

# RESUME

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## Websites of organizations:

<https://relieffoundation.in/> RELIEF FOUNDATION- Founder & Managing Trustee - Since Sep 1998

<https://cascadefls.org/> CASCADE FAMILY LEARNING SERVICES, Founder & Mentor - Since Jan 2011

<https://awakentolife.org/> AWAKEN TO LIFE, Founder & Proprietrix - Since Dec 2021

**LIFE MISSION:** To spread Montessori education to the unreached, as a viable economical, noble way of education for the world's children, setting up and augmenting systems that are magnetic, resource rich, people friendly, transparent and accountable to children.

## PRESENT AREA OF WORK & CONTRIBUTIONS:

### RELIEF FOUNDATION:

- Founder and Chairperson of Relief Foundation, an Organization which was set up to find Rehabilitation Solutions for children in distress and in Institutional Care. Since Sep. 1998.
- Relief Foundation has done intense work with children in need of care and support especially in the Juvenile and Observation Homes in Chennai.
- Years of research revealed the cause of juvenile delinquency, and since 2008, all efforts are engaged in strengthening rural preprimary and primary education for children as a mode of prevention of delinquency and drop outs. Website : [www.relieffoundation.in](http://www.relieffoundation.in)
- Currently Relief Foundation runs workshops for youth and adolescents on life skills and offers seed money and training for socio educational entrepreneurship projects. Teaching Fellowships are offered to youth to take up Montessori courses and qualify themselves to become Centre heads in the villages.
- Setting up an Erd Kinder program in Narasingapuram village where our city based and rural children can come together, learn and teach each other skills, along with local community resource persons.
- Lead a transformation team to build a residential tribal school in Wayanad, under the leadership of local youth, with funding from CARE Education, UK, providing indigenous good quality education for over 200 children.
- Relief Foundation has started Four Montessori Rural Resource centres, for children with the help of local parent groups and youth, training them in Montessori way of learning and practice, in the following villages:
  - Jamunamarathur village off Thiruvannamalai (June 2015)
  - Narasingapuram in Thiruvallur Districts (June 2015)
  - Baripada in Mayurbhanj, Odisha (Jan 2021)

- o Thettu (village), in rural Madanapalle, Andhra Pradesh (Aug 2021)

#### INFORMATION ASSETS:

- Almost all Montessori books published thus far by various publishers, and authors, on Montessori Education, beginning with Dr. Montessori's own writings.
- Almost all videos from NAMTA on Montessori Education
- All Communication journals available from Archives of AMI, till date
- Study circle recordings of Dr. Montessori's five books with Q and A from parents and guides.
- Few Translated books of Dr. Montessori's in Tamil and Hindi.
- Parenting resource library with books and reading materials for self-help as well as guided study, on the peaceful Montessori way of parenting.
- Books and lectures on Educational philosophies around the world on the timeline of evolution of educational processes and future paradigms and facilities for innovative learning.
- Transcribed experience of Ms. Bhuvana Venkatraman, who was trained by Dr. Maria Montessori in Karachi.

#### NETWORKING :

- Created a Whatsapp Group of Montessorians across the world, supporting them with classroom management information, besides parent study circle ideas, presentations.
- Parental awareness programs for parents of children 0 to 4 years, on Montessori way of parenting. Over 235 participants and 55 school teachers participated in this year's online sessions.
- Funded AMI Training for 10 trainees through Corporate Foundations.

#### CHILD RIGHTS:

- Community building besides spreading good parenting practices is the primary work of these centres. Children below 6 years come in to work in the Montessori preprimary classrooms and older children come in for reinforcement classes in the evenings. Parents come in for study circles and discussion forums, regularly. Outreach programs are offered to adjoining villages on parenting, women empowerment, authentic education and good parenting practices. Ensuring awareness and entitlement of Children's rights in the communities where we serve, the families have risen in stature by prioritizing education and respect for children. <https://bit.ly/3z29mRn>
- Relief Foundation under Vidya Shankar's leadership and guidance, has developed a path breaking tool to measure the **Child Rights Compliance Index** in schools. The tool has obtained copyrights and is launched to help schools certify themselves with an index that would grade them on entitlement of rights in their school. This tool will educate parents on the safety and wellbeing of their child if admitted into the school with higher order of compliance.
- Developed a rating tool for Preschools based on Child Rights and Development, and distributed it free to over 700 parents across India, seeking admissions into local schools, so that they are empowered to ask the right questions and rate it before deciding to admit their child.

## **ADOPTIVE FAMILIES NETWORK**

Founded the **SuDatta Adoptive families associations** of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. As an Adoption and Parenting Educator and was instrumental in creating a network of adoptive parents and adoption Interested persons throughout the country, offering counseling and support programs for parents and children to improve and better familial relationships since March 1995.

