



SHANTHI MAARGAM

PIONEERING SUPPORT FOR
ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH EMOTIONAL
WEL-BEING

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND FUNDING BRIEF

About Shanthi Maargam

A PIONEER IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH IN SRI LANKA



Shanthi Maargam means “Pathways to Peace” in both Sinhala and Tamil.

Established in 2016, Shanthi Maargam is a registered non-profit organization dedicated to reducing violence in society.

We focus on providing psychosocial support to youth in vulnerable urban communities like Gothamipura, Wanathamulla, and Obeysekarapura, helping them break generational cycles of violence.

Our services include trilingual counselling, community outreach, and advocacy initiatives.

a safe space for youth to heal from trauma and develop skills to y.

What We Do

At the “Youth Center”, we’re dedicated to empowering children and youth through professional counseling services, focusing on enhancing emotional well-being.

Our services include one-on-one counselling, parental involvement as needed, and a hotline operating from 8am to 10pm for immediate assistance.

We offer art and drama therapy sessions, support groups and outreach programs on various crucial topics such as substance abuse, bullying, and self-care. To foster emotional resilience, mindfulness sessions are integral to our approach. Join us in nurturing the emotional well-being of the next generation.



Board of Directors



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Director

Our Services



Counselling Services

We provide trilingual counseling services free of charge through a variety of channels, including hotline support, online platforms, and in-person consultations



Youth Center

Our youth center create safe spaces and opportunities for young people to enhance their emotional well-being with psychosocial support and youth services which facilitate holistic learning and growth.



Community Outreach Projects

Shanthi Maargam has been leading impactful community outreach projects in collaboration with esteemed international organizations. With a primary focus on addressing violence and providing vital psychosocial support to underserved low-income communities, our initiatives are dedicated to fostering safety and resilience. Some of our outreach initiatives include;

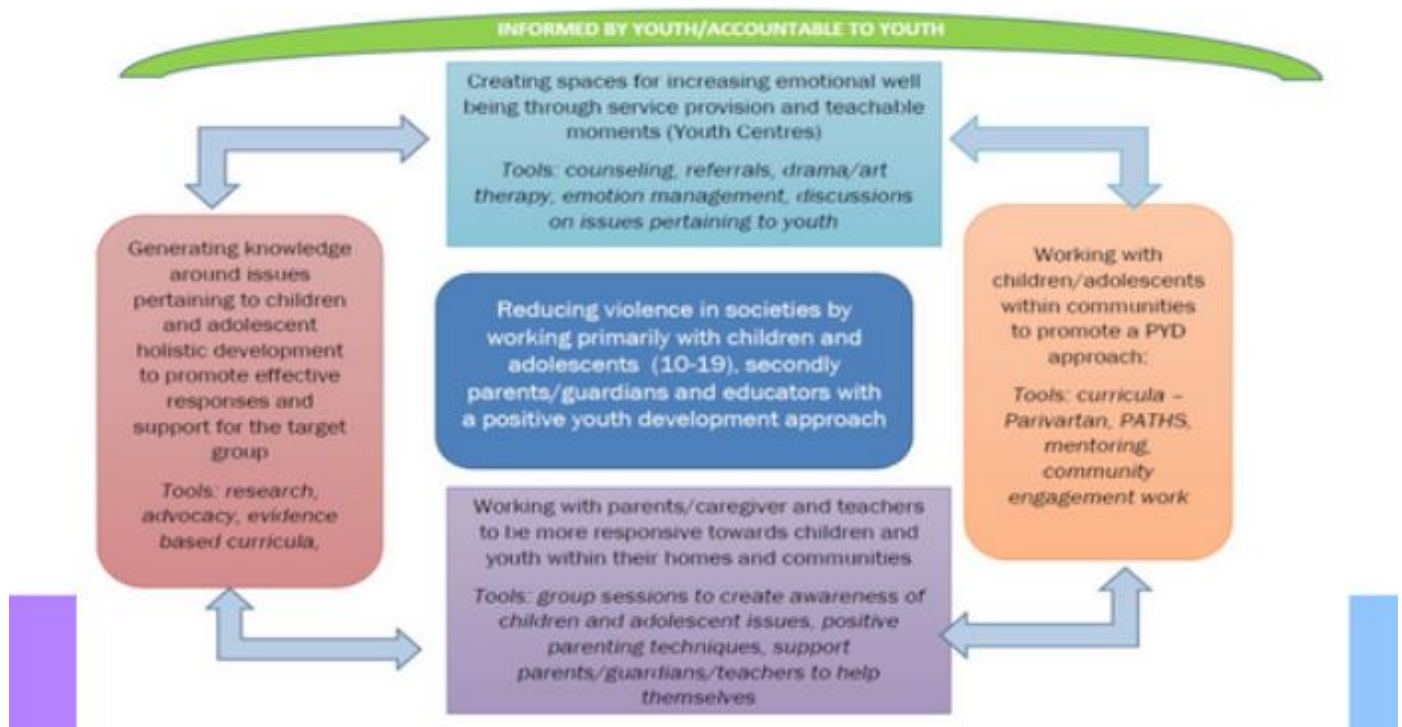
- Creating a Digital Safe Space funded by SVRI
- Youth Safe Spaces '23 funded by Asia Foundation (TAF)
- Period Prosperity funded by the French Embassy
- EMPOWER Project funded by Helvetas
- P. E. A. C. E Program funded by USAID



