

The Shooting Star programme

Sneha Care Home initiated a separate programme for our children who were in the age group of 12-14. It was named as Shooting Star Programme. We selected 29 children who were in this age group to be in this programme.

We started this programme with the aim of challenging these children and pushing them out of their comfort zone to face the realities of life as a young adult with HIV/AIDS. Therefore the Program was meant to ease this process for each of the students and foster excitement and anticipation among the students. We expected that by the end of the program, students will be emotionally, socially and academically prepared for the next stage in their life journey.

The programme had three specific goals. They are:

- To assist in the transition from life at Sneha Care Home into the real world of vocational training
- To encourage students to reflect on their experiences at Sneha Care Home- academic, emotional, psychosocial, and physical
- To foster in students an interest in vocational training and passion for developing their skills at Snehagram

The key elements that we planned for the programme were a project which aimed at developing their creativity, work ethics, team work, organizational, managerial, and problem solving skills necessary for life in the real world.

The second element was honing in and perfecting their written and oral skills in English. We felt that the ability to write effectively in English and communicate orally was critical to the success of many of these children for their vocational training and future employment. As such, we included in the lesson plans many oral and written assignments for these children.

The other elements included one-on-one mentoring, transition workshops and field trips to Snehagram on Saturdays.

We conducted an assessment during the second trimester. Based on this assessment we revamped the programme. We excluded the element of project in the third trimester as the children, during the post assessment evaluation expressed that it was a difficult element for them. But we retained all the other components and gave special emphasis on one-on-one mentoring.

We selected 25 children out of these 29 to be promoted to Snehagram in the next academic year. The four children were excluded because they were not aged enough to move to Snehagram.

In our evaluation we found that this programme was truly beneficial. All the children in this programme developed their oral and written communication skills to a long extent. There was also improvement in their logical and analytical skills, creativity, team work and problem solving skills.

Manoj Joseph

Programme Manager