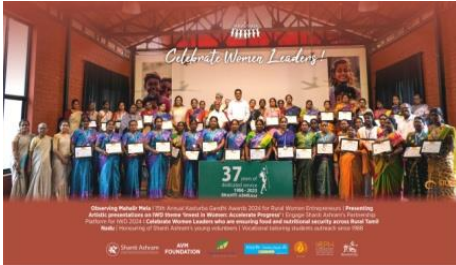


SHANTI ASHRAM

Annual Report

April 2023 – March 2024



‘Shanti Ashram is a creative laboratory where the problems faced by our communities can be both identified and provided with constructive solutions. Our spiritual motivation inspires us to be engaged in social action’.

Dr. M. Aram

Founder President, Shanti Ashram
Former Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha
Fulbright Scholar (1950)

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Shanti Ashram

Gandhian center for development, learning and collaboration



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Website: www.icphhealth.org

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

Face book: <https://www.facebook.com/shantiashramcoimbatore/>

1. President's Note



The world recognized the confluence of crisis that confronts the world with ongoing conflicts, climate change-precipitated natural disasters, the residual disruptions from the COVID 19 pandemic and economic slow-down. All of this has further compounded the everyday life of all, but especially the most vulnerable across the global community.

Stepping into the 38th year, Shanti Ashram was mindful of this particular global context and aware of the needs of local communities, particularly vulnerable children. We reviewed our work plans, took the new learning's from the COVID 19 pandemic & added to it our creativity & commitment. With immense satisfaction we present glimpses of our year's work with you.

We crossed a service milestone in 2023-24.



We served 1,02,187 children and adults across our ecosystem of 110 villages. With pride we report, 85% of our service footprint are Children: 79,574 children.

Through the work of our three programme divisions and two centres of excellence we achieved this milestone.

Beginning with 50 children enrolled in our first Bala Shanti Kendra in Vaikkalpalayam in 1991, it gives us great joy to achieve this significant success in serving children, especially vulnerable children.

The sustained development practice at Shanti Ashram also saw 24 projects implemented in 2023-24.

In the year under report, we would also like to highlight our ongoing programmes that have strengthened our implementing architecture and which includes:

- **The successful running of nine Bala Shanti Kendras** – early childhood centres for over three decades. Second generation children from rural families continue to benefit from this high-quality intervention. It also provides a platform to follow programmes for Bala Shanti Alumni, sustain community-centred partnerships and embed field research.
- **Sustaining the expanding impact of the Bala Shanti Academic Scholarships for the 16th year** and creating a working partnership with over 22 Government schools. Over the past 23 years Bala Shanti Scholarships have been awarded including special cohorts of children living with single parents & caregivers, with chronic illness and living in extreme poverty. To affirm academic excellence, we have also for 12 years recognized & awarded High School academic achievers from 30 Government schools.
- **SARVODAYA: A Consortium for empowering women through entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation and collective action** continues the good work for social and economic empowerment of rural women. This has allowed collaboration with over 86 women-led enterprises through the Kasturba Gandhi Award Fund & the Akshayam Community Fund for Food Security.
- **The Partnership platform of Shanti Ashram** is growing in strength, capacities and foot-print in serving the most vulnerable in society. An audit was done in 2023-24 and current partners list reads 211 organizations local, national & global.
- **Strengthening the partnership with the Government** has seen active work in the areas of child health, integrated child development, food security & care of people living with HIV. We have also partnered in improving utilization of Government development programmes.
- **Our Centers of excellence also had a good year of work:**
 - Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership and Development (MGIPLD)
 - International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH)

A. MGIPLD: Shanti Ashram celebrated 25 years of dedicated service by organizing the Sarvodaya Leadership Summit in January 2012. This International Leadership Summit broadly focused on Mahatma Gandhi's Vision of Sarvodaya and the framework it provides for building peaceful and harmonious societies. It was deepened by six identified sub-themes to look at the current impact and future potential of effective governance, active citizenship, dividends of economic progress and its investment for human development.

During the summit, **the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership & Development** was dedicated on 30th January 2012, the Memorial Day of the Mahatma by Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, the first Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize winner and a distinguished Sarvodaya leader from Sri Lanka and Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, Member of Parliament and the architect of the green revolution in India.

We worked further this year towards realizing the vision of the institute and contributed to

- Developing leadership capacities of children & young people
- Improving service outreach to vulnerable communities by creative ideation, re-imagined partnerships and service provision to communities both rural and urban
- Partnering to realize Mahatma Gandhi's twin visions of Sarvodaya & Anthyodaya

B. The International Centre for Child and Public Health (ICPH) continues to take active steps to respond to, develop and implement comprehensive interventions for vulnerable children.

- **An innovative hybrid model for programme implementation was implemented via the online digital platform to focus on areas of our core expertise: education, health, nutrition, leadership building and peace building with children.** Affirmed as the Children's Academy now, this effort continues well into 2023-24.
- **At ICPH we continue to work through the four verticals.**
Children's Health Center | Public Health Desk | Hospital on Wheels | People's Pharmacy.
The total service footprint from 2017 -24 stands at 2, 01,841

Contributions to National & Global events & efforts:

Shanti Ashram continues to work closely with a community of Sarvodaya-Gandhian institutions, Government agencies, departments & district administration, UN institutions, the Focolare Movement, Arigatou International, Medical Intervention Team, La Source, Niwano Peace Foundation, M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Keithan Sathya Trust & Rotary clubs.

