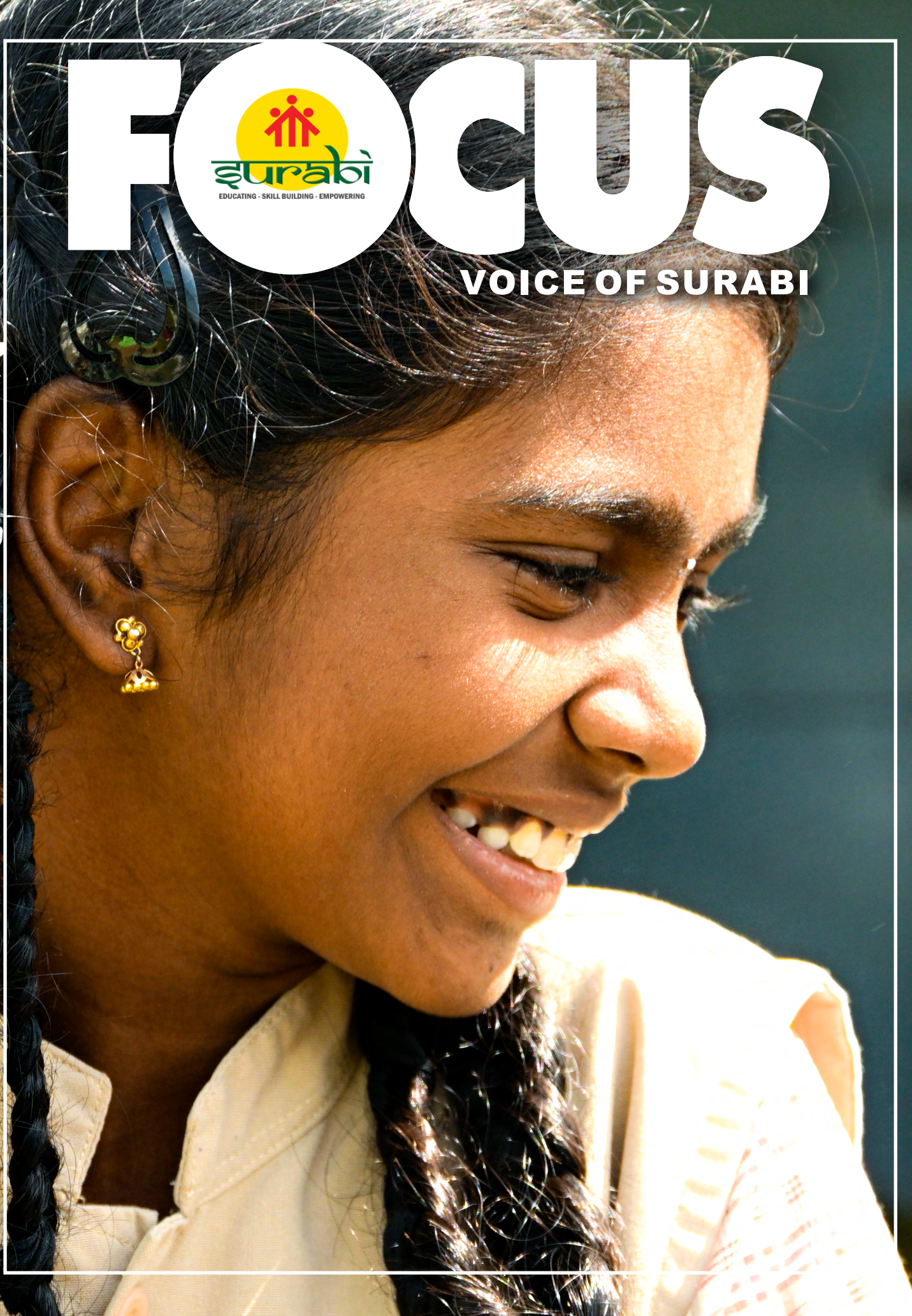


FOCUS



VOICE OF SURABI



EDITORIAL



Fr. Joseph Leo,
Director - SURABI

Dear Readers,

Gender equality is, first and foremost, a human right. A woman is entitled to live in dignity and freedom. Empowering women is also an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. Empowered women contribute to the health and productivity of whole families and communities and improve prospects for the next generation. Discrimination against women – including gender-based violence, economic discrimination, reproductive health inequities, and harmful traditional practices – remains the most pervasive and persistent form of inequality.

Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills, and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.

Adopting appropriate measures to improve women's ability to earn income beyond traditional occupations, achieve economic self-reliance, and ensure women's equal access to the labor market and social security systems.

Thus, we understand that as a society, need to applaud every effort made so far to bring to parity the gender debate and need to understand why this battle is not overrated and is completely

important to be justified.

Empowering a woman today will lead to a progressive society for tomorrow and this silver lining should be our motivation in analyzing any gender equality discussion.

We at SURABI have done in our capacities and projects, to include women in all our interventions and celebrations. We celebrated Women's Day in a few of our intervention areas. We also affirm that Girls' Children need to be promoted with the utmost care. We have exhibited through our events in various villages and streets of BEST, BRAVE, BRIDGE, and Microcredit projects the importance of Gender equity and sensitivity by everyone in the project areas.

I thank the staff and Salesians who were involved in committing themselves to women's empowerment. I also thank all the donors and sponsors for the various events that took place during Jan and Feb of 2024. Let us all join hands with the United Nations' theme 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress' on the coming International Women's Day celebration.

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Access to financial support empowers women

Focusing on a sustainable world, SURABI works to build sustainable solutions in response to environmental and social challenges in rural parts of Tamil Nadu. The growing contribution of women entrepreneurs in India's economy is heartening to witness. A lack of awareness and support in non-financial areas further exacerbates the alienation of women from formal credit services. With limited financial literacy, low credit scores, inadequate accounting abilities, and a dearth of tax-filing assistance, female

entrepreneurs struggle to navigate the lending landscape. Access to timely and sufficient financing is crucial to the success of any business, particularly those led by women. We provided 50 women credit for their business development in two locations namely Basin Bridge and Polur. We empower self-starters and promote financial inclusion by providing better credit access for female entrepreneurs, ultimately benefiting the family's economy



BRAVE Project Youth Seize Career Opportunities at Job Fair

Seventeen youths from the BRAVE Project youth group, who hail from remote villages, participated in a job fair organized by Don Bosco Vazhikatti at Sacred Heart College, Tirupattur. This event was a significant milestone for them as it provided an invaluable opportunity to kickstart their career journey. By actively engaging in the job fair, they gained practical insights and honed their interview skills. This event is a pivotal step for these students towards realizing their aspirations and breaking barriers to achieve success.

Empowering Marginalized Communities

BRAVE Project Women at Chennai Trade Centre Exhibition

The exhibition held at the Chennai Trade Centre in Nandambakkam, organized by the Tamil Nadu State Government and TAHDCO (Tamil Nadu Adi Dravidar Housing and Development Corporation Limited), was an excellent opportunity for Dalit entrepreneurs, especially for women from the BRAVE project SHG (Self Help Group). They were able to showcase their skills and learn valuable information. These exhibitions are great platforms for networking, learning, and exploring new ideas for various small-scale businesses. It is fantastic to hear that the SHG women's group leaders took part and gained insights into creative business ideas that can potentially empower their communities and contribute to economic growth.