Internship Programs

Comprehensive Internship Program designed for those who aspire to pursue their profession in the fields of psychology, counseling and social work, providing the required skill training and exposure as they begin their careers.

Shanthi Maargam Conceptual Framework



As illustrated in our conceptual framework, the team, comprising staff, counselors, interns, and volunteers work with youth in the community to deliver sessions that address areas included under “Positive Youth Development”, such as moral, behavioral, and social competencies. For this purpose, we adapted two highly successful programs from Hong Kong and India which worked on promoting positive youth development and reducing violent attitudes and behaviors towards women and girls. This work was funded by UNICEF. We have developed a digital platform to support children and youth to access mental health services and change harmful gender norms. At the “Art of Living” center, we focus on providing professional counseling services and use well researched, adapted approaches to work with children and youth on strengthening their emotional well-being. We provide one one-on-one counseling services for children and work with their parents when required a hotline for anyone who needs to contact us any time of the day. We conduct art and drama therapy sessions for children who visit our center and discussions that require reflection around substance abuse, bullying, relationships, educational pressure, abuse, gender roles, conflict resolution, self-care, etc. To strengthen their emotional well-being, we conduct mindfulness sessions with the children. During the ongoing crisis in Sri Lanka, Shanthi Maargam has provided emergency support to children and families in surrounding communities in the form of dry rations, lunch, and spaces to share their fears and concerns about the impact of the crisis on their own lives.

Why Sri Lanka need Shanthi Maargam

7,973

Reported Cases of Child Abuse and Other Related Incidents

1st Jan - 31st Oct 2023
National Child Protection Authority (2023)

41%

Children Sexually Abused in Sept. 2023

ECPAT Sri Lanka (2023)

39%

Prevalence of Depression among Children and Youth, aged 10 - 24 years.

Alwis, Baminawatta & Chandradasa (2023)

14%

Child Deaths in Sept. 2023

ECPAT Sri Lanka (2023)

72%

Students Experience Corporal Punishment at School

UNICEF (2019)

15.6 out of 100,000

Suicide Rate among Sri Lankans in 2020, 2021 and 2022

Balachandran (2023)

16%

Sri Lankan adolescents had used at least 1 illegal substance

Jayamaha et al. (2022)

70,862

Regular Heroine Users above the age of 14

National Dangerous Drugs Control Board (2019)

30%

Male sexual violence perpetrators had their first offense at ages 15-19.