- A Family Counsellor by experience, with a passion to strengthen the society from within the family units assisting Children, Youth and Parents on the nuances of Building and Nurturing Relationships, offers parenting programs called “Nurturing Empowered Children”

## **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

- Former Chairperson of Juvenile Welfare Board, Chennai District, from Aug 2001 to Dec 2003 and an adjudicating Member of Juvenile Justice Board (Juvenile Court) in Chennai from November 02 to Nov 05 adjudicating for rehabilitation of children.
- Has trained over 3000 teachers and Juvenile Justice Professionals on Child Rights and Child psychology besides laws related to children.
- Created public surveys on Child Rights Awareness, and Impact of increased screen time among young children, for parents, offering webinars to over 1000 young parents to empower them with information on conscious parenting practices.
- As a Former Trustee and Honorary CEO of Shriram Foundation – the CSR Arm of the Shriram Group of companies, anchoring programs that covered over 9000 children every year in Government Juvenile Homes, and Schools.
- Continued resource support to Child Rights & Juvenile Justice Professionals, Police Department, National Judicial Academy and Judicial Officers on Laws related and interpreted for children.

## **OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS:**

- During Juvenile Justice tenure, conceived and implemented the Co Management concept of Government Children’s Homes and Observation homes between 2000 to 2007, in the city of Chennai, with the Dept of Social Defence, Govt of Tamilnadu, serving children entering the Juvenile Justice system aided exclusively by public participation and contributions. This System of upgrading services to children with active civic participation with corporates and volunteers as seen as one of the first in the country to this extent in the area of family empowerment and child welfare. With a Rotary International’s Matching Grant program, the Juvenile Homes were revamped with Steel kitchens and playground equipment besides vocational training machinery, in 2006/7. The campus lit up with these state of art improvement, much to the comfort of the inmates, and was hailed by all in the department, including the several visitors and the IAS officers.
- Was the Chairperson of a Committee to Review the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act by the Juvenile Justice Boards across the country, set up by the National Commission for

Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) in 2007 and completed the Report on the functioning of the Juvenile Justice Boards in select states in the country.

- Presented a session on **“Building Montessori Families”** in the Fifth Assembly of Education sans Frontiers an International Conference on Montessori practices around the world, in Aug 2016.
- Conducted a series of training sessions for Administrators and Caregivers of SOS Children’s village, Tambaram Chennai on developmental needs, effect of media , preventive teaching and positive communication for primary age children.
- Functions as a resource person for Law makers and Education functionaries of the Government to have ready reference of the laws related to children, as well as updation of their knowledge related to justice delivery systems.

#### **BOOKS AND ARTICLES:**

- Authored a book – Open your Heart and Your Home for Aspiring Adoptive parents
- Authored a book for preprimary teachers on “Early Child Care and Learning and Development”
- Authored an e- Book on Experiences in the Juvenile Justice System of Tamilnadu called “Justice for children”.
- Written a series of articles on contemporary needs of children, handling children with behavior problems in institutions etc.
- Contributed several articles to Parent Circle Magazine in Chennai.
- Conceived and has implemented a full scale Montessori based Homeschooling program for families, during COVID, that has gained popularity among many parents around the world.

#### **CASCADE FAMILY LEARNING SERVICES – A NEW MODEL IN EDUCATION**

***“Never change things by fighting the existing reality; to change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete”- Buckminster Fuller***

Conceived and developed a new parent led Montessori educational resource centre model in the city, for families fostering parent involvement and co-operative learning in educating children. [www.cascadefls.org](http://www.cascadefls.org) that is now a fully autonomous educational eco-system run by Montessori trained parents in 4 centres, in the city of Chennai, offering Montessori programs across ages from toddler to adolescents. CASCADE FLS distributed free vacation advisories to families of children 2.5 to 11 years of age, to follow through during Covid Times. Many of the families across the country are in touch, looking for Montessori schooling near their locations. It is noteworthy to mention that *CASCADE FLS was / is open through the Covid times*, and functioning to full strength, thanks to the cooperative of families who follow the Covid safety practices completely in order to provide for children, the concrete experience, while safeguarding their interest in good health. We follow a good diet and physical fitness protocols at all times, which enabled the families to easily accept the norms and follow through.

## **INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER MONTESSORI ORGANISATIONS:**

1. CASCADE Families actively engage with **Indian Montessori Foundation** to take up Montessori training and refresher courses and participate in their IMF Talks besides offering time for folder corrections of the courses offered at the Institute.
2. **COLLABORATION with IMF, Chennai:** Relief Foundation has enabled training of several candidates every year, who have taken up seminal work in rural area schools to alter the learning systems and integrate Montessori practices in their classrooms besides manning our own rural initiatives.
3. Indian Montessori Training Centre – for training our rural candidates
4. NAMTA, USA – purchase of Montessori publications and videos
5. AMI – EAA – member from 2011
6. International Montessori Council and Montessori Foundation – participation in their workshops and newsletters
7. Montessori Australia Foundation – was their member till 2020.
8. NCMPS, Colorado- completed 3 of their courses
9. Montessori Sports – completed their Sports Fundamentals course and a member of the group.
10. Lead Montessori, Prague – regular participant in their Montessori workshops, including the recent 4 part Certificate series by Dr.Steve Hughes “Education for Life”
11. Montessori Institute of San Diego – regular participant in their workshops
12. Prepared Montessorian – regular participant in their workshops
13. Great Work Inc -MAPS – Participant in Adolescent Symposium programs
14. Educateurs sans Frontières – Resource person in the 2016 Assembly, contributed to the article on our Child Rights work.
15. Montessori Institute of North Texas – offer of volunteering for Interested and trained Montessorians in our rural programs.
16. Vietnam AMI, with Mai Nghiem- visit and stay free arrangement for their trained guides and interested parents, especially to see the school completion Erd Kinder group.
17. Beijing AISEE Montessori Education, China and Leaderjoy Imp & Exp Co Ltd – Ms. Jesmine Lok who visited us in 2019 donated an entire classroom of materials for our rural project.
18. Montessori Tours and Travel –Roelie Hartwig visited CASCADE FLS with a Montessori interested travel group in 2019 and has been in touch ever since.

