



## FRIENDS SOCIETY

(Voluntary University Youth Organisation for Community Service)

### ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT (2017-18)

Friends Society (FS) is a voluntary youth organization established in 1969 to provide services to the children and adults in Vadodara through variety of activities listed below. Self-development of volunteers through service is our basic focus.

Activities during the programme year (April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018) are listed in this report.

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## ACTIVITIES FOR DISABLED CHILDREN AND ADULTS

### Cheer Up

During the year, 13 visits were made at 'Sankul' (new name of the Pensionpura facility). 10 to 25 children attended them, and activities included playing cricket, various games (such as 'Dabba Fod' and dodge ball), art activities (such as creative painting using threads dipped in colors), preparation for a dance programme for their own annual function, and practice for Shaurya (special children sports meet) participation.

On September 23, 2017, "Navratri Night" was celebrated at Sankul -the organization provided dinner for all and FS provided Faraskhana and sound system. 35 FS volunteers had attended this celebration.

In November 2017, 80 new children from Juvenile School were added to Sankul. They all were given t-shirts and introduced to FS.

Three more visits were scheduled but cancelled due to heavy rain, children going through physio-therapy assessments, and volunteers visiting a member's home due to a death in the family.

NOTE: During the year, the operation of this facility was transferred from the government to the private Deepak foundation, and it took some time and efforts by the FS volunteers to introduce FS to the new management and get their permission to conduct Cheer up activities.



## Cheer Up - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

**Objectives:** Reduce monotony and bring happiness to institutionalized children with physical disabilities through various activities, and to increase their health awareness by organizing educational programs

**Beneficiaries / attendees:** The beneficiaries are children with physical or visual challenges; their ages range from 10 to 15 years. Typical attendance at regular activities is around 10 children – could be as high as 25.

**Frequency / Location:** Twice a month, evening visits on Saturdays at “Sankul” a residential facility operated by Deepak Foundation in Pensionpura, Vadodara.

**Regular Activities:** During each visit, two or three activities are conducted, such as: antakshri, storytelling, singing songs, identifying objects, playing cricket, clay work, passing the parcel, tactile painting, and many others.

**Occasional events:** Navratri, Uttarayan, Rakhee, Janmashtami, Christmas, chess competition, participation in FS annual event SHAURYA, picnic, etc.

**Volunteers:** Typically, 5 to 6 FS volunteers (students) organize and participate in such activities; sometimes, they are accompanied by past members and officeholders of FS.

## Sunday School

Regular Sunday activities were conducted for 31 beneficiaries on every Sunday except one month of summer vacation. In addition, 110 home visits, 27 school visits, four medical evaluations, and a few hospital visits (post-surgery) for one child were conducted. Beneficiaries included 15 children who have mental retardation, 11 had multiple conditions (such as mental retardation with vision problem, etc.), two were physically challenged, one had cerebral palsy, one had Down’s syndrome, and one had mental challenges.

In addition to the regular activities, several other events were held:

- Yoga session (June 18, 2017) - the instructor (Sita Barot) was impressed by the FS activities and offered to come every week to conduct 30 min Yoga sessions – which now has become a routine activity.
- Picnic at Neejanand Resort (near Anand) (Feb 15, 2018)
- Celebration of Rakshabandhan (Aug 6, 2017)
- Drawing competition (Nov 19, 2017) – by Billa International School
- Donations of sweaters (Rotary Club) and of shoes, sandals and other footwear (by BATA, through NSS)





## Sunday School - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

**Objectives:** Facilitate supplementary education, medical rehabilitation, mobility improvement, and social integration of non-institutionalized mentally challenged children

**Beneficiaries:** The beneficiaries are children and young adults with various limitations, most with mental and / or physical challenges; their ages range from 10 to 25 years. Typical attendance at regular activities is around 25.

**Frequency / Location:** Every Sunday 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the FS campus

### Regular Activities:

Every Sunday: yoga, music, physiotherapy (only for identified children)

Alternate Sundays: painting and drawing; paper folding; colouring; clay modelling; mono acting; singing and dancing; sport activities such as, cricket, running ball throw, fast walking etc.; and games such as musical chair, antakshri, passing the parcel etc.; storytelling, etc.

Rehabilitation and support activities: Home and school visits; medical evaluations, medical assistance, educational and vocational training

**Occasional events:** Picnic; participation in national level drawing competition - "Very Special Arts"; participation in PRERNA (Annual event at Faculty of Technology and Engineering, MS University); rakhee; holi; participation in FS Annual event SHAURYA; etc.