Care International (2013)

6.1%

Teenage Pregnancies

Ekanayake, Tennakoon & Hemapriya (2015)

Our Impact

Within the past 7 years, Shanthi Maargam has met the urgent needs of children and youth in our country through the provision of our services. To ensure children's rights are maintained, we have developed standard operating procedures and codes of conduct for all engaging with the children at our center or in the community. Due to the pioneering nature of our work, we have a full internship program for students in psychology with 2 intakes a year. Below we have captured some of the key highlights of our work with feedback on our impact from children who have received our services.

01

Shanthi Maargam Youth Center

Our youth center works with 650 children from surrounding urban poor families in Borella (Gothamipura, Orugodawatte, Maligawatte). Since 2016 we have conducted awareness sessions on self-care, child abuse, peer, parental and educational pressure, reducing violence against women, anti-racism and mental health etc. At our youth center, numbers tell the story of our impact and dedication to the well-being of the young minds we serve. With 60 registered children, we provide a vibrant array of activities, ranging from 16 to 18 engaging sessions each month. In the year 2023 alone, our doors welcomed an impressive 1508 visits, reflecting the trust and enthusiasm of our community. These numbers not only represent our reach but also embody our commitment to nurturing a space where youth can thrive, explore, and grow.

a) Facilitate support groups for varying mental health needs.

Design and implement targeted support group programs based on the identified needs for youth center youth, as well as youth at surrounding community schools. First, the counseling team spends time identifying the need. Based on these findings, the team determines the focal areas for their intervention plan, encompassing emotions and thoughts, distress tolerance, self-care, healthy and unhealthy coping skills, self-identity, gender stereotypes, assertiveness, self-advocacy, and problem-solving and decision-making skills. Each topic is slated for a minimum of 3-4 sessions, tailored to its content.

b) Sustain and increase the outreach of high-quality counselling services for adolescents and youth in poor urban communities and national level to increase their emotional well-being.

c) Community Engagement Initiatives for the Counseling Program

Conducting mental health educational workshops at community schools

Host Mental Health Education workshops for parents or teachers in community Schools or communities

Host Mental Health Education community workshops for children

d) Implementing the PATHS to change programme (Implementing the programme with the children at the youth centre) and Parivarthan for Boys and Parivarthan for Girls programmes

e) Conducting programs to improve skills in children and youth using a PYD approach

- f) Generating knowledge around issues pertaining to children and adolescent holistic development to promote effective responses and support for the target group
- g) Raising awareness on Sexual and Reproductive health
- h) Educational support for youth center /community children

i) *Lunch programme*

We commit to providing consistent lunch and facilitating free play sessions at the Shanthi Maargam Youth Center. We understand the profound significance of these programs in nurturing the overall development and well-being of children. The free lunch initiatives extend beyond addressing hunger, fostering a supportive environment where children feel cared for and valued, leading to improved concentration and academic performance. However, we acknowledge the financial challenges many families face in providing regular meals, underscoring the importance of community programs like ours. To further our impact, we aim to expand our lunch program to more days of the week with additional donor support, ensuring that more children receive nourishment and support to thrive in a nurturing environment.



j) *Dry ration distribution /Crisis support*

Shanthi Maargam has taken the lead in distributing essential ration packs and stationery supplies to families with children in the surrounding communities, with the generous support of our donors. This initiative has proven incredibly valuable to the community, especially amidst the current economic crisis. By working together on this initiative, our goal is to ease some of the burdens faced by families and strengthen the bonds of solidarity within our community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Shanthi Maargam extended support beyond children and youth to encompass families and communities. Our initiatives included targeted assistance for families, community outreach programs, and collaborations with local organizations. This comprehensive approach not only helped individuals navigate the challenges but also contributed to the collective resilience and well-being of the entire community.