## **ADDITIONAL PORTFOLIOS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- President of A C Tech Alumni Association from 2018 to present, successfully anchored the 75<sup>th</sup> Platinum jubilee celebrations of A.C.Tech, Anna University in Dec 2019.
- Children’s Laws and Rights lectures in National Judicial Academy, National Television channels and Criminology, Psychology Departments, University of Madras.
- Member of the Committee for Internal Complaints Committee on Sexual Harassment in workplaces in 12 Corporate and Govt organisations, establishing rights of women in offices and informal work spaces.

**COUNTRIES VISITED:**

- Japan – 1994
- Srilanka – 2008
- Dubai- 2009
- Malaysia- 2010
- Thailand -2013
- USA -2008, 2016
- Hongkong 2018

**OVERSEAS MONTESSORI SCHOOLS VISITED:**

- Forest Bluff Montessori School – Chicago
- Country Side Montessori School, Chicago
- East Dallas Community Schools- Dallas
- Lumin Education, Dallas
- Alcuin Montessori School – Dallas

**INTERNATIONAL LECTURES AND WEBINAR:**

- Delivered continuing education lectures on Rural Montessori experiences and Building Montessori Families at Montessori Institute of North Texas
- Introducing Adolescent Montessori program beyond Elementary – Vietnam Montessori guides and Families, facilitated by Mai Ngheim, of Montessori Vietnam.

**PARENT EMPOWERMENT: RURAL AND URBAN POPULATIONS:**

- Monthly Study circles in English, Tamil and Hindi are organized for rural and urban parents and Montessori guides separately to refresh their conscious practices with children.
- Conducted programs on Montessori tenets for over 200 government school teachers who were a part of our Sponsored teachers program during 2010-2014.
- Ongoing simplified translation work into Tamil, Hindi -Child Education – Dr.Maria Montessori for local rural populations to discuss in the rural communities study circles.
- Translated the Four Booklets of Aid to Life on Independence, Communication, Self Discipline and Movement for spreading among rural communities, with the required permissions.
- Translated 20 Montessori articles written by Maren Schmidt
  - Wrote and translated a secular universal Prayer for children that reflects Montessori perspective towards spiritual thoughts for children, is translated into 5 languages – Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, that is available on CASCADE FLS website for free download.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

- B.Tech. M.I.Ch.E 1986 AC Tech Anna University, (First class with Distinction)
- PG Dipl Child Rights Law (National Law School of India Univ, Bangalore) (May 2010)

- AMI Elementary Montessori Diploma – Batch of 2010 – Navadisha Montessori Foundation (Dec 2010)
- AMI Orientation to Adolescent Studies certification Batch of 2020 – Train Montessori (Oct 2020)
- AMI Montessori Sports Fundamentals Certification – Montessori Sports (June 2021)
- Montessori Coach certification from NCMPS Colorado (June 2021)
- Montessori DERS Certification from NCMPS, Colorado, (July 2021)
- Montessori Child Study Training from NCMPS Colorado (Sep 2021)

### **LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

- Tamil and English – Professional level of reading, writing and speaking
- Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi – Good level of speaking and comprehension.

### **HOBBIES**

- Portrait, Landscape and still life artist with over 100 paintings sold, for raising funds for Relief Foundation. Multiple media used for the products from canvas, cloth, Kraft chart, Prisma colour, charcoal etc.
- Basic Carnatic Music lessons for young children, with multi religious hymns and songs.
- Cycling long distances to enjoy nature and beaches.
- Gardening and feeding stray animals and birds.
- Proctor Gallagher Institute courses by Bob Proctor on Think and Grow Rich You were born rich etc.
- Writing blogs on parenting question & answers for a few magazines.
- Trying simple and new recipes to teach children, cooking at home.

### **SPIRITUAL ENGAGEMENTS:**

- Book readings of John Maxwell, Thomas Troward, Bob Proctor, Napoleon Hill for self improvement and leadership.
- Swami Paramarthananda lectures on Bhagavad Gita, Nitishatakam and Uddhava Gita
- Moderating and learning through a deep dive Montessori families study circle on Prophet by Kahlil Gibran.