagiri Hospital. The camp commenced at 9:30 AM and aimed to promote awareness and address the issue of blood shortages in hospitals. The technical supervisor of Rajagiri Hospital, Mr. Anoop V.A., conducted an awareness session explaining the importance of blood donation and the procedures involved. He detailed that donors must first provide consent, followed by a medical screening that includes checking weight, blood pressure, sugar levels, and haemoglobin. After donation, the collected blood is carefully stored and tested to ensure it is free from diseases. Dr. Rajesh R. Chandran also addressed the participants and explained that the hospital follows blood donation procedures in accordance with Central Government guidelines. He highlighted that hesitation toward blood donation continues to cause shortages in hospitals. A total of 25 donors participated in the camp, which successfully raised awareness and collected blood for patients in need. Since blood is essential during surgeries and emergencies such as accidents, the programme emphasized the importance of blood donation as a noble and life-saving act.





MEDICAL CAMP - "AASHVAAS 2026"

On April 21, 2026, a free medical camp took place at St. Vincent DePaul Nagar in Angamaly. This event was a joint effort by SMART India Foundation, Rajagiri Medical Centre, Angamaly, and the St. Vincent DePaul Society, St. George Conference Angamaly. The camp aimed to provide free healthcare services to elderly residents of the Nagar and other members of Ward 21 in Angamaly Municipality. A team of three skilled doctors from Rajagiri Medical Centre, Angamaly, offered their services during the camp: Dr. Johnson Akkara Sunny, Senior Consultant in Internal Medicine; Dr. Smithy Sanal George, Senior Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology; and Dr. Sayooj V. Sukrethan, an Orthopaedic specialist. They offered general health consultations, specialized care,



basic diagnostic support, and distributed essential medicines. The camp operated from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm and served a total of 35 patients, ensuring everyone received timely and appropriate medical attention. A formal inauguration ceremony began at 10:00 am, featuring a prayer song by MSW interns, followed by a welcome speech by Ms. Mariya Benny, Programme Manager at SMART

India Foundation. Mr. Dalin Dias, Managing Trustee of SMART India Foundation, then gave a presidential address. The ceremony included the lighting of a lamp and speeches of appreciation from dignitaries, including Ward Councillor Mr. Bastin D. Parakkal, and Mr. Ittoop P.M, Public Relations Officer at Rajagiri Medical Centre. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Ms. Athulya, MSW intern, marking the official start of camp activities.



“കൂട്ട്” 2K26 SUMMER CAMP

On April 24, 2026, Jeevadhara Foundation, SMART India Foundation, DePaul Extension Services, and YMCA Angamaly collaborated to conduct a two-day summer camp “കൂട്ട് 2K26” for children aged 7 and above. The two-day camp saw around 45 kids in the age range of 7-16 years on both days. The first day started off with the registration process of the attending children, wherein two interns were kept in charge of marking attendance for the children who were present. Registration closed by 10:00 am, after which the official inauguration function of

the event started. The formal event comprised the lamp lighting and formal addresses from the chief guests for the day. The programme began with a welcome speech by Ms. Neethu Narayan, Programme Officer, Jeevadhara Foundation, Angamaly. This was followed by the Presidential Address by Mr. Saju Chacko, Chairman, Jeevadhara Foundation. Following this, the inaugural lamp was lit by the distinguished guests. The formal inauguration of the event was done by Mrs. Reetha Paul, Chairperson of Angamaly Municipality, who delivered the inaugural address. The keynote address was delivered by Rev. Dr. Johny Chacko Mangalath V.C, Principal of De Paul Institute of Science and Technology, Angamaly. The felicitation notes were delivered by Mr. Regi M.P, Secretary of YMCA, Angamaly, Dr. Semichan Joseph, Deputy Managing Trustee, SMART India Foundation, and Mr. Devasurya Pradeep, Programme Officer of De Paul Extension Services, Angamaly. Ms. Mariya Benny, Programme Manager, SMART India Foundation, delivered the Vote of Thanks, marking the end of the formal inauguration function.