Internationally, our President, Dr. Aram continued to leverage her global leadership positions for the common good. She was invited to serve on the World Economic Forum's Advisory Committee on the Social Determinants of Health Platform. Dr. Aram also serves as Co-moderator and Executive Committee Member of Religions for Peace-International where she works closely with faith-based organizations in 90 countries to advance Peace building efforts

A community at work for 37 years



We have continued to work as a team with faith, focus and forward vision. Combining our collective expertise and experience, we have responded to the challenges that our communities face & the opportunities for partnership that can help overcome the challenges.

The team at Shanti Ashram & ICPH stands grateful to her Trustees, each of our donors, our partners and our volunteers for the cooperation that has defined our success. We count on your guidance and support in the coming year also.

We at Shanti Ashram ask for your continued prayers and support in the coming year too.

Dr. Kezevino Aram

President,
Shanti Ashram

2. About Shanti Ashram



For the past 37 years, Shanti Ashram has been accompanying communities and individuals in their efforts to move out of poverty, address inequalities, build creative leaders and ensure sustained development. Through a commitment to constructive social action, the Ashram strives to serve as a catalyst to empower the different sections of rural communities, and the society at large.

Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Sarvodaya, the Ashram was founded in 1986 by Dr. Aram and Mrs. Minoti Aram, along with fellow Gandhians. Locally, our work touches the lives of nearly 250,000 people today in the immediate service area. Standing alongside this service outreach is our collaborative work with over 215 institutions global and local. They are committed members of the partnership platform established as part of the silver jubilee celebrations of Shanti Ashram.

Shanti Ashram's work finds expression today through:

A. Three specialized programme divisions

- ✓ Bala Shanti Programme for vulnerable children
- ✓ Sustainable Development Programme
- ✓ Youth Leadership Programme

B. Two centers of excellence

- ✓ Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership and Development (MGIPLD)
- ✓ International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH)

C. Sarvodaya:

- ✓ A Consortium for empowering women through entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation and collective action.

The Ashram's innovative 'Development Practice' draws on this particular but integrated implementing architecture. It has also led to closer and meaningful interactions with people, communities, institutions and governments. Shanti Ashram has a dedicated full-time staff of 50 people and a five-member executive team. Over 200 volunteers enthusiastically contribute to our work on a regular basis.

The centers of excellence complement the work of the programme divisions.

The Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership and Development was the Ashram's Silver Jubilee dedication to the community. The vision of the institute is to realize the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and contribute to developing leadership capacities amongst young students and professionals by academic collaborations, inter-generational ideation and re-imagined partnerships. Over 212 academic institutions work with Shanti Ashram today.

The International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH)

ICPH is an Innovative model for integrating primary care with public health, where the best of global knowledge steers our comprehensive interventions for children. ICPH impacts child health in the following ways:-

Primary care | Public health practice | Academic & Capacity building programs | Research & Policy.

Sarvodaya: A Consortium for empowering women through entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation and collective action. Two significant outcome of the path breaking work of the Gandhian movement in general and Shanti Ashram in particular is the empowerment of rural women & recognition of the critical role women have in shaping society's present & the future. This creative consortium co-developed with rural women, development organizations and donors, financial institutions & business schools has been collaborating to work for women's entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation and collective action. On ground 86 entrepreneurs spread across 23 villages form part of the consortium.

Global problems-local solutions:

What we do through our programmes?

All our projects, ongoing programmes and centers of excellence

- Enhance human capacities
- Encourage concrete action
- Establish partnerships.

5 key aspects of the Ashram's development practice,

in synergy, which we believe, has led to success includes:

- Υ Our 'value base' that centres around **Mahatma Gandhi's** vision of Sarvodaya
- Υ A 'problem solving' approach co-created with **people's** participation
- Υ Linking of '**theory** and **practice**' and the evolution of a dynamic praxis
- Υ Creative thinking and consistent contribution to the '**common good**'
- Υ Convening power from the local to the global



Shanti Ashram & the International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH) have taken active steps to respond to, develop and implement comprehensive interventions for vulnerable children in the midst of the pandemic. Over the last year, we prioritized and worked consistently to ensure the wellbeing and development of children living in extreme poverty, children raised by single mothers, children raised by elders and children living with HIV. An innovative hybrid model was developed and implemented both on the field and online to focus on the areas of education, health, nutrition, leadership and peace building for children. We have been able to reach over 2, 01,841 vulnerable children and have partnered with 212 organizations across the government and private sector that share our vision and focus. Apart from within India, we have worked with individuals and organizations from 28 different countries across the world. As the pandemic continues to impact the lives of children in the coming year, our commitment to come together in solidarity to ensure the well-being of vulnerable children is only strengthened.

Along this 37-year journey, the dedicated team at Shanti Ashram has always taken time to pause and reflect on the impact of our development practice, the new frontiers we continue to explore with our partner organizations and to celebrate the inspiring stories of change that our women, youth and children share with us in our everyday encounters.

Our service, knowledge & policy outreach provides a template to visualize our future direction. At the heart of this dedication is our complete commitment to active peace building, being and becoming 'Instruments for Peace' as St. Francis of Assisi referred to in his prayer.

Post COVID 19 Response at Shanti Ashram

The International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH) and Shanti Ashram took many active steps to respond to, develop and implement comprehensive interventions for vulnerable children and their families in the midst of the pandemic.

From April 2020, based on our ongoing work, a rapid participatory needs assessment and inputs from governmental agencies, we prioritized the wellbeing and development of people living in extreme poverty, single mothers, elders, people living with HIV, vulnerable families in home quarantine and frontline workers who provide last mile connectivity. An innovative hybrid model was also developed and implemented both on the field and online and has reached over 35,000 vulnerable children and their families. This was accomplished with partners from 212 organisations across 28 countries in the government and private sector that share Shanti Ashram's vision and focus.

