NEWS UPDATE

JULY 2022

> **"Every student can learn, just not on the same day or in the same way."**
>
> **- GEORGE EVANS**



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INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF M S INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Manu and Rika Shah founded MSI in 1975, in the basement of their home in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. MSI is now the largest importer and distributor in the world of Premium Surfaces including granite, marble, porcelain and ceramic tiles, slate, travertine, limestone and other natural stone products from 37 countries. Most notably, MSI provided the granite for the Vietnam Memorial in DC.

Manu and Rika Shah established Sarva Mangal Family Trust (Sarva Mangal means 'let all be happy' in Sanskrit) over 20 years ago with compassion as their driving force for philanthropy. Manu's vision for SMFT is to act as a catalyst, challenge status quo, nurture passionate change-makers and support leapfrogging ideas that are scalable and sustainable. Today, all members from the Shah family are involved in social impact initiatives that are undertaken by SMFT. Manu supports VOSAP – Voice of Specially Abled People, which has created over 10,000 change makers and rated over 18,000 buildings rated for accessibility. He also supports Lend a hand India, which provides digital vocational training to over 300,000 students in 20,000 schools.

In 2007, Mr. Manu Shah was named Ernst & Young's national "Entrepreneur of the Year" in the distribution, manufacturing, and security category.

ABOUT SARVA MANGAL FAMILY TRUST

Established in 1994 by the Founders of M S International, Inc. The mission of the Sarva Mangal Family Trust is to improve and strengthen the health, education and wellness of communities and help them prepare for global jobs of the 21st century. Sarva Mangal is a Sanskrit word which means "Goodness to All."

To advance this mission, the Sarva Mangal Family Trust has donated to and is continuing to work with various organizations and programs in health promotion and prevention, assisting victims of domestic violence, empowering seniors, entrepreneurship, technological literacy, community activism, and children's education.

MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS



SMFT AND ROCKET LEARNING PARTNER TO CATALYZE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN INDIA

Rocket Learning aims to provide school and life readiness for young children by enabling access to age-appropriate learning in school and at home. They catalyze ECE and community engagement through digital solutions focused on parents and teachers of kids less than 8 years old. Through enabling a universal high quality ECCE system, the nonprofit wants to eradicate inequality faced by low-income children.

NGO IN FOCUS FOR JULY'22 – ROCKET LEARNING


Rocket Learning Beneficiary at Anganwadi

Rocket Learning is one of India's leading education non-profits catalyzing early childhood education and community engagement. They empower parents and community daycare workers through the Indian government system by using technology, media, and social influence techniques, creating vibrant digital communities to uplift local voices. **1 million students, teachers and parents are using their platform, and the average child in their cohort attains essential school readiness skills, reaching the top third of their class.**

Quality early childhood education (ECE) ensures school readiness, substantial increases in school completion and lifelong earnings and time freed up for parents (especially women) to enter formal employment. Yet, over 40 million low-income children in India cannot access quality ECE. Public schooling in India at the Pre-K level is limited to daycare centers that focus on nutrition and health care rather than cognitive stimulation. Parental engagement is critical for inclusive education, but low-income parents often need support in building **"AIM" – Awareness to be involved in their children's learning at the foundational level, Information that is contextual and usable and Motivation to be engaged at the sustained levels necessary for adequate cognitive stimulation**. This shows up in dismal educational statistics: in grade 1, 43% of low-income children can't recognize alphabets, and 35% can't recognize numbers 1-9. The inaccessibility of high-quality ECE means that each year, 50 million low-income children in India between 3-6 years of age are becoming less capable, as this lack of stimulation and building of fewer neuronal connections in their early years becomes increasingly difficult to address through remedial interventions later in life.


Beneficiary Attending Class

NGO IN FOCUS FOR JULY'22 – ROCKET LEARNING (Cont.)