The camp activities officially started with an ice-breaking activity and an interactive session for the campers on the importance of life skills, which was headed by DOWE club DiST, Angamaly. The session included direct interactions



with and between the children and the trainer, and included energizing activities that involved both the children and the volunteers at the camp. This was then followed by a leisure activity session for the children, guided by music and dance.

By noon, the children were split into five groups for the camp activities - Apple, Grapes, Banana, Orange, and Mango - and further group activities, for which they would receive points, were conducted based on these groups. For lunch, the children were served biryani by the camp hosts, distributed by the camp volunteers/interns. Lunch was again followed by a leisure activity wherein children were encouraged to come forward and sing songs, promoting a sense of togetherness and instilling confidence within the children. This was soon followed by a second group activity for which the children were joined by members of

“Naalu mani pookal (നാലുമണിപ്പൂക്കൾ) - Mr.Thomas Malliakkal, Mrs. Susy Paulose, Mrs. Rani, and Mrs. Mercy. The members joined the children’s groups for a group activity in which they acted out scenarios assigned by



he host, while the other groups tried to guess what was being depicted. This was also the last activity for the day, after which the kids dispersed and were picked up by their parents.

After the camp activities for the day were concluded, the trainees personally called up the children’s parents to gather feedback as given by the children to their parents, regarding their experience at the camp. The trainees also informed the parents about the clay modelling activity and the “Sharing is Caring” activity, which were to be held on the second day, for which the children were to bring packed “Pothichoru” to share and have alongside the other campers. The trainees received positive feedback about the camp and its activities from both the children and their parents, with parents relaying their children’s experiences.



On April 25, 2026, SMART India Foundation, Jeevadhara Foundation, Depaul Extension Services and YMCA Angamaly collaboratively conducted the second day of the summer camp “കൂട്ട് 2k26”, for children aged above 7, with a variety of engaging and skill-oriented activities designed to enhance the

physical, creative, and communication abilities of the participants. The sessions were interactive and ensured active participation from all children. The day began at 8.30 am with the arrival of children. About 45 children came to the camp on the second day.

The second day began with Zumba Dance, which helped children improve their physical fitness, coordination, and enthusiasm. The activity created a lively atmosphere and encouraged teamwork and enjoyment. Children were introduced to clay modelling, allowing them to express their creativity. They created various shapes and figures, which enhanced their fine motor skills and imagination. The children brought lunch from their homes to share, to teach them the importance of sharing and caring. After lunch, the children engaged in making eco-friendly paper



bags. This activity promoted creativity as well as awareness about environmental sustainability. Towards the end, they had a session on public speaking conducted by Mr G.V. Varghese, which focused on building confidence and communication skills. Children were encouraged to speak on simple topics, helping them overcome stage fright and develop self-expression. The camp concluded with a closing

ceremony with welcome speech by Ms. Mariya Benny, Programme Manager, SMART India Foundation, prayer by the intern, key note address by Ms. Ranjini Shivadas CDS Chairperson, Angamaly municipality, Presidential address by Sri. Saju Chacko, Chairman, Jeevadhara Foundation, felicitation by Mr G.V Varghese and Mr Thomas Maliyakal, Convenor, Naalumanipookkal and vote of thanks by Mr Devasurya Pradeep, Programme Coordinator DES Angamaly.

Day 2 of the summer camp “കൂട്ട്” was completed with active participation from all children. The activities contributed to the holistic development of the participants by enhancing their physical, creative, and communication skills. The camp concluded on a memorable note, leaving the children with joyful experiences and valuable learnings.



Social Workers' Empowerment Programmes



SMART INDIA FOUNDATION
SOCIAL WORK MOVEMENT FOR ACTION, RESEARCH AND TRAINING

SOCIAL WORKER'S EMPOWERMENT
PROGRAMME (107)

Resilient Roots: Integrating Fearless Empathy and Strategic Intervention in Social Work Practice

8:00 – 9:00PM
1 APRIL 2026

DR. SEMICHAN JOSEPH
Deputy Managing Trustee
SMART India Foundation

WWW.SMARTINDIAFOUNDATION.ORG

RESILIENT ROOTS: INTEGRATING FEARLESS EMPATHY AND STRATEGIC INTERVENTION IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