3. Governance

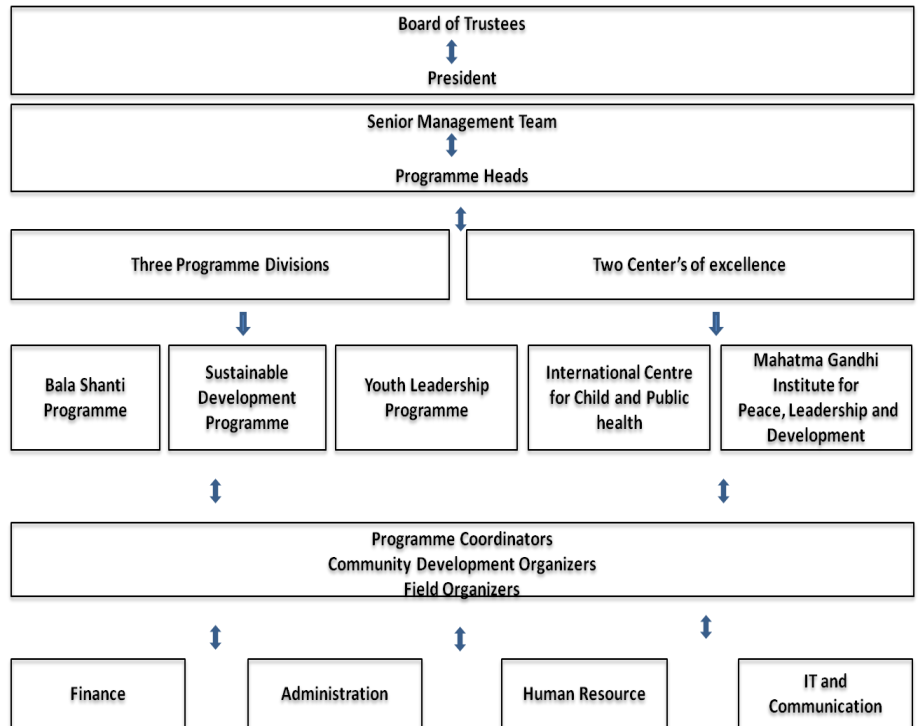
Organizational Chart:

Organizational Structure:

The service area in which we focus our efforts for integrated development now includes an ecosystem of 110 villages in 5 Blocks, 11 Town panchayats, and Coimbatore Corporation.

Situated in Southern India, Shanti Ashram has also been implementing countrywide programmes and collaborating with international agencies worldwide.

The Ashram adopts comprehensive and integrated approaches to respond to the various development challenges prioritized for action. Over the past 37 years, the Ashram's experience covering both through micro and macro level interventions has generated useful information, evidence and knowledge that informs both policy & practice.



Board of Trustees

Trustee	Dr. N. Markandan, Former Vice Chancellor, Coimbatore
Trustee	Thiru N. Arthanari, Educationist, Puducheri
Trustee	Thiru M. Alagiriswamy, Chartered Accountant, Coimbatore
Trustee	Thiru.Ganesh Devaraj, Executive Chairman, Soliton Technologies Pvt. Ltd, Bengaluru
Trustee	Dr.Suryakanthi.A, Former Professor of Home Science, Gandhigram University, Gandhigram
Trustee	Shri. Ashok T.Aram, Former CEO, Deutsche Bank , Europe and MENA Region
Trustee	Dr. Kezevino Aram, President , Shanti Ashram, Coimbatore

4. Programme Divisions and its impact

S.No	Name of the Project	Supporters
	Bala Shanti Programme	
1.	Bala Shanti Programme	AFN Onlus Support At A Distance
2.	Toolkit on Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years	Arigatou International
3.	Bala Shanti Programme	Individual donors
4.	Care and Empowerment Initiative for Single Mothers	Individual donors
5.	Children's Savings Initiative	Bala Shanti Kendra Children Community funded
	Youth Leadership Programme	
6.	Bala Shanti Fund for Child development (FC ,Trust)	Shanti Ashram Trust National, International and Individual Donors
7.	Aakkam funds for girls education and empowerment (FC ,Trust)	Ajit Singhvi Education and Training Trust Rtn.Hanspeter Baer
8.	Sudar-Ensuring Integrated development of Children Living with HIV/AIDS – (FC ,Trust)	AFN Onlus (Support At A Distance(SAAD), Italy) Individual Donors
9.	Deepasudar 2022 (Trust)	Community funded Shanti Ashram Trust
10.	Sustaining holistic development of Children, Young people & Families living with HIV/AIDS in a COVID 19 affected world - A community impact initiative of Shanti Ashram" (FC)	AFN Onlus
11.	Joint Initiatives with GNRC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • End Violence Against Children (EVAC) (FC) 	Arigatou International, New York
12.	India Poverty Solutions (Trust)	Shanti Ashram Trust Community funded
13.	Thesathircku Thool Kodu <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students Internship Programme (FC & Trust) • Food bank • Coimbatore Peace Festival 2023 • Volunteering Initiative 	Shanti Ashram Trust Community funded

14.	Jugal bandhi	Shanti Ashram Trust
	Sustainable Development Programme	
15.	Strengthening Leadership and entrepreneurship capacities of rural women through Kasturba Gandhi Award Fund	Partnerschaft mit der dritten welt, Germany
16.	Empowering Rural Women through entrepreneurship capacity building and community cohesion	M/s. Orbinox Groups Charitable Trust
17.	Ensuring Rights to education for Rural Children	M/s. Rotary Club of Coimbatore North
18.	Sarvodaya: Empowerment of Vulnerable Children	M/s. Sakthi Finance Pvt Ltd
19.	Akshayam Community Fund for Food Security	M/s. Rotary Club of Coimbatore Heritage
20.	Sarvodaya Consortium for Women Entrepreneurs	Community funding
	Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership and Development	
21.	KAICIID	King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue
22.	International Seminars	
23.	World Day of Prayer And Action for Children 2023	M/s.Arigitou International, New York
24.	Transform+: Young Leaders Dialogue on Peace Building and Transformational Leadership	M/s. Focolare Movement and Students Registration Fee
25.	International Leadership School for “Paths to Peace: Building Bridges through Dialogue”	M/s. Focolare Movement

5. Highlights of our work



(i) International Center for Child and Public Health



Adolescent Health Outreach:

The International Center for Child and Public Health (ICPH) is an innovative model of integrating primary care with public health, where the best of global knowledge steers the provision of comprehensive interventions for children and the community.