“Empowering 9th grade students through a career guidance awareness program”



SURABI and Don Bosco Vazhikaatti organized a career guidance awareness program for 9th grade students at St. Joseph Hr. Sec. School in Pavunjur. The headmaster of the school, Fr. Robert Pathi, felicitated the speakers, staff, interns, and students. The session was initiated by Mrs. Leni, who engaged the students in interactive activities. Mr. Prem then led a motivating session



that stressed the importance of overcoming obstacles and pursuing dreams. He emphasized the significance of learning from challenges and using one's abilities to achieve goals. Mr. Prem also shared memory enhancement techniques, including creating study timetables, teaching others, and using flashcards. Interns conducted an activity to promote critical thinking and teamwork among the students. The final session, led by Mr. Levin Leo, focused on career guidance, where students explored their ambitions and received insights into selecting suitable career paths based on their interests and skills. A video presentation reinforced the importance of pursuing dreams. Overall, the program provided valuable guidance and insights, enabling students to gain clarity on potential career paths and fostering an enjoyable and interactive learning environment.

Bridging Educational Gaps: SURABI's Creative Learning Centers for Marginalized Children

SURABI's initiative aims to establish Creative Learning Centers for Irular, Thurambar, and Gypsy children in the areas of Gedilam, Thiruvallur, and Chengalpet. These centers provide educational and social activities that offer children the opportunities for growth and development they might not have had otherwise. The regular use of the centers indicates their value to the community and suggests that they are effectively meeting the needs of the children. Initiatives like these play a crucial role in promoting education and social integration among marginalized communities, fostering a brighter future for all involved.





“Empowering Children: BEST & SMILE Projects”

During the monitoring visit of the BEST & SMILE project to Cuddalore, Thalavadi, Kadambur, Kotagiri, Gedilam, and SIHRAM on 22nd & 23rd February and 28th and 29th February 2024, a thorough evaluation was conducted to assess the progress and impact of the initiatives. The team shared their observations and recommendations with each community, engaging in an open dialogue to promote continuous improvement. The purpose of the visit was to ensure that the projects were aligned with their intended goals, foster community engagement, and address specific needs. By tailoring recommendations to individual communities, the monitoring visit aims to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the BEST & SMILE initiatives, ultimately contributing to positive and lasting change in the Evening study centres.

Empowering Women in Vulnerable Communities as Entrepreneurs and Leaders

Empowering women in vulnerable communities is a critical need, and SURABI's BRAVE project is making a significant impact. Through income generation training in candle-making and livestock rearing, SURABI is providing necessary



tools and materials to transform women in the Irular, Thurambar, and Gypsy communities into small-scale entrepreneurs. These women are now selling candles, homecare products, and livestock products, thus enhancing their income and strengthening their role as income generators in their families. These initiatives have fostered entrepreneurship and economic independence within these communities. SURABI's assistance has even led some women to start their own shops, highlighting the profound impact of this project. By improving the livelihoods of these women, SURABI is making a positive difference at the individual and family levels and contributing to the overall socio-economic development of these communities. It's time to support SURABI and empower women in vulnerable communities to create lasting change and empowerment.



Fostering Global Citizenship - "School to School" Project

A group of teachers and students from Mariagaard in Belgium visited Don Bosco Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Redhills, Chennai, India, from 9th to 16th February 2024. The visit was part of the School to School project, which is a collaborative initiative between the Belgian NGO VIA Don Bosco and the Indian NGO SURABI. The primary goal of the visit was to engage in a cultural exchange experience within the Chennai region, with a particular focus on the learning environment at Don Bosco Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Redhills. The group included two teachers, Clinckspoor Katrien and Geerinck Leen Paula G, and ten students: De Rocker Ona, Diependaele Lentl, Fleerackers Maud, Marius Lisa Luc N, Mecon Glauke, Verbraekel Athena, Verstraeten Janne Saskia W,

De Roo Torben Boris A, Borry Achille Francky G, and Cizak Oliwia Jagoda. At Don Bosco Matriculation Higher Secondary School in Redhills, they received a warm welcome and had the opportunity to wear traditional Indian attire. They attended several workshops, including Henna design and Rangoli, as well as a cooking workshop, where they learned how to prepare Chai and Chicken Tikka. They also engaged in sports activities, playing volleyball and throw ball with the local students. Additionally, they visited Don Bosco Arts and Science College in Kilpauk and interacted with the students. They also visited Don Bosco Anbu Illam Boys and Beatitudes Vysarpadi, for whom they had collected funds and stationeries for cyclone relief. The project's emphasis on fostering global citizenship was appreciated by all involved.