The 107th SEP session on the topic “Resilient Roots: Integrating Fearless Empathy and Strategic Intervention in Social Work Practice” was conducted on April 1, 2026 from 8.00 – 9.00 pm. The session was led by Dr. Semichan Joseph, Deputy Managing Trustee SMART India Foundation. A total of 15 participants attended the programme. The session began with an introduction to the concept of resilience in social work and the importance of combining empathy with structured intervention strategies. The resource person explained that fearless empathy involves understanding clients without judgment while maintaining professional boundaries. This approach enables social workers to build trust and create a safe space for individuals to express their concerns and experiences. The speaker further discussed the role of strategic intervention in addressing complex social issues. Key aspects such as assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation were highlighted as essential components of effective social work practice. The integration of empathy with these structured methods was emphasized as a way to ensure both compassionate and outcome-oriented interventions.

The session also focused on the practical application of these concepts in diverse settings, including community work, counselling, and policy-level interventions. Ethical considerations such as respect, confidentiality, and professional integrity were also discussed as guiding principles in practice.

The session was highly engaging and enriching. The participants actively participated in the discussion, raised relevant questions, and shared their insights. The programme finally concluded at 9.00 pm.

INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (ICDS) PROGRAMME

An introductory session on the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme was conducted on 6th April with the objective of familiarizing interns with the structure, functions, and significance of this important social welfare initiative. The programme aimed to provide

a comprehensive understanding of how ICDS contributes to the holistic development of children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers in India.

The session was graced by the presence of the Resource Person, Ms. Priya P. Sankunni, who shared her valuable insights and practical experiences related to the implementation of the ICDS programme. In her address, she highlighted the key services provided under ICDS, including supplementary nutrition, immunization, health check-ups, referral services, pre-school education, and nutrition and health education. She also emphasized the crucial role of Anganwadi workers in delivering these services at the grassroots level.

The programme included an interactive session with interns, which served as a platform for active engagement and knowledge exchange. Interns raised questions regarding challenges faced in the field, strategies for effective implementation, and the impact of ICDS on community health and child development. Ms. Priya responded thoughtfully, encouraging participants to think critically about social issues and their role as future professionals in addressing them.

The session was informative and engaging, helping interns gain practical insights into early childhood care and government welfare initiatives. Overall, the ICDS introductory programme enhanced interns' understanding of community-based welfare programmes through an interactive and educational learning experience.

SMART INDIA FOUNDATION
Social Work Movement for Action Research and Training

SOCIAL WORKER'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (108)

ICDS PROGRAMME: AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY

MS. PRIYA P SANKUNNI
ICDS SUPERVISOR
WOMEN AND CHILD DEPARTMENT
ICDS PROJECT OFFICE
VAZHAKULAM ADDITIONAL

8:00 - 9:00PM **6 APRIL 2026**
WWW.SMARTINDIAFOUNDATION.ORG



SMART INDIA FOUNDATION
SOCIAL WORK MOVEMENT FOR ACTION, RESEARCH AND TRAINING
(SEP 109)

INTERACTION WITH VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR



MS. DEEPA BIJAN
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
SMART INDIA FOUNDATION

10 APRIL 2026 | 8.00 - 9.00 PM
www.smartindiafoundation.org

INTERACTION WITH THE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

An interactive programme was organized to provide valuable insights into volunteer coordination and practical field experiences. The session featured Ms. Deepa Bijan as the Resource Person, who serves as a Volunteer Coordinator with extensive experience in managing

community-based initiatives. The programme commenced with a warm welcome, followed by an introduction of the resource person Ms. Deepa Bijan shared her professional journey, highlighting the importance of volunteerism, leadership, and effective communication in social work. She emphasized how coordinated efforts among volunteers can create meaningful social impact and bring sustainable change in communities.