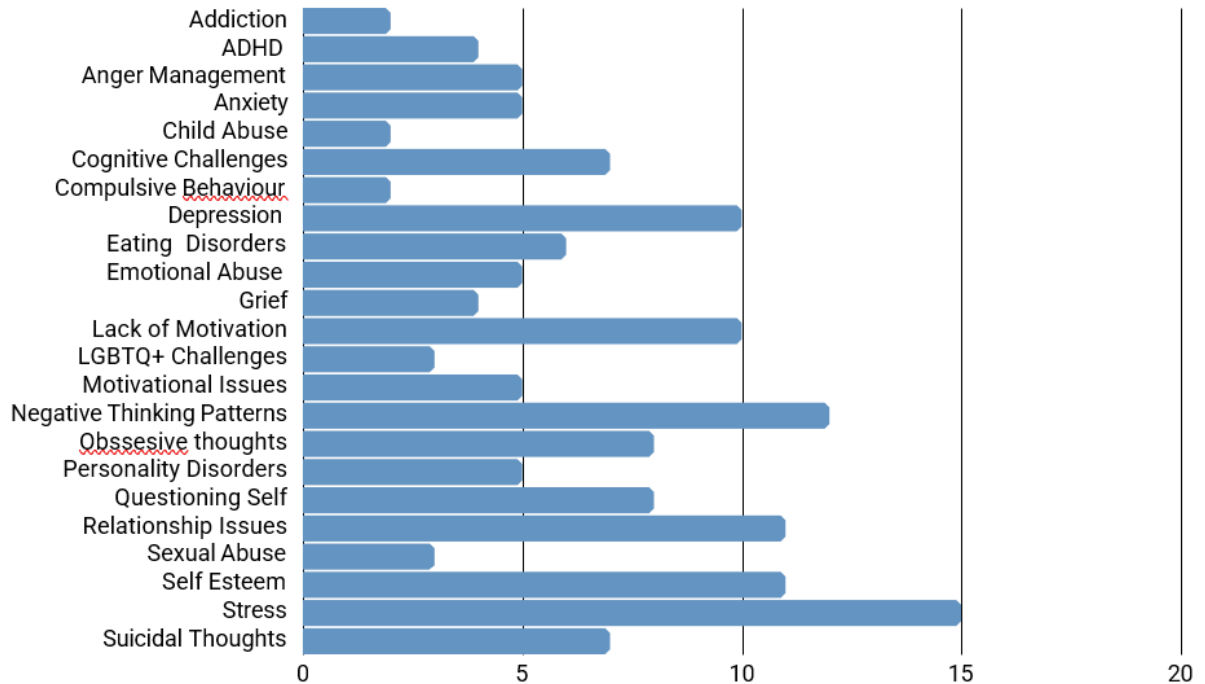
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Crisis Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