ICPH has served as a nodal institution for clinical practice, active research, and global policy making in child and public health, building on Shanti Ashram's 30 years of community service and leveraging its long-standing international and local partnerships.

The International Centre for Child and Public Health (ICPH) continues to take active steps to respond to, develop and implement comprehensive interventions for vulnerable children. The total service footprint from 2017 -24 stands at 2,01,841.

In these years report we detail our **public health outreach to ensure health and well-being of adolescent girls & boys.** ENGAGE | EDUCATE | ENABLE | EMPOWER is the call we give for effective adolescent health outreach.

Why investing in Adolescent girls continue to be critical? :

Adolescence is the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from ages 10 to 19. It is a unique stage of human development and an important time for laying the foundation of good health. Despite being thought of as a healthy stage of life, there is significant death, illness and injury in the adolescent years. Much of this is preventable or treatable. About 43 % of girls drop out before completing secondary education due to household responsibilities. Child marriage, a deeply rooted social norm, provides glaring evidence of widespread gender inequality and discrimination. Estimates suggest that each year, at least 1.5 million girls under 18 get married in India, which makes it home to the largest number of child brides in the world - alone accounting for a third of the global total.

To grow and develop in good health, adolescents need information, including age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education; opportunities to develop life skills; health services that are acceptable, equitable, appropriate and effective; and safe and supportive environment. They also need opportunities to meaningfully participate in the design and delivery of interventions to improve and maintain their health (WHO, Report, 2022).

Critical game changers in leveraging the potential of adolescents in India include postponing marriage, improving their productive health and nutritional status of adolescent girls, generating better education, skill development, work and citizenship opportunities for adolescent girls and boys.

We list below our adolescent health Interventions:

- Comprehensive Paediatric Health Check-up for Adolescent Boys and Girls
- Adolescent Vaccination
- Anaemia Prevention and Management
- Paediatric Low Vision Screening
- ENT and Dental Screening
- Adolescent Mental Health and Well-being
 - Needs Assessment on Adolescent Mental Health through Rapid Appraisal Techniques
 - Counselling Sessions : Group & one to one
- Interactive Knowledge Updates on the Growing Adolescent Brain & its relation to high-risk behavior among Adolescents.
- Community Nutrition Hub outreach
 - Nutrition counselling and Life Style Modification sessions
 - NDWD :National Deworming Day observation

- Capacity Building & Behaviour modification sessions for adolescent girls & boys
 - Malarum Pavai: Adolescent Health Out Reach, ENGAGE I EDUCATE I ENABLE I EMPOWER
 - Dialogue with Girls on the impact of child marriage and teenage pregnancy
 - Dialogue with Boys : Intergenerational Dialogue with Boys to End Violence against Girls and Women in Rural South India

Community Based Health Services for Vulnerable Children: ICPH in Partnership with Aravind Eye Hospital:
Community outreach I Pediatric eye Screening and Correction I Public Health Education

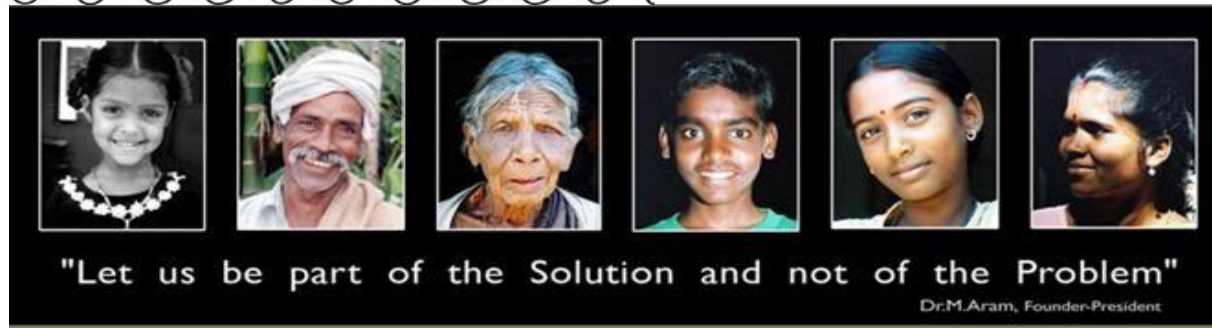


Summary: April 2022 – March 2024

	Total number of schools covered/Sessions covered	Total number of children screened	Total number of adults screened	Spectacles provided	Total
April 2022 – March 2023	32 Partner schools	11,995	263	286	12,258
April 2023 - March 2024	36 partner schools At Shanti Ashram – 4 Total – 40	16,363 355 16,718	333	277	17,051
Total service outreach	72 sessions	28,713(98%)	596(2%)	563(2%)	29,309 children & adults

(ii) Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership & Development

Nurturing future leaders ...transforming today's leaders



Context:

Building public opinion in favor of peace is key, said our founder President. Dr. M.Aram. Shanti Ashram has attached great importance to this framework of thinking and working for peace. We also acknowledge that there is a critical need today to build the capacities of leaders and communities and strengthen public opinion and resolve in favor of peace.