Journey of Resilience and Success

From Homemakers to Entrepreneurs.

Savariammal, a 34-year-old homemaker from Anthoniyarnagar, Payanur, Chengalpet District, is a successful entrepreneur today. Her journey perfectly exemplifies the transformative impact of the BRAVE project and SURABI's support. Despite facing financial struggles, she grabbed the opportunity to join the project's Self-Help Group (SHG) and discovered her entrepreneurial potential. With the help of SURABI's training and livelihood support, Savariammal started her own business of candle-making and home care products, and gradually expanded it while also mentoring others. Her story is a testament to the power of empowerment initiatives that uplift individuals and communities, and showcases SURABI's commitment towards fostering entrepreneurship and empowerment.



My name is Mary and I am a member of the Shakti Samanthi Group. I have been running a tailoring business for the past 20 years. Recently, I received a loan of Rs. 20000/- from Polur-VIA Sakthi Pengal Munnetra Sangam through SURABI. This loan has been instrumental in helping me buy two additional tailoring machines and provide employment to two other people. It has also been a great help in managing my family's expenses and supporting my children's education. I am extremely grateful to SURABI and VIA for their support.



"Green Hands" project inspires young minds at transformative Nature Camp



Green Hands, a prominent environmental education initiative, recently organised a Nature Camp in the scenic hills of Yercaud, Tamil Nadu. The camp aimed to establish a deeper connection between children and nature and was held on February 28th and 29th, 2024 at the Yercaud retreat center. The event attracted 64 enthusiastic participants from grades 6 to 8, who engaged in inspiring talks, interactive workshops, and a fascinating trek through the nearby forest. The camp began with a warm welcome from Fr. Joseph Leo SDB, Director of SURABI, followed by inspiring speeches from Fr. Arul Maran SDB and Fr. John Christy SDB. Fr. John Christy SDB captivated children with the Pope's 10 commandments on climate change, while Fr. John Wilson SDB provided valuable insights into the unique landscape of Yercaud. The core of the Nature Camp focused on three key components, each designed to foster environmental awareness and responsibility among the participants. Renowned environmentalists, such as Mr. Ramesh of Kurinji Trust and



Mr. Deva Prakash of the Yercaud Youth Movement, shared their expertise through engaging sessions. After the input sessions, the students embarked on a captivating 2-kilometer trek through the nearby forest, immersing themselves in the region's rich biodiversity. The trek culminated atop a hill, offering breathtaking panoramic views of the Kalvarayan Ghats stretching from Salem to Erode. The energy and enthusiasm reached new heights during the campfire activity, and the young participants showcased their creativity by enacting different scenarios highlighting various forms of pollution and their impact on global warming.

Representatives from the 13 participating schools pledged their commitment to becoming warriors for climate change, adding a further layer of impact. Each school presented its unique plan for protecting and preserving the planet, leaving a lasting impression on all attendees. The Nature Camp concluded with the distribution of certificates, marking the successful culmination of a program that significantly expanded the children's understanding and appreciation of the natural world. This transformative experience has undoubtedly instilled a sense of environmental responsibility in the young minds, inspiring them to become future stewards of our planet.