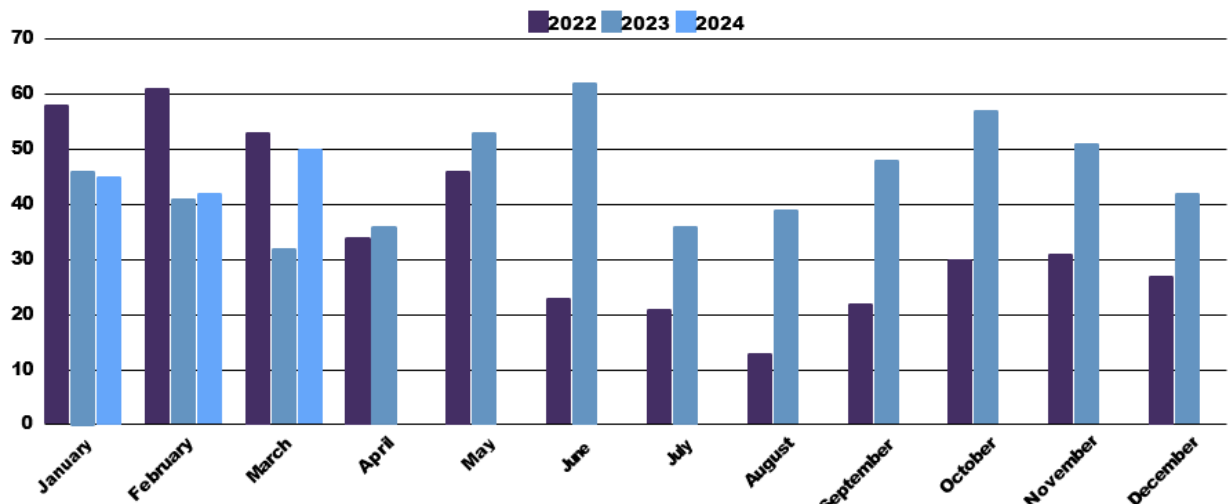


Counselling Services

Shanthi Maargam has been a pioneer in the provision of high-quality counseling services targeted at children and youth in Sri Lanka. Our services are free of charge and are provided through our hotline and one-on-one therapy sessions in all three languages. Given below are some of the key issues why children and youth seek our services:



Given below are the total number of counselling sessions from 2022 -2024



Our toll-free mental health hotline offers counseling services in Sinhala, Tamil, and English, ensuring accessibility for individuals across the island. Operating from 8 am to 10 pm, we provide holistic support through a culturally competent approach, delivered by a diverse group of counselors who offer empathetic, non-judgmental assistance. Our focus on psychological first aid and creating a supportive atmosphere underscores our commitment to promoting well-being for all who reach out. In 2023, we received 1452 calls with 150 - 200 calls received monthly.

Impact through key Community Outreach projects

a) Paths to Change-Development of a life skills programme for adolescents to reduce violence among peers - Piloted in Colombo and Kilinochchi with 100 children (funded by UNICEF).

Adaptation and piloting of two UNICEF/WHO recommended programmes to Sri Lanka in Sinhala and Tamil:

- P.A.T.H. to Adulthood curricula developed by the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong which is activity-based, promotes bonding and resilience; enhances social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills; develops self-esteem; and fosters good social behaviors and norms.
- “Parivarthan” - uses cricket as an entry point with boys by engaging coaches as positive role models and training them to deliver messages to their male athletes about the importance of respecting women and changing harmful attitudes towards women and girls.
- Some key results from the piloting are provided below:



b) Creating a Digital Safe Space for adolescents to break the cycle of violence against children and women (funded by SVRI).

A Digital Application for positive youth development and behaviour change using PATHS and Parivarthan, counselling/emotional support, meditation, yoga, games, and creative outlets. We provide the children with the skills to manage their emotions and find a deeper level of peace, which we believe can break the cycle of violence in families and the perpetration of violence in communities.



c) Providing a safe and supporting environment for youth to improve emotional well-being through community outreach programs, one-to-one counselling, mental health support groups, and counseling hotlines (funded by The Asia Foundation).

The project aimed to enhance emotional well-being within school communities by providing resources and support to individuals in need, normalizing reaching out for mental health support, reducing stigma around mental health, and raising awareness about the importance of seeking support as a preventative measure. Targeting two schools in the GN divisions of Gothamipura, Wanathamulla, and Obeyseykarapura, namely Susumayawardhana Vidyalaya and Anurudhdha Balika Vidyalaya, the project aimed to enhance the emotional well-being of children and youth in these communities by increasing awareness and providing mental health services. The project's outputs included increased awareness and access to mental well-being services for selected school children, establishment and implementation of support groups for general emotional well-being, and provision of one-on-one counseling for those in need. With 11 workshops conducted, totaling 526 participants, the project saw significant engagement, with 102 seeking direct counseling, 149 participating in support groups, and 44 accessing one-on-one counseling. Notably, there was a reported 9.44% improvement in emotional well-being for support group participants and an 11.43% improvement for those accessing one-on-one counseling. The implementation of support groups facilitated a deeper understanding of the primary challenges faced by students and strengthened the bond between the project team and the students. This connection resulted in 38 students expressing interest in participating in future programs, highlighting the project's success in addressing immediate concerns and fostering sustained engagement for future collaborative efforts.