The divides we speak about in modern India today are many yet in the first decade of the 21st century, there is a striking optimism about emerging India. The country, which only had a past, as some say, is beginning to be seen as a country with a future. The land of scarcities is being thought of as a land of opportunities, the land of traditional crafts is increasingly perceived as a land of technology and development. This dramatic change is widely palpable in India. There is a similar change in the thinking about India in the outside world.

Change in itself is not enough; it must contribute to a better quality of life for all. As Amartya Sen eloquently argues, increase in income must be accompanied by better health and educational opportunities, if human development in its composite form has to be realized. What happens in India is also of interest to the world as we are continuing participants in a societal experiment of different cultures, religions, socio-economic experiences, co-existing together tempered by scientific development and participatory democracy.

It is time to revisit Mahatma Gandhi's vision and hope for India. At the dawn of India's Independence, Mahatma Gandhi spoke of Poorna Swaraj. The concept of Poornam or fullness of life was beautifully prefixed to the notion of Swaraj or freedom by Mahatma Gandhi. In his address to the people of India, he emphasized that freedom had many dimensions, and it goes beyond the immediate victory of winning political freedom. This reminder is not time specific for every individual, family, community or nation, stands to benefit from this eternal call to realize the fullness of life.

The continuing aspiration of an inclusive and peaceful society, where not only each individual experiences the fullness of life but society as a whole stands testimony to progress and lasting peace is what we think can be achieved by constructive and informed public opinion, leaders and action.

Ideation of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Peace, Leadership and Development:

The ideation of this institute began with the answering of four critical questions:

1. Why do we need to nurture leaders?
2. Gaps in the current educational and social systems in India that fail to empower professionals particularly the young to serve society?
3. What kind of leaders are needed to achieve the twin objectives of Sarvodaya and Anthyodaya?
4. How can we create a shared space for people in leadership positions to be part of problem mapping, collective thinking and partnership building?

With nearly seven decades of socio-economic empowerment, the young leaders of India are better endowed with education, resources and opportunities. They have much to offer in impacting the lives of the most vulnerable as well as

to break new grounds in solving problems like poverty, poor governance, gender empowerment, poor health, malnutrition and the deprivation and vulnerability of children.

Public discourse today is giving renewed focus to transformational leadership and public honesty in solving societal challenges, and in doing so linking means to ends. The institute sees 'Peace' as that desired end, and leadership and development as the means. Empowering leaders to build peaceful communities is the inspiration behind the ideation.

Silver Jubilee Dedication:

Shanti Ashram celebrated 25 years of dedicated service by organizing the Sarvodaya Leadership Summit in January 2012. This International Leadership Summit broadly focused on Mahatma Gandhi's Vision of Sarvodaya and the framework it provides for building peaceful and harmonious societies. It was deepened by six identified sub-themes to look at the current impact and future potential of effective governance, active citizenship, dividends of economic progress and its investment for human development.

During the summit, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership & Development was dedicated on 30th January 2012, (the Memorial Day of the Mahatma) by Dr.A.T.Ariyaratne, the first Mahatma Gandhi Peace Prize winner and a distinguished Sarvodaya leader from Sri Lanka and Dr.M.S.Swaminathan, Member of Rajya Sabha and the architect of green revolution in India.

200 guests, both international and national, representing 95 organizations were present. Participants were drawn from seven faith traditions, including Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism and the Baha'i faith. The presence of South Asian countries, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Maldives was also a highlight.

Young leaders, Gandhian thinkers, religious communities, academicians and social development organizations in peace building, conflict transformation and human development came together urged that the services of the Institute be extended to the participating organizations also.

The Institute is therefore Shanti Ashram's Silver Jubilee dedication to society and we hope to develop it further as a Centre for Excellence and public partnership.

Vision of the Institute:

The vision of the institute is to realize the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and contribute to:

Developing Leadership capacities by

- Discovering and Transforming the future leaders
- Sharing the wisdom of experienced leaders

Improving Service Outreach to Vulnerable Communities by

- Creative ideation, re-imagined partnerships and service provision to vulnerable communities both rural and urban

Partnering to realize Mahatma Gandhi's twin visions

- Sarvodaya – the upliftment of all
- Anthyodaya - Putting the last first – upliftment of the poorest

Leadership as a resource for social development:

The Institute believes that the realization of this vision will lead to

- A more purposeful engagement of leaders and leadership resources in problem –solving and peace building.
- Unearthing of leaders at multiple levels who can contribute to societal progress beginning from the local to the global, from the vulnerable communities themselves to people in decision making roles, from the public & private sectors.
- Transforming development outreach qualitatively and quantitatively.

Building peace, leadership and development: Shanti Ashram's achievements in 2023-24

Developing Leadership capacities by

- Discovering and Transforming the future leaders:
 - TRANSFORM+: Young Leaders Training on Transformational Leadership and Peace Building
 - TRANSFORM + first batch was inaugurated in August 2023 at Shanti Ashram
 - 39 students from different colleges participated in this course that adopted a 360 degree learning approach
 - This course provided young minds with inspiration, hand-on tools and knowledge that enhanced in the 21st century leadership skills.
 - Transform+ also aids in improving students' decision-making and cross functional skills
- Sharing the wisdom of experienced leaders
 - Organized Sarvodaya Mela and shared the experiences of the leaders with the volunteers, participants, people in the community

Improving Service Outreach to Vulnerable Communities by

- Creative ideation, re-imagined partnerships and service provision to vulnerable communities both rural and urban
 - In collaboration with Rotary Clubs and community organizations, provided emergency and health services with necessary materials to the rural vulnerable communities
 - During Covid-19 pandemic, over 100 families isolated with Covid-19 symptoms benefitted with mental and health counselling. MGIPLD provided dry rations to the families in vulnerability.