During her address, she explained the roles and responsibilities of a volunteer coordinator, including planning activities, managing teams, resolving challenges, and ensuring smooth execution of programmes. She also discussed real-life experiences, which helped participants understand the practical aspects of the field. The session was followed by an interactive discussion with interns, where participants actively engaged by asking questions and sharing their experiences. The interns gained clarity on handling field challenges, improving teamwork, and developing professional skills. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks, expressing gratitude to the Ms. Deepa for her valuable time and insights. Overall, the session was a meaningful learning experience that enhanced the understanding of volunteer coordination and inspired interns to contribute effectively in their respective roles.

INTERVIEW SKILLS IN CASE WORK

The 110th SEP session on the topic “Interview Skills in Case Work” was conducted on April 13, 2026 from 8.00 – 9.00 pm. The session was led by Ms. Agnes Babu P, Consultant Psychologist, Welfare Services Ernakulam, Sahrudaya. A total of 15 participants attended the programme.

The session began with an introduction to the importance of interview skills in social case work practice. The resource person explained that effective interviewing is a fundamental tool for understanding clients’ problems, building rapport, and gathering accurate information. Emphasis was placed on creating a safe and non-judgmental environment that encourages clients to express themselves openly. The speaker discussed the different types and stages of interviews in case work, including intake, assessment, and follow-up interviews. Key techniques such as active listening, probing, paraphrasing, and observation were highlighted as essential skills for effective communication. The importance of both verbal and non-verbal communication in understanding clients’ emotions and experiences was also explained.

The session further emphasised the need for maintaining professionalism, confidentiality, and ethical standards during the interview process. The resource person also discussed common challenges faced during interviews and strategies to handle resistance, emotional distress, and sensitive issues. The session was highly engaging and enriching. The participants actively participated in the discussion, raised relevant questions, and shared their insights. The programme finally concluded at 9.00 pm.



SMART INDIA FOUNDATION
 SOCIAL WORK MOVEMENT FOR ACTION, RESEARCH AND TRAINING
 SOCIAL WORKER'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (110)
 INTERVIEW SKILLS IN CASE WORK

MS. AGNES BABU P
 CONSULTANT PSYCHOLOGIST
 WELFARE SERVICES ERNAKULAM,
 SAHRUDAYA

8.00PM -9.00PM 13/04/2026
 www.smartindiafoundation.org



SMART INDIA FOUNDATION
 Social Work Movement for Action, Research and Training
SOCIAL WORKER'S EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (111)
CASE RECORDING AND DOCUMENTATION
 8.00 PM-9.00 PM 20/04/2026



Muhamed Shalih C
 UGC-JRF Ph.D. Scholar
 Department of Social Work,
 Bharathidasan University
 Khajamalai campus
 Tiruchirappalli

www.smartindiafoundation.org

INTERVIEW SKILLS IN CASE WORK

SMART India Foundation organized 111th session of the Social Worker's Empowerment Programme on the topic "Case Recording and Documentation" on 20th April 2026 from 8:00 PM to 9:00 PM. The session aimed to strengthen the knowledge and practical skills of social

work students and professionals in maintaining proper case records and documentation, which are essential for effective social work practice. The resource person for the programme was Muhamed Shalih C, a Ph.D. Scholar from the Department of Social Work, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli. He shared valuable insights on the importance of accurate and systematic case recording, different methods of documentation, and the ethical considerations involved in handling client information. The session also highlighted how proper documentation supports professional accountability, continuity of care, and effective intervention planning. Participants gained a better understanding of practical approaches to writing case reports and the role of documentation in evaluating social work practice.


Overall, the programme was informative and enhanced the professional competencies of the participants in social work. The interactive session, supported by real-life examples, promoted active participation and emphasized confidentiality and professionalism in handling sensitive information. Participants responded positively, reflecting the efforts of SMART India Foundation in developing skilled social work professionals.

WORLD BOOK DAY

World Book Day, also known as World Book and Copyright Day, is celebrated annually on April 23 to promote reading, publishing, and copyright awareness. This global event is organized by UNESCO and highlights the importance of books in connecting cultures, spreading knowledge, and enhancing literacy. It particularly encourages children and young people to develop the habit of reading for pleasure. The World Book Day event was organised by SMART

India Foundation on April 23 from 8:00 PM to 9:00 PM via Google Meet. The program featured distinguished guests, including the Chief Guest, Mr. Shaji Malippara, and the Deputy Managing Trustee of SMART India Foundation, Dr. Semichan Joseph. The event also saw active participation of the participants.


