



# seeding

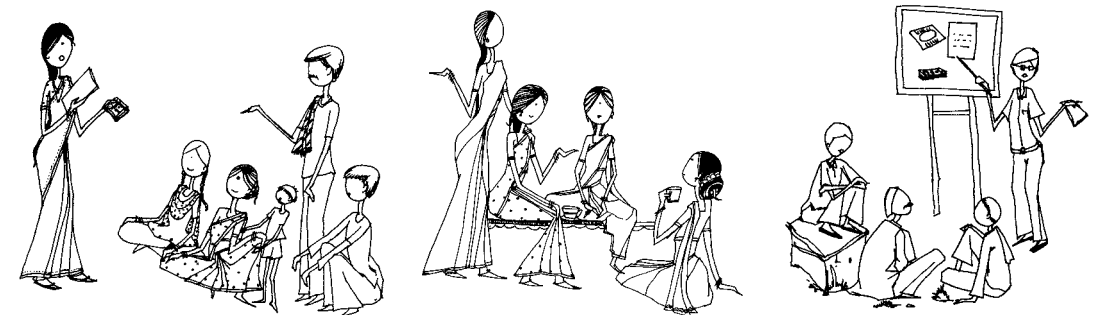
a movement

10 years of United Way Bengaluru

Dedicated to the world  
community which has  
demonstrated time and again  
that collaboration holds the  
key to change.



# Seeding a movement



## Seed to tree



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## United Way Worldwide Network



- 1800 United Ways in 40 countries
- 2,900,000 volunteers working to improve their communities
- 61,000,000 people served annually
- 15 million parents benefit from Born Learning tools, tips and education material
- Over 25,000 low-income people accessed health care
- 85% of children and adults adopted healthy living behaviours
- Over 100,000 people received preventive care support

## United Way Network in India



- 7 chapters
- Partnered with 200+ corporate entities
- Network of 400+ NGOs
- Over 310,000 lives impacted throughout India

## Preface

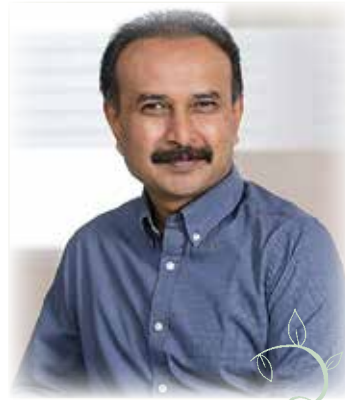
United Way Bengaluru has come of age. It's ten years and time to reminisce. As I put these words to paper, wondering how to begin talking about an organisation that has achieved such a significant milestone, some thoughts come to me. A child and an organisation are much the same. They must be nurtured right, especially in the foundation years. The first ten years often set the direction for the future. If the foundations are right, the results too are good. United Way Bengaluru, which was founded in 2008 is a living example of an organisation that set its foundations and benchmarks right.

United Way Bengaluru was established as a chapter of United Way Worldwide, which is a movement seeded on the concepts of volunteerism and philanthropy. The premise is that beginning with effecting change in the immediate environment around us, and by helping people in our own neighbourhoods, we can, in widening circles make a difference.

Mapping United Way Bengaluru's growth is to see this premise at work. Begun small, gradually widening, the organisation has entered its tenth year with a resolve to build on some very solid foundations that have been set. I am particularly proud of my association with United Way Bengaluru as it gives me a platform to address local issues close to my heart. Being a Bengalee at heart and in spirit, I resonate with its challenges and its growth. I want to see my city grow and prosper and United Way Bengaluru helps me to give wings to the dreams I have for Bengaluru.

This memoir reveals some interesting facts about United Way Bengaluru's growth. Be it leading campaigns that address some very challenging and complex issues in the world around us or drawing in ever growing numbers of volunteers to make a difference, the success has been consistent, both in philosophy and action.

I will not reveal the entire story in this preface. That is for the reader to discover by reading on. I will however, reveal my own dreams for and convey my wishes to United Way Bengaluru. When we prioritised lakes for attention, it was in an atmosphere of hopelessness. Bengaluru's lakes were languishing for want of attention. Citizen groups were feeling isolated and feared about where



their city was heading. To our surprise, when we began directing attention to reviving lakes, we found waves of support. Corporate entities, citizens, government agencies, environmentalists and activists alike joined us. The results are visible today. Wake the Lake, which we called our movement is now owned across the city by the multiple stakeholder we involved. Our Realm of Influence as we call our way of work, has drawn in more and more committed individuals and entities.