**Volunteers / Staff:** Four FS staff members provide services: a music teacher, an art therapist, special teacher for children with disabilities, and one person to make visits to homes, schools, hospital, and manage financial assistance provided to the Sunday School and Sunday Club beneficiaries. In addition, two van and one auto rickshaw drivers are retained by FS to provide transportation services for the children to come to the FS campus.

Typically, FS volunteers (students) help children prepare for dance and other items for special events at FS, such as celebration of the Independence Day; arrange picnic for them, etc.

NOTE: A philanthropic organization in Germany, FACES, provides financial support for the Sunday School.

## Sunday Club

Typical activities include: supporting visually impaired students in their education, help all members explore their talents, provide/ update about government policy and benefit and help them with securing such help, secure help for members who have financial crisis (lower salary earner) for

medical needs and education of their children, discuss general problems of the members and try to solve them. Special events included:

- Donation was obtained to provide a sewing machine to one Sunday Club member.
- New year celebration (day after Diwali): on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017, the new year was celebrated at the FS campus.



- Navratri celebration: on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017, Navratri was celebrated for the members of the Sunday Club and other NGOs. A music group of one of the FS members (Swarmash Garba Group) had performed.
- “Peace Meeting” for a deceased member (Kirit Bhavsar) of the Sunday Club was held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2017.



In the past, FS had written letters to the Railway Minister and visited the railway station, because of these efforts, online tickets booking facility was established and that benefits all the people with disabilities throughout India.

#### Sunday Club - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Objectives: Serve as a support group for differently-abled adults who are our past beneficiaries

Beneficiaries / attendees: The beneficiaries typically are the past beneficiaries of the Sunday School and they are adults. Typical attendance at regular activities is around 35 to 40.

Frequency / Location: Once a month – 2nd Sunday 4:00 to 6:00 PM, at the FS campus

Volunteers / staff: This group is mostly self-managed. Three past members help coordinate its activities as needed. Also, one staff (Chirag Choksi) who works with Sunday School regarding health, educational and financial assistance issues also works with this group to help secure such assistance for them

## GUNJ (An Echo of Music)

This event was not held this year.

The last Gunj event was held on 25th February 2017. The visually impaired members of the Sunday Club presented the music program. They sang well known Gujarati songs and the FS volunteers had decorated the area to depict a Gujarati village and prepared a banner. The Chief Guest was a dancer, choreographer and lecturer in the Music College (Ms. Parulben Patel) and the Guest of Honour was the Principal of Experimental School (Ms. Madhuriben Barot).

A visually impaired member had also demonstrated how the visually people play chess. Dinner was served to all at the end.



### Gunj - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Gunj is a musical programme by visually impaired artists who are the past beneficiaries of FS or are students of Music College, M. S. University. Such programme helps them showcase their talents which may open avenues for career progress. Gunj is a part of Sunday Club. We plan to expand Gunj to include physically impaired persons also.

## Shaurya (All Vadodara special children sports meet)

2018 Shaurya was held on 23rd January 2018 at the Convent of Jesus and Mary Girl's High School grounds in Vadodara. 318 children from 25 schools had participated and the event was organized by 25 FS student volunteers, with participation by another 50 volunteers and past members. Volunteers showed up at 6:30 AM and stayed after the games were over to clean up and return to the school the grounds in good condition. Planning for the event had started around two months in advance. Funds were raised for this event by volunteers themselves, with support from past members.

Chief Guest was Bharat Dangar, Mayor of Vadodara and the Guest of Honor was Sandep Desai, President of Baroda District Football Association.

Fifteen sports events were held: Dabba Fod (418 participants), 50M Race (215), Shotput (144), Ball Throw (85), 100M Race (80), Sack Race (57), Goal The Ball (56), Lemon & Spoon (39), Identify the Object (29), Archery (23), Foot Ball Race (21), Carrom (9), Langdi Race (9), Football (8), and Tricycle Race (5).



### Shaurya (All Vadodara sports meet) - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Shaurya (“A feat of Courage”) is sports meet for the differently-abled children (physically, visually, hearing, or mentally challenged, or visually impaired) aimed at helping them discover and test their potential and infuse in them a spirit of fair and healthy competition. About 300 to 500 children from 20 to 25 special schools in Vadodara participate.

Beneficiaries / attendees: The beneficiaries are children with various physical, mental limitations and their ages range from 10 to 20 years. Typical attendance at regular activities is around 300 to 500 children of differently abled children.