I want to thank you for making such a program. The program helped us calm our minds. It helped a lot to find answers to the questions we had, and I, personally had a great improvement. We got a lot of valuable knowledge that we didn't get from school. I had a problem that many children had about relationships. I am very impressed that we were able to talk about it openly and that the confidentiality was protected. It is correct to say that our self-confidence improved. Special thanks to Miss Rashmi.

STUDENT H

I participated in this program without any idea. At first, I thought we would get some kind of certificate. That's what I thought too. That's why I went to individual counseling. But something happened, one by one, problems that bothered me and I didn't tell anyone started coming out without even thinking. It surprised me too. It was a great relief to me. I am very satisfied as it helped to find the answer.

STUDENT M

d) Safe spaces for youth supporting emotional well-being, holistic learning, & intercultural harmony with a focus on the Prevention of Violent Extremism (funded by HELVETAS).

The project enabled Shanti Maargam to provide mental health and psychosocial support for youth from Gothamipura, Obeysekarapura and Wanathamulla. provided psychosocial support, including counselling, arts-based therapies, and crisis interventions to promote trauma healing and emotional well-being; and promoted holistic learning and intercultural harmony as a path to ethno-racial peace and reconciliation. The centre, built as a safe, welcoming, inclusive space, is to expand its holistic services through the project. The purpose of the project the development of a “PEACE manual which was adapted from an Australian “Racism, No Way” program to decrease the acceptance of racist and ethnocentric attitudes among children and adolescents in schools and those accessing the youth center while increasing pro- social norms among children and adolesce.



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**EMPOWER Project
Testimonials**



The participant is from Wanathamulla. Through the program, he said he learned about the differences between different religions, how to diffuse a violent situation in the community, and the disadvantages of ethnic conflicts. He is confident he could take this message forward and finds great value in the program.



The participant, who has been part of the program since its initiation, said that he was able to expand his existing knowledge on the concepts of managing violence and extremist ideologies. He insisted that the program continues to engage with the communities and allow them to take forward what has been taught to them. He further reiterated the importance of guidance to help younger participants to be more disciplined and to find the motivation to seek more value in such programs.

e) Period Prosperity Project funded by French Embassy and FPA

The project aims to revolutionize menstrual health in Sri Lanka by conducting comprehensive research, improving accessibility to menstrual products, and empowering youth advocates to combat stigma, discrimination, and period poverty.

SHANTHI MAARGAM'S FUNDING REQUIREMENT

Since the inception of Shanthi Maargam all conceptual and administrative guidance has been provided voluntarily by the Executive Director with the support of the board of Directors. However, due to the growth of the organization and more complex operation a General Manager was hired who is responsible for overseeing the overall functions of the Shanthi Maargam. As Shanthi Maargam grows and expands, it is required to hire additional staff members to meet the needs of the clients. The current staff structure of the organization consists of a General Manager, finance officer, community outreach coordinator, five in-house counselling team members, and five hotline counsellors. Each member of the team plays a critical role in ensuring the smooth functioning of the organization and meeting objectives. To maintain this structure, Shanthi Maargam requires funds to cover staff salaries and operational expenses, in addition to donor contributions.

Details of the SMYC monthly forecasted Budgeted expenses for the period April 24 to March 25

Details of the expenses	Per month cost (LKR)	Total budget (LKR)
Staff salaries and allowance for volunteers	578,626	6,943,512
Office maintenance	10,000	120,000
Administration expenses	86,083	1,033,000
Hotline solutions	6,500	78,000
Travel expenses	9,000	108,000
Bank charges	1,000	12,000
Utilities (electricity, water)	7,117	85,400
Youth center activities	17,979	215,750
Income Tax (30% on 3% on income Rs 9,097,261)	6,823	81,875
Total	723,128	8,677,537

We express our heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support in our mission to make a difference through Shanthi Maargam. Your continued commitment enables us to expand our reach and serve our community more effectively. Together, we are creating positive change and fostering a brighter future for those in need. Thank you for standing by us as we strive to make a meaningful impact.



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