The President of APIS, on a visit to the Chennai Province



The President of APIS, Ms. Federica Annibali, accompanied eight APIS donors on a visit to the INM Province from January 13th to January 19th, 2024. The following are the names of the delegates from APIS who visited India: Federica Annibali (President of APIS), Stathis Thalassinou, Liana Canichella, Giovanna Greco, Giuliana Bruschi, Anna Katharina Silveira Soares, Vanina Marini, Chiara Felici, and Vincenzo Brasca. They were warmly welcomed by INM Provincial, Fr L. Don Bosco, and Fr Joseph Leo, the Director of SURABI, who extended their felicitations and sincere wishes for a comfortable and

joyful stay. The purpose of their visit to our schools was to establish a deep connection with the educational institution, understand the real-world impact of their philanthropy, and align their goals with practical challenges faced by the schools. This visit added a human touch to their act of giving and further strengthened the bond between APIS, the students, and the educational institution. The institutions they visited are Don Bosco Beatitudes in Vysarppadi, Pope John's Garden in Madhavaram, Don Bosco Perambur in Madhavaram, and Don Bosco Higher Secondary School in Nedungadu.



Training for Effective Tutoring

Beginning the session with a prayer and welcome address is a great way to set a positive tone. Ms. Leni provided a clear roadmap for the tutors, covering the timetable, activities, and learning materials. Her tips and techniques for achieving positive outcomes in both academic and social aspects were valuable insights.

Ms. Priya's explanation of the steps to motivate children, including focusing on discipline, hygiene, education, and sports and games, covered crucial aspects of child development. She also highlighted various teaching methods, such as teacher-centered, student-

centered, hands-on learning, and game-based approaches, which cater to different learning styles.

Moreover, the focus on measuring outcomes using compassion, case studies, assessment, time management, and academic impact shows a commitment to holistic evaluation and improvement. The participants actively engaged in the session and committed to implementing what they learned. Such dedication will undoubtedly contribute to better outcomes for the children they work with. Overall, the tutor training was comprehensive and engaging.

Youth Skills Development: Preparing Young People for the Future



In September, IBM SKILLSBUILD was launched in Tamil Nadu, offering free online courses to students. REACHA & SURABI organized online courses in 12 Don Bosco institutions, where they introduced the students to IBM SKILLSBUILD courses and guided them to the IBM SKILLSBUILD portal. The colleges that were oriented include Sacred Heart College Tirupattur, Don Bosco College Yelagiri, Don Bosco College Dharmapuri, Don Bosco Arts and Science College Chennai, SIGA Polytechnic College Chennai, Don Bosco Polytechnic College Basin Bridge, Don Bosco

Polytechnic College Thirukazhukundram, Sagayathottam Institute of Agriculture and Rural Development Sagayathottam, Don Bosco ITI Polur, Don Bosco Vazhikaatti Perambur, Don Bosco Arts, Science College Karaikal, Auxilium College (Autonomous) Vellore, Loyola ITI Ranipet, Auxilium BED College Vellore, Annai Violet Arts and Science College Chennai, and Thiruthangal Nadar College Chennai. So far, 5284 students have been onboarded and have benefited from the courses by gaining knowledge and developing themselves.



Breaking Barriers

Empowering Education with Free Transportation for School Children in Elaimbedu and Kattavur villages

In the pursuit of equitable and inclusive education, innovative strategies have emerged to dismantle hindrances that obstruct the learning path. In an era where education is revered as a cornerstone of societal development, ensuring that every child, regardless of their socio-economic background or geographical location, can access quality learning opportunities is paramount. Providing free transportation for school children removes obstacles to education and promotes accessibility and inclusivity. SURAB has taken a CSR Initiative with support of Ashirvad pipes in collaboration with Give and Bosconet. This initiative empowers young minds, fosters societal progress, and enhances access to education. Ensuring quality learning opportunities for every child, regardless of their background or location, is of utmost importance. Implementation of safety measures such as driver qualifications, vehicle safety standards, and emergency protocols is crucial for student well-being and building trust among parents and the community.

Thanks for your Partnership for Making Children Environmentally Conscious



UPCOMING EVENTS



MEDICAL CAMP

@Thiruvallur



VISIT OF DON BOSCO MONDO, GERMANY

to INM Province



SUMMER CAMP

@Elaimbedu & Kattavur

VOTE
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