Partnering to realize Mahatma Gandhi's twin visions

- Sarvodaya – the upliftment of all
 - Gandhi Jayanthi was celebrated for a week where shramadhan was done in the villages engaging the people in community and students from educational institutions
- Anthyodaya - Putting the last first – upliftment of the poorest
 - For the families affected by HIV/AIDS, with the support from Coimbatore District Administration, houses from housing board were allotted with Shanti Ashram's contribution

(iii) Bala Shanti Programme



Ensuring the Holistic Development of Vulnerable Children in Early Childhood & Pilot implementation of the Toolkit on Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years

Background & Context:

In 2023-2024, the toolkit for nurturing the spiritual development of children was piloted in India, Pakistan, Brazil, and Mexico by Arigatou International. In India, Shanti Ashram was the implementing partner, leveraging its 30-year experience in ensuring the holistic development of children through the Bala Shanti programme.

Timeline at a glance:

- **August 2023:** Training of Trainers
- **September 2023:** Educators Baseline Data Collection, Analysis & Reporting
- **October 2023:** Volunteers Training
- **November 2023:** Educators Training
- **December 2023 - April 2024:** Classroom Implementation, Classroom Observation, Data Collection & Analysis
- **May 2024:** Parents Capacity Building Sessions
- **June 2024:** Educators Diary, Volunteers Training
- **July 2024:** Parents Endline & Attendance, Data Collection & Analysis, Educators Capacity Building Sessions, M&E Review Meetings
- **August 2024:** Educators Diary Analysis, Educators Endline Data Collection & Analysis

Implementation Activities:

The activities & materials newly included in the Bala Shanti Kendra environment include:

- This is Me
- Diversity Cards
- Bird Feeder
- Meditation
- Tree of Me
- Seed Pots
- Free Drawing
- Touch & Feel

Teachers adapted and contextualized activities, such as expanding the bird feeder activity to include all animals, making activities always available to children, and adapting meditation to a group activity.

Sessions for Parents

Parents participated in the capacity building sessions on:

- Child Dignity & Rights
- Nurturing Positive Relationships between Caregivers & Children
- Creating Safe Environments
- Empowering Experiences & its impact on children.

These sessions were conducted in public places to allow parents to participate in good numbers. Parents with young children were also provided child care support by teacher volunteers.

Learnings from Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E):

The M&E Tools identified by the Center for Whole Child & included for monitoring and evaluation in the Bala Shanti Programme included:

- Educators Interviews & Surveys
- Educators Diary
- Weekly Review Template
- Parents Surveys
- Classroom Observations
- Facilitators Diary

What this pilot initiative has helped strengthen in children especially their spiritual capacities at our Bala Shanti Kendras include:

- Positive Relationships: Responding to children's emotional needs, encouraging sharing, non-judgmental behavior.
- Respectful Environments: Facilitating children's agency, treating them with respect, opportunities to share ideas/opinions.
- Empowering Experiences: Promoting connection with nature, creating moments of meditation, free play.

Success points: that our M&E Diaries point to:

- A 20% increase in parents extremely likely to listen and respect children's opinions, encourage children to be who they want to be, role model peaceful conflict resolution, share childhood stories and traditions, integrate play into daily activities, and find moments of meditation/silence.
- Over 90% of parents agreed that spirituality can be nurtured in non-religious ways, is related to a sense of belonging, play is a tool for spiritual development, and family plays a central role.

A few challenges we hope to work in the coming year as:

- A third of parents disagreed that children exposed to violence are more likely to be victims and perpetrators later in life.
- A third of parents still agreed that shouting is not a form of violence.
- Physical punishment remains a challenging area, with 26% believing in the phrase "sparing the rod spoils the child" and 65% believing it is sometimes inevitable. However, 81% disagreed that physical punishment prevents the repetition of unwanted behavior.

New Opportunities: that we want to build on:

- Engaging parents, particularly around attitudes to punishment and violence.
- Creating training programmes to sharpen higher-order skills and competencies, contextually specific to Bala Shanti Kendras.
- Involving young students in influencing lesson directions.
- Exploring the role of praise and positive reinforcement in the classroom.
- Encouraging free play in space-scarce environments.
- Contextualizing the toolkit for larger Indian contexts.
- Integrating MEL beyond pilot implementation.

Conclusion:

This toolkit aims to protect children from violence and promote their holistic well-being by positively influencing their upbringing. By focusing on children up to 8 years, the toolkit highlights their innate spiritual capacities and the importance of nurturing these through playful activities. The project underscores the critical roles of religious communities, parents, caregivers, and educators in shaping the holistic development of children. The preliminary learnings from the pilot study at Shanti Ashram indicate significant progress in promoting positive relationships, respectful environments, and empowering experiences for children.

The Bala Shanti Programme emerged out of Shanti Ashrams' active commitment towards building a peaceful society by ensuring the holistic development of children during their critical stages of growth and development.

The programme, which has specifically targeted rural marginalized pre-school children, was a follow up action initiated by Dr. M. Aram and Mrs. Minoti Aram, the founders of Shanti Ashram, after their participation in the World Summit on Children, organized by the United Nations in 1990.

The programme also provides a constructive interface between the child, their family and the community. Today, the programme addresses the continuous needs of children in early childhood and provides a platform for a wider reach to children in the service villages of Shanti Ashram.