Frequency / Location: Annual event held at the university or school grounds in Vadodara, since 1992

## ACTIVITIES FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### Programme for Future Leaders (PFL)

No PFL activities were conducted this year.

### Programme for Future Leaders (PFL) - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Objectives: Enable school students to develop into socially responsible, effective, and efficient leaders of tomorrow

Beneficiaries / attendees: The beneficiaries are high school students.

Frequency / Location: 3 to 4 programmes in a year at various locations or schools in Vadodara

Volunteers: Typically, FS volunteers (students) organize and participate in such activities.

### Programme for University Youth (PUY)

15 talks were held at the FS campus, individual sessions were attended by 8 to 16 volunteers.

The topics covered included: Power of introverts; staying calm when you know you will be under stress; taxes; first aid and management of emergencies; waking at 4:30 AM - 10 lessons learned; Gujarati folk dances; Indus Valley civilization; professional ethics; security at the cost of privacy, orientation to para jumping, dying clothes in different patterns; Darwin's dangerous ideas; importance of programming, etc.

Three of these sessions included viewing videos (TED talks) followed by discussions; 9 volunteers and two outside people had presented talks.



### University Youth (PUY) - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Objectives: Conduct programmes tailored to the needs of the university youth; help them develop leadership and other skills, and understand the importance of team work

Beneficiaries / attendees: The beneficiaries are FS volunteers.

Frequency / Location: Two talks a month at FS campus

## ACTIVITIES FOR PATIENTS

### Blood Donation

326 units of blood were collected in seven camps during the year. The range was 31 to 86 units of blood per camp. Three camps were held at various faculties of MS University; three in private industries and one at a high school.

Eligibility to donate blood continues to remain an issue. For example, at one faculty of MS University, 130 students had signed up to donate blood, but only 50 were eligible to donate.



## Blood Donation - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

**Objectives:** Mobilize student community to donate blood, encourage others to do so, and disseminate knowledge on the subject

**Beneficiaries / attendees:** The beneficiaries are needy patients at the SSG hospital

**Frequency / Location:** Around 15 camps in a year at various locations in and around the Vadodara city

**Volunteers:** FS volunteers (students) find opportunities for holding camps, conduct educational sessions for potential donors, and organize the camps. Typically, 4 to 6 volunteers participate in organizing each camp.

## ACTIVITIES FOR FATEHGANJ COMMUNITY

### Balwadi

Regular sessions as per syllabus established by Chetan Balwadi. Now government requirements for syllabus are met and trained teachers conduct the program. The program includes sessions on general knowledge, storytelling, dance, physical exercises, and games.

Special events:

- Health checkups for children and mothers (April 14, 2017, August 5, 2017, Jan 18, 2018)
- Bus tour of Vadodara city landmarks; snacks in a park (Dec 18, 2017)
- Walked around FS garden identifying various flowers and fruit plants (Nov 2017)
- Two celebrations: Diwali (October 12, 2017) and Christmas (December 22, 2017)



Parents' education



Health check-up

## Balwadi - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

**Objectives:** Integrate children from lower socio-economic class into the mainstream of society and foster self-confidence in them

**Beneficiaries / attendees:** The beneficiaries are children from nearby communities; their ages range from 3 to 5 years. Attendance at regular activities is around 25, can be as high as 40.

**Frequency / Location:** Mon to Fri 9:00 AM to 12 noon at the FS campus

**Volunteers / Staff:** Typically, three FS staff members (Balwadi teachers) conduct activities and one staff member helps with the activities. FS volunteers (students) typically help children prepare to present dance, song and other items at special events (such as the national days & various festivals).

## Youth Club

Variety of activities are conducted for children from underprivileged communities near the FS. Frequent activities are educational (such as learning about family, shapes and colors, good habits in daily activities, number tables, etc.) and games.

Special events during the year included:

- Drawing competition in an open area near a temple. The location was intended to attract more younger people to join. (5<sup>th</sup> June 2017)
- Visit to Sayaji Garden Museum (3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018)
- Talk on child abuse – by Seema and Binal from Child Helpline (10<sup>th</sup> March 2018)
- Drawing competition at a local school (15<sup>th</sup> March 2018)
- Talk on importance of education – by Aesha Mehta, FS volunteer (24<sup>th</sup> March 2018)

Campaigning to increase participation in Youth Club: Multiple campaigns were conducted by FS volunteers by visiting nearby communities and talking to children and their parents. They were able to get 20 children interested in joining.