This has encouraged us to move into other areas that challenge communities, such as early childhood education and facilitating access to unmet needs in rural areas. We have been encouraged that there is political will, policy support and access to funds to do all of this. India is at the cusp of growth. Today's youth is fortunate in that they have platforms and opportunities, which they can leverage to attain economic and life stability. United Way Bengaluru is actively encouraging youth through Student United Way to use these platforms and it's working. The next decade for India, for its population, and for United Way Bengaluru will be equally vital and vibrant. Because if a country does well, its people do well and if people are happy, an organisation that has worked for change can rest easy. However, we must not rest easy on our laurels. There is a long way to go. For every challenge we overcome, fresh ones manifest themselves. We must identify them and work on them. Thus, clean air, reduction of carbon emission, heritage conservation. health for all and poverty elimination, among others, will be our priorities in the coming years. We are charting a path that will include all of these and more, taking our stakeholders with us.

Let's look for a state of Utopia! I wish United Way Bengaluru all the very best for the coming decade. It is becoming a young adult, just like the youth it serves!

**Prashanth Prakash**  
Chairman





## The Seeding

***“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you sow...”***

*Robert Louis Stevenson*

The year – 2008

The beginning was small, almost innocuous...

United Way Bengaluru was born as the local chapter of United Way Worldwide, a 130-year old organisation, present in 47 countries and with 1800 chapters. The mandate was to make a place for itself within the larger canvas of United Way Worldwide. With a small purse of seed funding from a benevolent donor, a modest office space, two people, and little else, United Way Bengaluru set out to make a difference.

*The mission was simple yet far reaching:*

*Improve lives by mobilizing the caring power of communities around the world to advance the common good.*

The mission of United Way is all-encompassing. It implies in a few words, the need to involve, as well as impact communities to enable common good. UWBe has used a collaborative approach involving local governments, communities, corporate funders, youth, volunteers and indeed all of society to drive collective impact and find unique solutions for social issues. This has also involved the mapping of funds to community needs.

Manish Michael, CEO, reminisces, “When I came on board United Way, I knew I was coming into a one-man space. I knew we were lean on



budgets and had a large canvas to fill. Thus, I would have to assume all roles from office-boy to fund-raiser. Getting on the ground literally meant that because I had to clean and mop the office in the first few months! This did not intimidate me at all as our Board Members were so strongly behind me, motivating and helping me along.”

He shares that it was as much a daunting task to try and fit into the shoes of a worldwide organisation as it was exciting to be a part of its efforts to expand its footprint into India, which was limited to Vadodara and Mumbai till then. “For a few months after we registered the organisation, I worked from the office of a Board member. When I came on board, I had to first get the statutory compliances in place as per the law of our land, else we would not have a starting point. This proved challenging but the day we got them we were truly ready to go!”

United Way Bengaluru, in its decade of existence, has created a diverse portfolio. Closely aligned to the United Way Worldwide pillars, United Way Bengaluru has prioritized the following areas for attention. These pillars are also in consonance with the SDGs as outlined by the United Nations:

- Access to healthcare
- Childhood success
- Economic mobility
- Youth success

Manish recalls, “It was important to address the vital pillars that contribute to a meaningful and productive life, even while being sensitive to local issues and sentiments. Our Board had individuals who could look at global concerns through a local lens. This helped us to identify vexing issues in Bengaluru and around and what’s more, find people and resources to address them. This could be done because we were all rooted to local culture and sentiments and knew the value of community involvement.”

The first years of United Way Bengaluru were marked by excitement, exploration and experimentation. Bengaluru had several deserving causes that needed support and there were also innovative solutions and a willingness to help. But there was a challenge associated with connecting the two. There was a need for credible entities who could align the need with the response as well as create a sustainable bridge between the two. United Way Bengaluru was able to assume this role with ease and has evolved into a core philosophy down the years.

Thus, it was that United Way Bengaluru focussed on raising much-needed funds for urgent and emergency healthcare needs such as cancer surgery for children, clubfoot repair surgery and heart surgeries through innovative campaigns that included walkathons, quiz programs and marches. These initiatives demonstrated that Bengaluru had a big heart.

The first years of United Way Bengaluru also demonstrated strongly, the commitment and passion of the fledging team. Vinod P R, Assistant Manager, Accounts and Administration, and an early team member of United Way Bengaluru recalls, “We did not have a huge purse to fall back on and very often, grit and determination were our only assets with donated tables and chairs. Even our tea kettle was donated! We have not forgotten the value of those learnings and still continue to be frugal in our ways.”

David Kumar, General Manager, observes “Collaboration was the underlying core of United Way Bengaluru from inception. For all activities, there was an attempt to draw in knowledge and expertise from the best in that sector. An example is the first tree planting drive done with Qwest, the corporate partner. Advice was taken from the best regarded environmentalists of India to plant, protect, and nurture 150 trees in the neighbourhood of Qwest.”