The session was hosted by Ms. Silpa Mol, who guided the program smoothly. The event began with a warm welcome speech delivered by Ms. Sreelakshmi, setting a positive tone for the session. This was followed by the Presidential Address by Dr. Semichan Joseph, who emphasized the significance of reading and the role of books in personal and intellectual growth.



SMART INDIA FOUNDATION
SOCIAL WORK MOVEMENT FOR ACTION, RESEARCH AND TRAINING

ലോക പുസ്തക ദിനാചരണം

23 ഏപ്രിൽ 2026 | 8.00-9.00PM



മുഖ്യാതിഥി
ശ്രീ ഷാജി മാലിപ്പാറ
എഴുത്തുകാരൻ
ഒറ്റയ്ക്കൊക്കില്ല
ഒരു പുസ്തകം ഒപ്പമുണ്ടെങ്കിൽ

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The Chief Guest, Mr. Shaji, delivered an insightful speech highlighting the value of literature in shaping society and inspiring individuals. Following his speech, an interactive session was conducted, where participants were encouraged to share their thoughts, ideas, and experiences related to

reading and books. This segment made the program engaging and participatory. The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Joel Lal, expressing gratitude to all the dignitaries, participants, and organizers for making the program a success.

Overall, the World Book Day celebration was informative, interactive, and inspiring, successfully promoting the importance of reading and the value of books in our daily lives.

POCSO ACT AND ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKER IN CHILD PROTECTION

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 was enacted on November 14, 2012, is a comprehensive and gender neutral Indian law which is designed to protect children under the age of 18 from sexual assault, harassment and pornography. It defines strict punishments for offences including

penetrative and aggravated assaults, and also gives importance to child well-being through child friendly legal procedures. Key features include mandatory reporting, confidentiality of victim and special courts for speedy trial. The session on the topic was conducted on April 30 from 8pm to 9 pm through Google Meet. The programme featured distinguished guest including Resource Person Adv. Sarannya K (BAL, LLB, MSW). The event also saw the active participation from interns of the agency. The session was hosted by Ms. Elizabeth Agnes who hosted the programme smoothly. The event begun with a warm welcome speech delivered by Ms. Elizabeth Agnes, setting a positive tone for the session. Following that Adv. Sarannya K started her session about POSCO Act 2012 which is enacted on November 14 is a comprehensive gender neutral law to protect children from sexual assault, harassment and pornography. Following her speech, an interactive session was conducted where participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas regarding POSCO Act. The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Ms. Sreelakshmi Suneed, expressing gratitude to all dignitaries, participants and organisers for making the programme a success. Overall the POSCO Act 2012 session was very informative and interactive.

Organisation Visits



A VISIT TO PARAKKADAVU SOCIAL SERVICE SOCIETY

The visit to Parakkadavu Social Service Society was conducted as part of a field activity under the guidance of the Smart India Foundation. A total of seven interns, along with a supervisor, participated in the visit. The program began at 10:00 AM and concluded at 1:00 PM. The primary objective of the visit was to understand the living conditions, health challenges, and care needs of patients receiving palliative care services in the community. During the visit, the team had an interaction with the Secretary of the society, who shared several concerns regarding the locality. He highlighted that the area faces multiple health-related issues, with a notably high number of cancer cases among residents. This raised awareness among the interns about the seriousness of chronic illnesses in rural settings and the importance of accessible and continuous care. The discussion also provided insights into the socioeconomic and environmental factors contributing to these health challenges. The team then visited patients receiving palliative care and observed their conditions closely. This experience helped the interns understand the physical, emotional, and social needs of patients requiring long-term care. It emphasized the importance of compassion, patient support, and community-based healthcare services. Overall, the visit was informative and meaningful, giving the interns practical exposure to palliative care and its impact on improving the quality of life for patients and their families.