Every child matters! This is the belief and the framework for action at Shanti Ashram since 1991.

(iv) Youth Leadership Programme

Bala Shanti Fund for Child Development Ensuring right to education for rural children

We believe:

Educational empowerment of vulnerable children is fundamental in ensuring their right to holistic development. We also know that children's education can break the trans-generational cycle of poverty and give vulnerable children a hopeful start to life.



The Bala Shanti Fund for Child Development:

In 2002 Shanti Ashram established this fund to award educational scholarships to our Bala Shanti Alumni as well as vulnerable children from our service villages. Beginning with forty-eight recipients in the first year, the fund now has come to award over one thousand scholarships every year covering nearly 39 service villages of Shanti Ashram.

Priority is given to children from single parent families, families in extreme poverty, affected by chronic illnesses like HIV and in the care of grandparents. Once awarded a Bala Shanti Scholarship after field verification, the child is supported till she or he completes their first degree. Besides the scholarship the child also has access to five child development interventions implemented by Shanti Ashram & ICPH.

Our Goals:

- Creating awareness about the importance of education among rural children
- Awarding scholarships to children from socio-economically marginalized sections of the society.
- Reducing drop-out rate from rural schools in our service villages and assisting children to continue higher education into colleges, polytechnics and universities.
- Engaging young leaders in serving their own community by being part of the community outreach

Our achievements:

- Inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's call to work for Sarvodaya, welfare of all, the Bala Shanti Fund for Child Development launched in 2002, has come to highlight children's 'right to education'.
- In the first year, 2002 we were able to support 48 children through the Bala Shanti Fund.
- Over the past 22 years, a total of 17,249 scholarships have been awarded.
- An average of 850 scholarships are awarded every year, of which 60% of the awardees are girls
- 3 awardees have completed their PhD programme and 1 awardee got the Prime Ministers Research Fellowship (PMRF).
- Post COVID 19 Pandemic saw active collaboration with Government schools and further augmented to support the educational needs of vulnerable children.
- Academic achievers – toppers in the SSLC programme from over 30 Government schools have been awarded scholarships too.
- The fund provides scholarships, educational opportunities and follow- up support to thousands of young boys and girls across Indian villages.
- Many of our awardees are first generation professionals in their families and communities.
- We thank our children, their families and the schools in the villages; we serve, for their cooperation and participation in the scholarship awarding process for the past 20 years.

We have received much support in ensuring 'the right to education' for vulnerable rural children

Digitization of the Bala Shanti Scholarship database and increasing the scholarship's financial component is our priority this year.

Together, we believe, we can make a difference in every child!

(v) Sustainable Development Programme



Leadership that Transforms lives, empowers women & builds more peaceful communities

Celebrating the life journeys of Kasturba Gandhi Awardees (2009 – 2024)

Strengthening Leadership Capacities through the Kasturba Gandhi Awards

The Kasturba Gandhi Award Fund:

The Kasturba Gandhi Award Fund was established by Shanti Ashram to honour and recognize the work of rural women. This award was instituted by the Ashram in 2009 and bears the name of Kasturba, Mahatma Gandhi's life partner and fellow Sarvodaya Worker.

Each year between two to three distinguished women entrepreneurs from the service village of Shanti Ashram are presented this award. The awardees are selected on the basis of their entrepreneurial achievements, leadership capacities and their demonstrated commitment to improving the lives of others.

Many of the awardees are part of SARVODAYA: A Consortium for empowering women through entrepreneurship, poverty alleviation and collective action. The consortium was launched at the 70th birthday celebrations of Shanti Ashram's co-founder Mrs. Minoti Aram. A milestone in Ashram's work for Women empowerment as also a testimony of the sustained efforts that women themselves have taken in the service villages for gainful livelihood.

This consortium has led to the creation of a dynamic platform for exchange of experiences between entrepreneurs, further training and capacity building of more rural women from the service villages and the possibility of common action for the progress of the society. The life journey of each of these inspiring women has been unique and the transformation visible, an inspiration for the women in their own community. Shanti Ashram stands resolute to provide knowledge, experience and service to rural women to reach their full potential and become truly on debuting members of the society.

Annually the process in finalizing the Kasturba Gandhi Award includes:

- Receiving of nominations. The date for receipt of nominations is the 6th of December each year.
- Field verification and assessment by the Shanti Ashram's Sustainable Development Programme
- Selection and finalization of annual awardees by Dr. Shobhana Madhavan, Professor at the Amrita School of Business has led the jury accompanied by select MBA students.
- Announcement of the Awards on February 22nd the birthday of Kasturba Gandhi
- Presentation of the Kasturba Gandhi Awards at the Annual Mahalir Mela organized to mark International Women's Day each year at Shanti Ashram
- Convening a dialogue with the awardees for inputs into the Women's Development Programs.
- Facilitating access to credit for the awardees from the Kasturba Gandhi Award Fund.

The Jury:

Dr. Shobhana Madhavan, Professor, at the Amrita School of Business has led the jury since the inaugural edition of the Kasturba Gandhi Award. She and Dr. S.R. Subramanian visit each of the short-listed nominees in the field and spend time observing the entrepreneurs & interacting with them. They are accompanied by select MBA students & field staff from Shanti Ashram.

Post the interviews and interaction with the selected women entrepreneurs and based on the agreed criteria, the jury rank the women entrepreneurs. The decision is then jointly made on how many entrepreneurs will be awarded the Kasturba Gandhi Award. Dr. Shobhana and her team also then submit a detailed report on all the women entrepreneurs who have been interviewed. In 2024 we will be archiving all the reports for further impact assessment.