Beneficiary Going Back Home from School

Rocket Learning builds early childhood and foundational learning at scale using technology, community, and government. They deliver short, contextualized content in local languages to 1 million children and 60K+ pre-school teachers daily via government-anchored WhatsApp groups. Rocket learning uses these teacher-parent messaging groups to send academic content and nudges that build aspiration through group effects. Their technology sends daily information and stores and analyzes responses. This enables pre-school teachers to obtain regular guidance on how to stimulate their students through activity-based learning. Equally critically, low-income parents, especially mothers, build the confidence and knowledge to engage with their children while doing learning activities at home. This results in improvements in the child's abilities and learning; increases in teacher skills, accountability, and motivation; and changes in caregiver knowledge and confidence for home learning and engagement with school.


Kids during Lunch Break at School

NGO IN FOCUS FOR JULY'22 – ROCKET LEARNING (Cont.)

Rocket Learning's impact so far:

- 1 million students, teachers, and parents are using their platform
- Children are becoming school ready - an average child in their cohort reaches the top third of their class
- Parents double the time they spend with children on learning, with this behaviour change persisting even post 12 months



Kids during Class at School

Rocket Learning plans to scale to impact 50 million children over the next 5 years. They believe this is possible for three main reasons. First, they rely on simple front-end technology, building on Whatsapp and YouTube, which are widely available on even the most basic smartphones. Secondly, they partner with the government system, which has the requisite infrastructure and staff to work with the most disadvantaged children across the country. Lastly, their solution is highly cost-effective; cost per classroom is less than $10 dollars/year. Governments can afford to pay these costs, and many current partners have indicated willingness to pay for their digital solution in the near future.



Mother Teaching RL Beneficiary at Home



ECE Students with their Class Teacher



Kids Learning About Flowers and Leaves



Hands-On Learning in Progress

SUCCESS STORY – ROCKET LEARNING

Name: Muskan Shake
Program: ECE
Location: Uttar Pradesh

Engaging with Rocket Learning's WhatsApp content is a family affair at 2nd grader Muskan's home in western UP. She has two cousins—Sonika, a 1st-grade student, and Sahil, who is also in 2nd grade. Their parents eagerly look forward to this daily family ritual. Father MD Najrul says with a smile, "after a hard day of labouring and toiling, to see the children learn poems, stories, and games makes me forget the hardships that await me the next day." Muskan's mother Sahk believes these play-based lessons have changed Muskan's as well as her outlook on learning. Muskan has been able to improve her performance throughout the academic year consistently. Sahk, a self-proclaimed dreamer, fondly says, "I now dream of seeing Muskan as an afsar bitiya, as they show on TV." Sahk herself could never go to school because she had to work a farm hand for her family. She gushes about how secretly she enjoys learning alongside the children of the house and proudly recites the poem 'Aloo Kachaloo'. The family prefers the content that they receive from Rocket Learning to the learning material they received from a previous private school. It has made a difference in the education of all the three cousins, despite them being at different learning levels. Muskan's parents feel proud about being able to provide their child with quality learning resources, and the ease with which they maneuver the platform and the content boosts their confidence. It is evident in Muskan's increasing interest in her learning —she watches Rocket Learning's content alone and does the activities even when all the adults are busy! It is a further testament to the efficiency and quality of Rocket Learning's product.



SUCCESS STORY – ROCKET LEARNING

Name: Sharmila
Program: ECE
Location: Chandigarh

Sharmila has been working in her community as an Anganwadi worker for the last decade. Before the Rocket Learning program, her community viewed her as a mere caretaker and the Anganwadi center as a place where their children ate 'khichdi'. Parents, too, never knew how to assist their children with their basic learning needs. Nowadays, parents in her community actively come to her to discuss their children's learnings and the monthly certificates they collected over the Whatsapp lessons. These learnings, complemented by Sharmila's efforts at the center, have greatly improved the children's learning experiences in her community. She proudly shares the story of one of her students Pihu, a girl who had engaged with the Rocket Learning program over the last year and now is excelling in 1st grade at the nearby primary school. She firmly iterates that this was possible because Pihu was able to build a strong foundation during her anganwadi years of learning with the play-based learning content. Her community sees her as a teacher now, and she proudly shares how she is addressed by everyone as 'Maam' now and not 'Didi'. The boost in her confidence translates into actively seeking opportunities to enhance her skill sets. She recently completed an NSE-certified course for ECMP operator cum supervisor. Smiling widely, Sharmila ji tells everyone that before the Rocket Learning intervention in her community, she couldn't imagine being anything more than a 'khichdi waali didi' for her community. Now, she has immense social capital in her community as everyone sees her as the face of the transformation in early childhood learning in their community brought about by Rocket Learning.