Testimonies



Amrita Lenin

Final Year MSW

Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery

My time as a Social Work intern at SMART India was very fulfilling and fun, both in terms of professional work and personal achievements. My internship was for a period of one month, throughout the course of which, I got to participate in field visits and conduct on-site surveys to learn about the issues of the residents, and then subsequently prepare official reports for them. This, and the opportunities to participate in various events of the organization such as the Medical Camp, the Blood donation Drive, and the Children's Summer Camp were all very hands-on experiences for me, as they allowed me to properly integrate myself into the systematic functioning of the organization, and effectively contribute to the organization and its various stakeholders.

SMART India Foundation also gave me the opportunity to showcase my creativity and communicative media skills by assigning and trusting me with the task of feature writing and editing the January - March edition of their official newsletter, "SMART Voice". It was an enriching experience that also built my confidence in documenting official communication pieces for an organization.

I am truly grateful to my Supervisors and fellow interns at the organization for having created such a welcoming and nurturing environment at work, where I could learn to enhance and exhibit my professional social work skills and creative skills effectively!



Athulya martin

First Year MSW

De Paul Institute of Science and Technology, Angamaly

The 25 days in SMART India Foundation were a valuable and enriching learning experience for me. During this period, I was able to gain both professional and personal learning experiences through field exposure and interaction with different groups of people. The organization provides excellent exposure in various settings such as disability settings, elderly care settings, and community settings, which helped me understand the practical aspects of social work more effectively. These experiences improved my communication, observation, and interpersonal skills, while also helping me gain new knowledge and confidence in dealing with people from different backgrounds. I also learned how to interact respectfully and sensitively with disabled students and elderly individuals, which enhanced my understanding of empathy, patience, and professional behavior in the field. Overall, the internship period was meaningful and helped me grow both personally and professionally. The guidance and field exposure provided by the organization contributed greatly to my learning process.



Anmol K Itteera
First Year MSW

De Paul Institute of Science and Technology, Angamaly

The 25 days of concurrent field work at SMART India Foundation as a valuable and enriching learning experience. It provided an opportunity to understand the practical aspects of social work and helped in connecting theoretical knowledge with real-life situations. The field work enabled the trainee to interact with individuals, families, groups, and communities and to understand their social, emotional, and economic problems. During the field work period, the trainee actively participated in various activities such as case work, case study, group work, surveys, community programmes, awareness activities, and need assessment. These activities helped in developing communication skills, observation skills, leadership qualities, and professional attitudes required for social work practice. The agency provided proper guidance and support throughout the field work. The supervisors and staff members were cooperative and encouraged active participation in all programmes and activities. The field work experience also helped in understanding the importance of teamwork, professional ethics, empathy, and community participation. It improved confidence in dealing with clients and strengthened problem-solving and intervention skills. Overall, the field work at SMART India Foundation was highly beneficial and informative. It contributed significantly to the personal and professional growth of the trainee and helped in developing a better understanding of social work practice and its importance in society.



Athira Santhosh

First Year MSW

De Paul Institute of Science and Technology, Angamaly

My field work experience at Smart India Foundation was very informative and beneficial for my professional growth. The organization provided a supportive environment for learning various aspects of social work practice and community engagement. I got opportunities to interact with people, observe different activities, and improve my communication and interpersonal skills. The supervisor was very friendly, approachable, and supportive throughout the field work period. Their guidance and encouragement helped me complete the activities confidently and gain practical knowledge. The staff members were also cooperative and welcoming. Overall, the experience at the organization was meaningful, enriching, and helped me develop both personally and professionally.

Editorial Team



Ms. Mariya Benny
Program Manager



Mr. Joel Lal
BSW intern, RCSS, Kalamassery



Ms. Sreelakshmi Suneed
Intern, BSOLS, Choondy



Ms. Silpa Mol K.M
Intern, BSOLS, Choondy



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DISCLAIMER

The content in this newsletter report is intended for informational purposes only and provides an overview of the activities conducted by Smart India Foundation throughout the month. The views and opinions expressed reflect the experiences of the participants and organizers and do not necessarily represent the official policy or position of any affiliated organizations or institutions. While efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information, Smart India Foundation does not assume responsibility for any errors or omissions. Readers are advised to verify any details before relying on them.
