



# LET'S LIVE

## True Progress is Slow but Sure!

- Swami Vivekananda

While Kerala was preparing for Monsoon, at Let's Live, we were slowly but steadily warming up for our first project - **Monsoon Café** - an open space for free expression of thoughts, emotions and feelings. It was conceptualized as a smaller version of our dream Project 'The Halfway Café'. The *Monsoon Café* project was supposed to be a soft launch where we test our idea of Café as a means for Service in the field of mental and emotional health. Kanthari co-founders Paul Kronenberg and Sabriye Tenberken were generous to offer their space and the tenth batch of Kanthari participants as volunteers for the *Monsoon Café*.

The first session of the *Monsoon café* held on 9 June 2018 was inaugurated by Kanthari co-founder Paul Kronenberg. The session focussed on bringing awareness about mental/emotional health issues amongst teenage girls in the neighbourhood followed by open discussions over coffee.



Public Charitable Trust- Doct. No 12/2018/4 on 17/01/2018. TC 48/536, Manacaud PO, Trivandrum -695009, Kerala, India. Phone: +91 8078944613. Email: [letslivekerala@gmail.com](mailto:letslivekerala@gmail.com)

For more information log on to [www.letslivekerala.org](http://www.letslivekerala.org)





The second session of the *Monsoon Café* was held on 16 June 2018. The focus this time was on teenage boys in the neighbourhood where we discussed about the top reasons that push them to depression - such as lack of understanding from parents, love failures and substance abuse due to peer pressure. The café had various interesting dishes such as Soul Pie, Uplifting Cake, Borderline Shake, etc. which piqued curiosity as well as raised awareness. Those who came to the café were generous to buy beverages and snacks for our young beneficiaries who were attending the sessions.



Public Charitable Trust- Doct. No 12/2018/4 on 17/01/2018. TC 48/536, Manacaud PO, Trivandrum -695009, Kerala, India. Phone: +91 8078944613. Email: [letslivekerala@gmail.com](mailto:letslivekerala@gmail.com)

For more information log on to [www.letslivekerala.org](http://www.letslivekerala.org)





The final session of the *Monsoon Café*, was held on 23 June 2018. This day had a special focus on identifying one's emotions and dealing with them. The beneficiaries of the *Monsoon Café* day 3 were a bunch of teenage girls who reside in *Nirbhaya* homes. This session saw enthusiastic young women volunteers who were supporting and cheering the girls through-out the session. There were art classes, tarot reading, and salsa classes from international volunteers for these girls. On the other side our café was supported by our good friends/customers of the café who help us run the business and see if we could balance social change and business equally. The girls who were a bit sceptic when they came, left with huge smiles and walked away confidently not before giving all our volunteers warm hugs which made our day 😊





## Networking with Peers

We were fortunate to find peers working for suicide prevention in Trivandrum.

- *Sanjeevani* is one such NGO working for suicide prevention. They are part of Befrienders Worldwide - which operates in a successful way across the world. Maithri, an NGO for suicide prevention in Kochi also comes under the same parent. We were fortunate to meet with them and talk to them about future collaborations, if any.
- The *SPC (Suicide Prevention Clinic)* at Medical College, Trivandrum which functions every Tuesday for this cause

## Supporting other social causes...



We were lucky to be part of the brainstorming and Need analysis discussions for the *Youth Capacity Building Program for children and young adults in Rajaji Nagar Colony*, Trivandrum headed by the District Child Protection Office with the support of District collector's interns.



The project was supported by the government here in collaboration with NGOs like Blue Point which was instrumental in reformation of Karimadom colony in Trivandrum.

## Networking with Market Space

While we could not afford a space of our own for the Halfway Café, we were talking to various people in the Café business - if they could provide us with a space to offer non-judgemental listening. We got green signal from two coffee shops in Trivandrum. *Coffee Savory* which has a very nice ambience with cosy setting - offered us space for conversations - as per the need. *The Muffin House* was also willing to support us with space and showed interest in collaborating with our social cause.

## Networking with Influencers

We were lucky to meet the influencers like District Collector Dr. Vasuki IAS who talked about her five point agenda, which included bringing in youth support groups. Her ideas of bringing in support groups for youth closely aligned with Let's Live vision of providing an open space for youth for free expression of thoughts, feelings and emotions.

As part of inviting girls for the *Monsoon Café* session 3, we met PE Usha, Project Director of the Kerala Mahila Samakhya Society (KMSS) which supervises and runs the *Nirbhaya shelter homes*. We discussed about the need/importance of positive psychology and consistency in providing psycho social support to the inmates, some of who are victims of sexual abuse and shows signs of suicide.

We also met the District Child Protection officer KK Subair who had plans to work towards prevention of suicides in teenage girls. He shared the statistics of suicide in Kerala which states that Male suicide is 4 times more than female suicides, however when it comes to teenagers the suicide rate is higher in girls than boys. This issue, we agreed, need to be studied further.

## An Entry to Technopark...





We took our first session on Stress Management and how to bring in more balance to work/life at Allianz in Technopark. The session was well received and the number of participants who applied for the session shows how lost we all are in handling stress and the significance of equipping ourselves with positive life skills.

## Connecting with Beneficiaries & Target Group

This season was all about getting in touch with our beneficiaries and target group. The *Monsoon Café* paved a way to get into the heart of teenage boys and girls in the neighbourhood and homes like Nirbhaya. The meetings at slums like Rajaji Nagar gave more insight on what all are the main issue that push a youngster to contemplate about suicide.

We approached the neighbourhood schools to study the psychosocial support provided by government schools - such as Vocational Higher Secondary School (VHSS) Kamaleswaram and VHSS for girls, Manacaud after the report of suicide of a 17 year old girl from VHSS Manacaud. It was disheartening to know that the position of school counsellor remains *vacant* even though the children in these school face various psycho-social issues. Sometimes the situations get out of hand resulting in such extreme actions which could also be caused by substance abuse,



sexual abuse, serious mental illnesses, etc. We offered our voluntary services to these schools and to Fort police station where the case was reported.

Meanwhile at Let's Live, we've started receiving phone calls for support and counselling. Youngsters call for issues mostly related to socially imposed restrictions by family, peer pressure, failure in love relationships and lack of space for self-expression and their inability to handle such life situations. For those who called from Trivandrum we ensured that we support them directly. Most of such face-to-face sessions were done at public spaces in Trivandrum like Kanakakkunnu palace grounds or Public Library.

## Media Focus - Serving Nothing but Life!

This article written by Aathira in The New Indian Express dated 28.06.2018 covered Let's Live initiatives on bringing awareness through the *Monsoon Café* project.



## Looking forward to spreading awareness in coming months...

Now that we have tested our café model, we are confident to use café as a means for providing our services. All we need now is the space and funds for The Halfway Café project. While the universe conspires to help us achieve it, we are extending our focus to other areas of intervention for our target group i.e. mental health advocacy for those who are undergoing issues and to bring in more awareness to general public about Mental and Emotional health and related issues.

Knowledge is indeed power. Armed with just that and a passionate heart, we move forward, hoping to bring positive change and touch some lives.

Fingers Crossed!

Sherin Noordheen

30 Aug 2018

Founder-Director

Trivandrum, Kerala

Public Charitable Trust- Doct. No 12/2018/4 on 17/01/2018. TC 48/536, Manacaud PO, Trivandrum -695009, Kerala, India. Phone: +91 8078944613. Email: [letslivekerala@gmail.com](mailto:letslivekerala@gmail.com)

For more information log on to [www.letslivekerala.org](http://www.letslivekerala.org)

