

KALA MINUGU



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ArtSparks foundation has a strong team of facilitators who directly work with children in the creative learning lab spaces. The facilitators engage children and support them to learn, grow and develop the 21st-century learning and life skills through carefully designed interventions. The women are from the local communities which provides an additional advantage in engaging the children. In our journey of serving children, we identify and cater to the needs of our women facilitators to continuously learn, unlearn and develop themselves to become strong education practitioners and also to empower them to lead changes in their own communities and cater to them. This edition of Kala Minugu brings to you the work we do to empower them and support in their growth and development.

Professional Development: Start of the Year and Mid-Year Sessions



We are proud of the commitment shown by our facilitators, supported by the program team, which has led to their success in engaging the children in the previous year during the pandemic. Like every year, this year too we had our Start of the Year and Mid-Year professional development sessions for our women facilitators. These sessions have enabled our women facilitators to enrich their learnings and are able to better cater to the needs of the children.

The 'Start of the Year' Professional Development sessions helps our facilitators to start the year with new learnings and also reflect on the previous year's experiences and on themselves. The objective of this 6-day training was to bring together all our women facilitators to engage with each other, exchange ideas and best practices, reflect on the previous year's experiences and allow themselves to open up in developing self-awareness.

The main objectives of these sessions were:

- To deepen the understanding of self
- Understanding children in-depth and empathy towards children
- Deepening the understanding of 21st-century learning and life skills
- To develop a short-term self-development plan

"The professional development sessions help us immensely in understanding children, to be able to plan for children's development, provide a caring and safe environment for them. It has helped me build my confidence in engaging children in the classroom effectively and to motivate them to do more "

— Sarvath Saba, Facilitator, GHPS Kadirenahalli"

The Start of the Year sessions was conducted online through the Zoom platform. The objective of Day 1 was, for facilitators to learn to manage themselves through recognition of their emotions, their strengths, and their Area of Development. Day 2 was about understanding children and building empathy towards them where the women reflected on how children are affected by the pandemic and the school shutting down for the past year-and-a-half. The women discussed the solutions in groups, what in their capacity could they be doing for children, and created a comic storybook which told their stories. Day 3 and Day 4 were about understanding two important skills creative risk-taking and flexible thinking in depth through experiencing the activities themselves and discussing the same during reflection time.

Day 5 was about understanding the assessment of Artworks in detail for each of these skills. Defining the rubrics for assessment and deeper discussions on how do we look at artworks and assess them. Day 6 was about discussing the process for the current year and creating the facilitator's self-development plans and setting a vision plan for this current year.

The Mid-Year sessions help our facilitators bring their on-ground experience to a larger group, discuss their half a year journey, challenges they faced, solutions they came up with, and also learn new strategies, best practices from facilitators of other school sites. This helps in developing openness and learning from each other without any prejudices in our women creating an environment of learning and camaraderie.

The objectives of the sessions were

- To develop an understanding of reacclimatizing children back to the classroom spaces
- To develop our women's capabilities in engaging children (in person) effectively
- To continue developing our women to become reflective practitioners

The Mid-year sessions were conducted in the Bosch Vocational Centre in Aduvodi. The objective of Day 1 was to discuss in-depth how to reacclimatize children back to the school spaces and create a safe and learning environment for them post 18 months of a learning gap. Day 2 was about understanding classroom management in depth. This session helped the facilitators in refreshing their understanding of classroom management and creating a positive culture in their ab spaces. Day 3 was experiencing photography. The session was about understanding how rich photographs can be taken during the sessions for documenting children's work. Day 4 was about reviewing the half-year where each school presented their lab's progress and the best practices in various aspects.

These professional development sessions help our women, facilitators, to better cater to the needs of children in the classroom spaces and also to develop them as better practitioners.



Learning Circles

The Creative Learning Lab program team at ArtSparks has initiated a dialogue platform Learning Circles to create smaller communities of practice and knowledge-sharing groups among facilitators. It has been created as an extension of the professional development of ArtSparks' facilitators to add to their transformation.

The objective of the Learning Circles is to create a safe space for facilitators to share their ideas, knowledge, discuss and dialogue various things pertaining to their development, share their best practices, and find solutions to the challenges they face in a collective manner.