To realize the above mandate Shanti Ashram:

- Established a revolving fund titled: Kasturba Gandhi Award fund with a total value of Rs.10,00,000/-
- Financial support is provided to Annual award winners.
- The Sustainable Development Programme has a dedicated budget line to operate the same.

The Experience so far:

- Since 2009, 53 successful women entrepreneurs were honoured with the Kasturba Gandhi Award.
- They come from 18 service villages of Shanti Ashram.
- They carry out 16 different types of enterprises from running eateries to public distribution centres, tailoring units to neighbourhood stores selling provisions of everyday needs, doll making units to dairy farms.

Celebrating the life journeys of Kasturba Gandhi Awardees will be organized in 2024-25 to mark 15 years of successfully empowering rural women.

The goal of this milestone celebration is to organize a re-union to celebrate & review the collective experience of the cohort of Kasturba Gandhi Awardees by:

- Organizing a facilitated reunion where the progress & success of the Awardees will be celebrated;
 - Documenting the collective success & particular experience through a case study and video story for further dissemination and learning.
 - Updating of the Kasturba Gandhi Award Scroll of Honour since 2009
- All the stakeholders involved in the strengthening leadership project will be acknowledged including Shanti Ashram, Weil der Stadt, Amrita School of Business and the awardees.

6. Awards and Recognitions:

1. Vocational Excellence Award

We are proud to report that the Rotary club of Coimbatore Heritage awarded the 'Vocational Excellence Award' to **Dr. S.R. Subramanian** on the 27th February 2024 for his outstanding contribution to the field of agricultural economics, social development and well-being of underprivileged.

2. 'Krish Award'

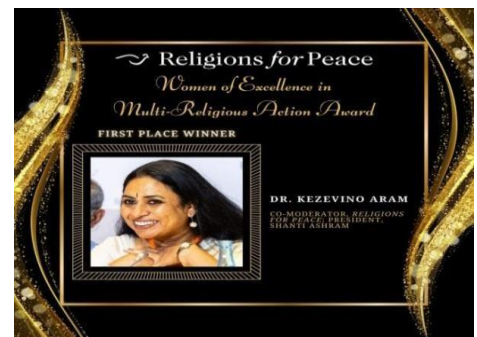
Sri Krishna Educational Institutions awarded the 'Krish Award' to **Mr. Vijayaragavan Gopal** on the 14th of March at a well-organized ceremony. He won the award under the 'Best Social Worker' category in recognition of his work with youth for over two decades. Empowering the young volunteers with transformational leadership skills, volunteering opportunities & commitment to serve vulnerable communities.

3. Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award

The Shanti Ashram family is honored to record that Dr. Kezevino Aram, President was the inaugural winner of the Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award. The Award was presented at a high-level ceremony, held on 26 March 2024 in New York, USA at the UN Church Center Chapel.

Excerpts from the communique read:

'As an active woman of faith, you have played an instrumental role in promoting peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights, including for the most vulnerable, within and beyond your communities, through interfaith collaboration and cohesion.'



Since March 2023, the Religions *for* Peace International Secretariat received a total of 99 nomination packets from across the globe. After a thorough process of review and evaluation, guided by the Award Selection Committee, we are pleased to inform you that you have been selected as the **Winner of the Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award**.

Through the Award, Religions *for* Peace aims to highlight and honour the vital work that you have been leading, and support your efforts to scale up the positive and far-reaching impact of your work through a cash prize of **\$7,000**.

Furthering our commitment to highlight the critical role of women of faith, Religions *for* Peace is delighted to announce that the next volume of the [Building a Better World: The Women Leading Religions for Peace](#) global directory will feature a section that highlights the winners and nominees of the **Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action Award**. Lastly, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the nominators who have dedicated their time and effort into recognizing the invaluable work that you have been leading. Religions *for* Peace remains committed to honoring the women of faith who continue to provide outstanding stewardship of the global movement. '

Recognitions:

Mr. Vijayaragavan Gopal has been selected as the Coordinator of the GNRC South Asia Hub by Arigatou international-6th GNRC Forum for networking and mobilizing pre forum activities with the South Asian countries on 26th February 2024.

7. Infrastructure:



Existing:

The Ashram has its headquarters at Kovaipudur, Coimbatore.

The Headquarter houses the following units:

- *Aram Arangam*
- *Administrative Block*
- *Prayer Hall*
- *Seminar Hall*
- *Achi Kudil*
- *Computer Training Center*

Aram Arangam

- Aram Arangam (Auditorium) provides the opportunity of hosting over 300 people in the open air auditorium for meetings, seminars, concerts and celebrations. Apart from the programs organized by the Ashram, fraternal organizations & institutions also utilize the Aram Arangam.

Administrative Block

- The administrative block provides office space for all the program coordinators, the communication and documentation, reception, and administrative units.

Prayer Hall

- The prayer hall is the centre of spiritual activity for the Ashram. Daily interfaith prayer is held six days a week.

Seminar Hall

- A well- equipped Seminar Hall has been established in the Ashram which houses the following:
 - Exhibition space
 - People's Information Center
 - Vocational Training Center

The center, with a capacity of 150 participants has been equipped with the following infrastructure:

- Public address System
- Audio-Visual Aids
 - Overhead Projector
 - Slide Projector
- Multi media Projector

Achi Kudil

- Achi Kudil provides space for post training, apprenticeship for women self help group members. It also houses the Sarvodayam Unit of the Ashram.

The Impact that we visualize with the new infrastructure:

- Enhancing community service to an ecosystem of 100 service villages and this will continue for over 20 years.
- Dedicating a physical space of 13,000 square feet that brings alive the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi in thought, word and action to serve 10,000 people each year. This will include a reflective space dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi with a library, a meeting hall and a dialogue hub.