SUCCESS STORY – VOICE OF SPECIALLY ABLED PEOPLE



Name: Girish Svvasheri
Program: VOSAP Volunteer
Location: Belgaum

Nothing can stop you from achieving what you want if you are determined to get it. We all have heard such quotes but honestly very few among us dare to do what it takes to achieve our dreams. SMFT supported nonprofit Voice of Specially Abled People has a strong team of dedicated volunteers and partner organizations who are working towards creating a better world for Specially Abled People by empowering and enabling them with Assistive Devices, promoting accessibility and inclusion, employment opportunities to give them an independent life.

One such organization is APH in partnership with whom VOSAP provided ration kits on the ground to SAPs during COVID-19, started a shared service module for wheelchair, has rated various public places in Belgaum for Accessibility, and is enabling SAPs with assistive devices.

As an organization, VOSAP is lucky to have several individuals on the team who are a pure personification of grit and determination. One such individual is Girish Svvasheri who is a part of the VOSAP team as a dedicated volunteer. He has been a member and an active volunteer for the Association of Physically Handicapped (APH, (Partner Organization of Voice of SAP) for over 25 years. Currently serving as the secretary of APH, Girish is determined to bring positive changes in the life of people with disabilities.



It becomes important to tell that he himself is a person with disability with lots of challenges in his life. He is not only overcoming challenges of life himself but also inspiring others with his action and helping many as a volunteer. **Being born to a specially-abled mother he knew from the very beginning that life is all about overcoming challenges and not letting his disability define him.**

After finishing his basic education, Girish started working at a rubber stamp manufacturing company at the age of 19. By taking this job at such a young age he was fulfilling his financial responsibility towards his family but it

SUCCESS STORY – VOICE OF SPECIALLY ABLED PEOPLE (Cont.)

did not bog down his willingness to work for society. He became an active volunteer for APH and started helping other PwDs to live a life of independence and dignity.



Girish affirms that mobility, independence and access is very crucial. Like most other young boys, Girish too had a love for fast zooming bikes. But, unlike them, he could not get a bike so easily because he needed a modified one due to his disability. He tried but could not get someone to modify a bike for him. He could have left his dream to ride a bike unfulfilled, but he did not! Girish learned the techniques and modified a bike for himself. His dream was fulfilled but he did not stop here. He helped many other people with disabilities to be independent for their mobility by modifying bikes and cars for them.

Taking care of a job, volunteering for an organization, and volunteering on a personal level may seem overwhelming to most people as we keep whining about the scarcity of time. But, Girish is surely not like the majority of us. He carved out time for his other interests and became a sportsperson. Yes, you read it right, VOSAP volunteer, Girish Svvasheri is a sportsperson as well. He has participated in various regional and state-level sporting events including marathons, swimming, table tennis, bodybuilding, etc. He has been a part of a few national-level sports competitions as well.



In 2012, he attempted to set a world record in swimming for Rotary International's project for eradicating Polio. Rotary International honored him with Rotary Vocational Award for his services in 2013-14.

Girish has not only been an inspiration but also a ray of hope for many. He has strongly stood by humanity in the testing times of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

VOSAP, in association with APH, has helped specially abled people with ration and PPE kits. And, Girish was one of the dedicatedly active volunteers who went outside to help fellow citizens in need. We cannot thank him and other volunteers enough with our words.



SUCCESS STORY – VOICE OF SPECIALLY ABLED PEOPLE (Cont.)

Currently living in Belgaum with his parents, wife, and two children, Girish manages a Gas Agency. His family, especially his wife, has been a constant support in everything he does. This story alone is capable of inspiring and motivating people to live life to the fullest and help others in any capacity we can do. Lastly, Mr. Girish Svvasheri gave the following message:



"I would like to request all the specially-abled people to step outside and chase their dreams and not let their disability define them. The world is big and there are opportunities everywhere. The only thing stopping you is yourself" were the words of Mr. Girish Svvasheri, VOSAP dedicated and inspiring volunteer.



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