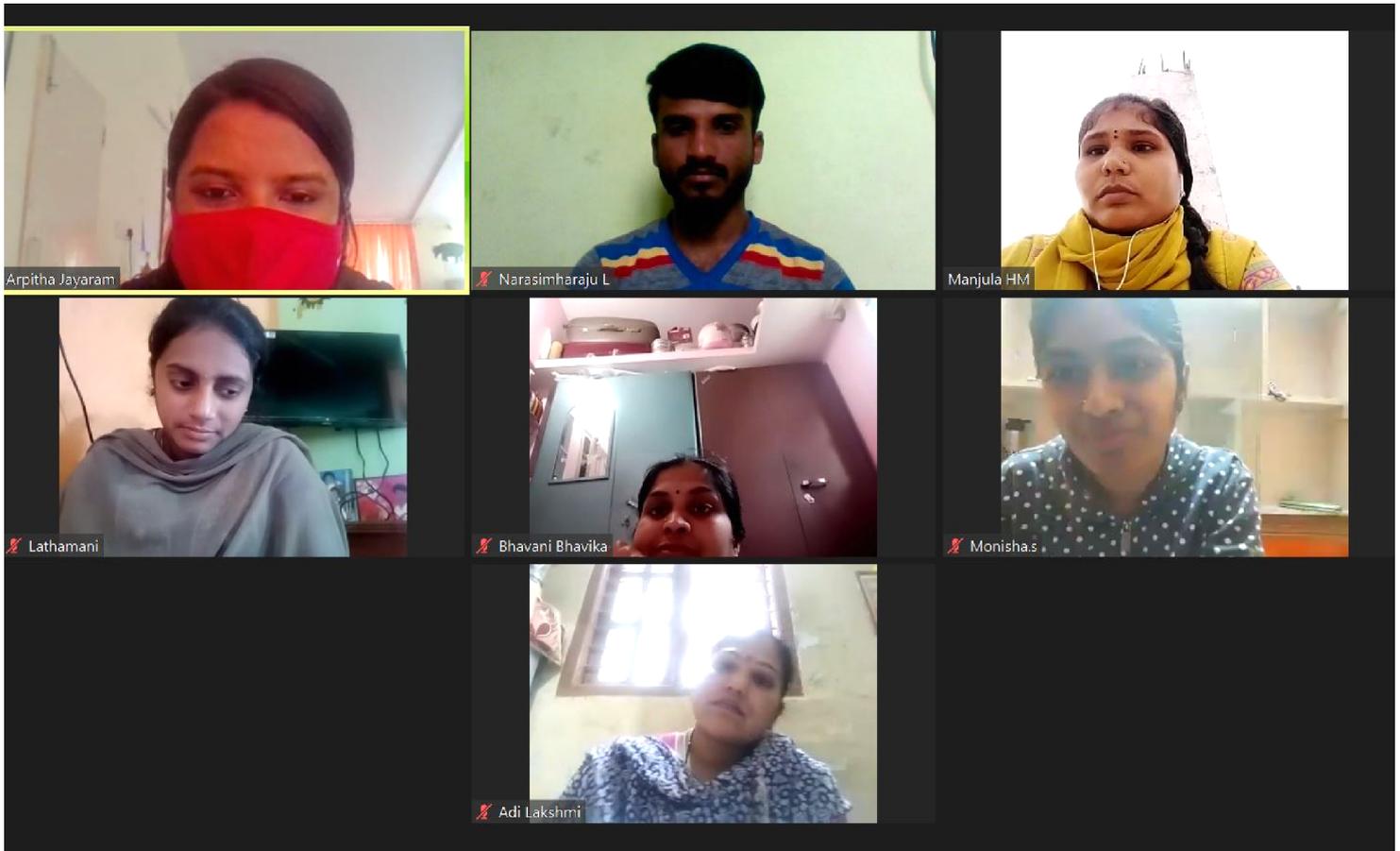
Learning Circles happen every month and facilitators are divided into six smaller groups. Some of the topics covered in the learning circles conducted this academic year were on changemakers and understanding who a changemaker is and what are some steps that they can take to become changemakers and how they are going to overcome some of the challenges within themselves and their surroundings.

"Learning Circle is an open space where I feel confident in speaking and stating my opinion. We discuss a variety of topics and which not only concern school work but focus on our development too. Learning Circles helps me think about what more can I learn, what more can I do. I look forward to engaging in Learning Circles every month"

—Rajeshwari, Facilitator, GHPS Thindlu

The next learning circle was about Self-belief where facilitators got to understand the importance of self-reliance and how control is exerted on them and they exert control on others.

Learning circles occurs in small groups and hence create a safe platform for our women to speak their minds and share their thoughts authentically.





Engaging facilitators in Art Projects

With an aim of continuously developing creativity, self-belief, and agency in our women, this year we started another initiative to engage our women in art-making. In this endeavor, our women are given week-long projects that they can work on in a staged manner with check-ins and feedbacks in between. These projects enable our women to develop skills in themselves too which provides a hands-on experience in order to engage their children too. Our women have been involved in these projects enthusiastically and our next project for them is to create activities where there are taking part in designing an activity, testing it by themselves, and final art-making by themselves. Continuous support and feedbacks are given in this process to encourage and push them forward. Through this, we intend to develop a sense of creative confidence in our women.

In the Next Issue

Our next issue will be dedicated to the work that we do with girls in our partner schools called the Project Empow[HER].

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