### Youth Club - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

**Objectives:** Provide friendly atmosphere conducive to learning; reduce delinquent behaviours of children from lower socio-economic areas who are often school drop-outs

**Beneficiaries / attendees:** The beneficiaries are children in the age range of 7 to 15 years. Typical attendance at regular activities is around 25 to 30.

**Frequency / Location:** Mon to Sat 5:00 to 7:00 PM at the FS campus

**Volunteers:** 7 to 10 FS volunteers (students) participate in such activities.

## Public Reading Room and Library

Around 14 to 15 people visit the Public Reading Rom regularly to read newspapers. There are 105 library members. On an average, around 10 to 12 of them will use the library in a week. The library has about 6,500 books.

### Public Reading Room and Library - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Objectives: Promote reading habits amongst people of all ages

Frequency / Location: Reading room: Daily 8:30 - 11:30 AM at the FS campus

Library: Mon, Wed and Fri 5:30 - 7:00 PM at the FS campus

Volunteers / Staff: Two staff members routinely work in keeping and maintaining the library and the reading room. FS volunteers do not have a role on their operation.

## Sewing and Embroidery Classes

FS conducts classes to team women from the surrounding areas sewing and embroidery. FS also administer exams every six months and issues a certificate at the end of a year based on the combined results of two exams. This certificate helps women get a job since FS is a certified NGO. (In the past, the similar exam was conducted by the government and was called “Women Children Garment Making” – WCGM)

During the year, 31 women were issued certificates. There were 23 students in the second half of the year – 20 in sewing calls only and three in both sewing and embroidery classes.

Special events were also held:

- Trip to Sardar Sarovar Dam, Gurudeshwar and Supraneshwar (23<sup>rd</sup> December 2017)
- Talk on Digital and Cashless transactions - by two professors and three students from Polytechnic college (9<sup>th</sup> January 2018)
- Awareness talk on various kidney diseases – by Lekah Joshi of Indian Renal Foundation
- A survey on socio-economic conditions – by a student of Faculty of Social Work, MS University

### Sewing and Embroidery Classes - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Objectives: Encourage and facilitate self-employment among women from lower socio-economic areas; guide their educational and social development

Beneficiaries / attendees: The beneficiaries are 16 to 45 years old women. Typical attendance is around 20.

Frequency / Location: Mon to Fri - 2:00 to 4:00 PM at the FS campus

Regular Activities: During each visit, x, and many others.

Occasional events: Trips, talks, etc. Also, participation in various FS activities such as Independence Day celebration.

Volunteers: Three FS teachers conduct the classes and administer exams. They are supervised by the Office and Staff Coordinator, Manorama Dubey. FS volunteers do not have a role to play in this activity.

## Vocational Training for Women

Mehndi classes and Beauty Parlor classes are conducted at the fs CAMPUS BY fs TEACHERS. Each class includes from 8 to 20 students and the classes are month long. Total of 77 women have attended the classes during the year.

Special events:

- Products made by the women of the sewing classes and vocational training programs were exhibited at two private companies – Neilson Pvt. Ltd and E-Tech of Gorwa. Also, they were displayed at a FS stall during the NGO Fair organized by the Faculty of Social Work (see photo).



### Vocational Training for Women - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

Objectives: Impart vocational skills to women from lower socio-economic class to supplement their incomes

Beneficiaries / attendees: The beneficiaries are women from the lower socio-economic areas near the FS campus.

Frequency / Location: Monthly 12:00 to 2:00 PM at the FS campus

Volunteers: One FS teacher conducts the classes. FS volunteers do not have a role to play in this activity.

## Sahiyari Mela (Arts & Crafts Exhibition)

This year, the ‘Sahiyari Mela’ was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> October 2017. The Chief Guest was Premal Parikh (owner of a boutique in Vadodara). Approximately 1,000 people visited the meal during the three days.

The volunteers had put up posters of the Mela in prominent places in the area. On display were items made by Sewing and Embroidery class and of Vocational training program students. The items included different types of cloth bags, pouches, toilet case sets, aprons, spectacle cases, table mats and runners, placemat, etc. In addition, Sunday School children had made paper bags, cards, pots, decorative lamps, etc.; Balwadi staff had made lamp holders, keychains, photo frames, etc. and some art and jewelry items were made by some of the Balwadi teachers. The Youth Club had set up a food and games stall. Besides the FS staff, 11 FS volunteers and 9 placement students had helped with organizing this event.



