

# A visible change through 'opening-up'

Project Green Slate introduces children of low-income families to multiple intelligence recognition

SOMA BASU  
MADURAI

Till six months ago, 12-year-old Anitha (name changed) was a child suffering from low self-esteem. She wouldn't mingle with anybody when she attended regular school before COVID-19 struck, and the lockdown only worsened the communication skills of the pre-teen.

Luckily, she joined Project Green Slate, an initiative of the NGO Yellow Bag Foundation (YBF), which began conducting multiple intelligence (MI) training for children in the city's slum areas in February this year. Attending three-hour weekly sessions of 'opening-up' have ushered in a visible transformation in Anitha.

## Encouraging results

Her facilitator, Ambika Baidri, and peers at the Mathichiyam centre, are amazed to see the shy and reluctant girl now discovering herself through singing, drawing,



**Holistic growth:** Project Green Slate began conducting sessions for children in slum areas this February. ■ R. ASHOK

and sometimes even few steps of hip-hop and jump!

There are 45 more children from low-income settle-



ments along the banks of the Vaigai, who have been attending these sessions based on the worldwide MI framework.

"Results so far have been

encouraging," said social entrepreneur and YBF co-founder Krishnan Subramanian, "in a no-school year for the children from less-privileged families".

Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner theorises that people are blessed with more than intellectual capacity and outlines eight kinds of intelligences in every individual – musical, spatial-visual, verbal, logical, naturalistic, kinesthetic, inter-and intra-personal intelli-

gences – which when identified and tapped yield improved performance in other spheres, including academics.

The idea of MI training struck Mr. Krishnan Subramanian when he saw the children of his tailoring unit staff stitching masks during lockdown 1.0.

"Most women brought their children to work, and observing them, I felt these kids have only been attending local government

and corporation schools to mug up text and did not get any opportunity to learn special skills at a young age," he said.

"Providing them with the right environment and engaging them in activities that would help them identify their strengths and talent is our aim," he added.

The pilot project was

launched in two phases, first for children aged between five to eight, and now for those aged 10-12.

## Mapping skills

"The smiles are back on their faces, and the children enjoy learning their way," said Ambika.

For example, when a child is taught alphabets, some may like to write them down, some enjoy singing aloud, some identify them with the names of ani-

mals. Whatever combination of learning happens, it indicates the child's latent abilities.

"Mapping a child's skills and interpreting their strength is important," said Mr. Krishnan Subramanian, who wishes to scale up the free programme for another 200 children, but for the lack of volunteers now.