### Sahiyari Mela (Arts & Crafts Exhibition) - OVERVIEW OF THE ACTIVITY

SAHIYARI MELA (“Collaborative Fair”) showcases items made by beneficiaries of Sewing & Embroidery class and Sunday School with the support of FS volunteers. Items displayed and offered for sale typically

include jewelry, ankodi work, chaniya choli with fabric painting or embroidery, ladies' dresses, clothes for children, shoulder bag, mobile phone cover, decorative pieces for hanging, bookmarks, paintings, and so on.

**Objectives:** To provide encouragement and increase confidence of the women participating in the Sewing and Embroidery classes and Vocational Training programs.

**Frequency / Location:** Once a year (usually in September) at FS campus

**Volunteers:** The Mela is organized mostly by the FS teachers and the office / staff coordinator. FS volunteers and the placement students help variety of activities such as decorations, placing posters, packaging items for sale and placing price tags on them.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Independence Day Celebration

The Independence Day was celebrated at FS on August 15, 2017. The Chief Guest was Karan Mistry, a university student & NCC cadet who had represented India as a Youth Ambassador to Kazakhstan and had represented Gujarat in the best cadet competition at the Republic Day Camp in 2016. He was also honoured with the Chief Minister's and Governor's medals for his achievements. After flag hoisting, he gave an inspiring speech. This was followed by an entertainment program where the beneficiaries of Balwadi, Youth Club, Sewing Class and Sunday School performed. The program was attended by the beneficiaries of various FS activities, staff and volunteers and other members.



### Republic Day celebration

On January 26, 2018, the Republic Day was celebrated at FS campus. The program included fancy dress competition and action group song by Balwadi children. Sewing class students performed drama on importance of education. FS volunteers performed broom dance.



## Navratri celebration at FS

On October 5, 2017, 'Sharad Poornima Navratri Night' was celebrated at the FS campus. The beneficiaries of Sunday School, Sunday Club (visually challenged members), sewing class students, FS staff and volunteers had taken part.



## Summer Camp

A 14-day summer camp was organized at the FS campus for children in the community around the FS campus. The summer camp was held from May 1st to 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 from 5 PM to 7:30 PM every day. 24 children had participated, and 11 volunteers had conducted the camp.

Yoga was every day, and on alternate days were other activities: art and craft, personality development, dance, storytelling. On one Saturday, a session on Zumba was conducted. On the day before the last day, a program to showcase all the items made by children was held for their parents. The last day was a picnic at Ravines, an Eco Park in Fajalpur near Vasad, where trekking, rain dance and commando training were undertaken.

## Individual assistance ("under-the-radar" help provided)

A couple of the past FS members are very actively involved in assisting individuals who are visually or physically challenged, most being beneficiaries of our Cheer-up, Sunday Club and other activities. They raise significant amount of funds to directly help these individuals. Dozens of people have been helped in getting jobs in private industries.

Large number of visually impaired youngsters and adults have been helped with their studies, and almost all of them are computer literate (they use special software to hear the text and be able to use computers). Several laptops have been donated to them. These volunteers have also helped few disabled people get married and helped with medical treatment and education of their children.

While all such help is very significant, all the work is done quietly, unassumingly, and without formal records, so we do not know exactly how many individuals have been helped.

## Executive Committee (EC) Camp & Meetings

An EC Camp for the EC members and few other members was held at the Spiritual Life Center in Bharuch on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August 2017. Nine EC members and three other volunteers had attended. Besides the various educational sessions, the volunteers also enjoyed songs and playing 'Dumb Charade.' Sessions were conducted by mentors Shubhada Kanani and Rizwana Jamshed. Several other past members had joined on the second day and helped with sessions – they were Sujit Prabhu, Seema Nambiar, Ashwin Gupta and Falguni Gupta.



During the year, the EC had met four times: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2017, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017, 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and 17<sup>th</sup> February 2018.

The EC members from July 2017 to June 2018 were: Secretary - Zaiba Dabhoiwala; Joint Secretary - Akrati Jain; Treasurer - Burhan Shaikh; In-Charge, Youth Club - Aman Sharma; In-Charge, Blood Donation - Saanya Dholkawala; Group In-Charge, Programme for University Youth (PUY) - Anushree Gokhale; In-Charge, for Future Leaders (PFL) - Alay Dabhi; In-Charge, Cheer-up - Vijender Rathore; and In-Charge: Sunday School - Prabhjot Kaur.