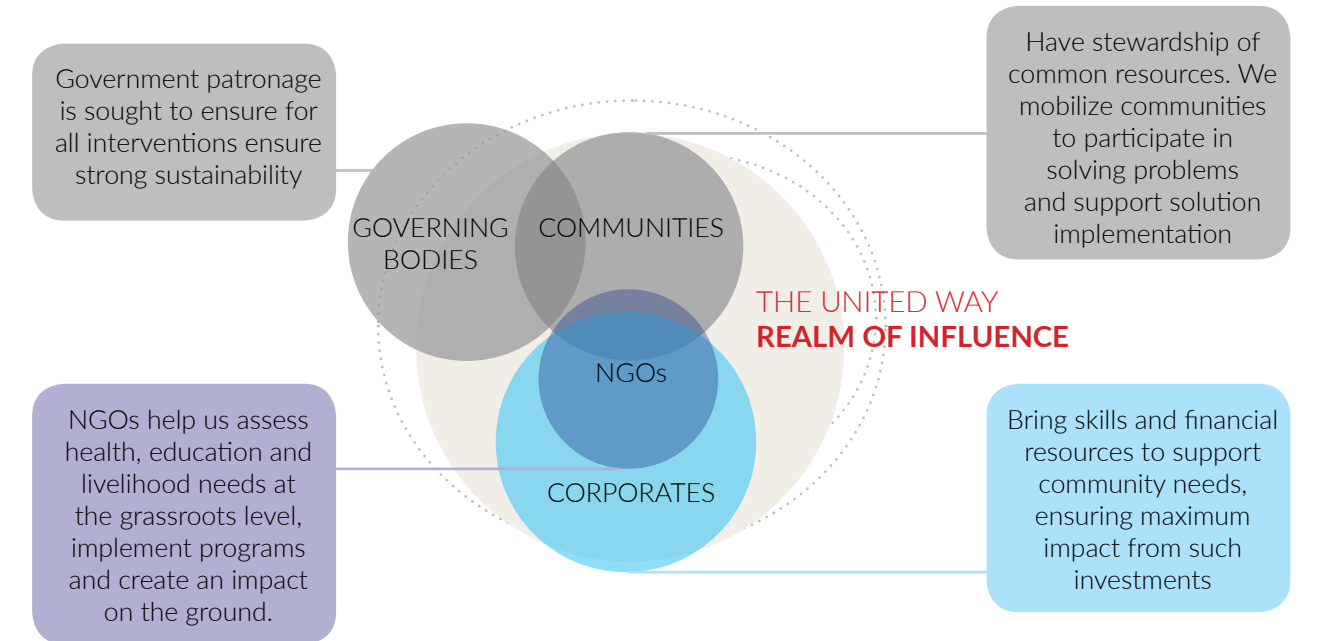


## Evolving, expanding

United Way Bengaluru was also looking to create spaces where socially responsible and committed Bengaloreans could converge, collaborate and contribute. Through discussions, it evolved that Bengaluru had an emotional connect with its lake series. The lakes of Bengaluru had reached a state of decrepitness and disrepair. Bengaluru was also seeing a construction boom of unprecedented proportions and the demand for water was growing in leaps. Local resources had to be preserved and it was time to launch what was to become a flagship initiative of United Way Bengaluru - Wake the Lake.

Sabu Thomas, Founding Board member, says, "It was not as if there was a lack of political will to save lakes. The government had the funds and were doing a lot. But this was towards the civil works, or the hardware, such as dredging, desilting etc. The authorities were extremely concerned about how the initial activities would be sustained. Wake the Lake addressed these concerns very well." He adds, "We had the ability to establish rapport with communities and because of the strong relevance it had to local contexts, Wake the Lake also had the potential for scale up across the country if required. Water had been acquiring centre-stage owing to challenges associated with shortage and pollution. We had a perfect issue on hand to raise awareness as well as initiate pre-emptive measures that could augment what the government was already doing."

United Way used the collaborative approach, which was its driving principle, for Wake the Lake. Its realm of influence was already set, and each section of society was an equal stakeholder. This held good for Wake the Lake too, and the program was born. A look at how Wake the Lake evolved...







## Voice of a Mentor

### Roma Bose

*Mentor, United Way Bengaluru & Senior Vice President, WISH Foundation*

I began my career with non-profits in 1999 with United Way International, which later merged with United Way of America to become United Way Worldwide. Over the course of my 15 years at the organization, I took on various roles and in 2007 I was given the responsibility of expanding the United Way Network in India and raise funds in the US for this. The idea for setting up a network of United Ways in India came in 2007 from Mr. Barry Griswell - the then CEO of Principal Financial Group and a firm believer in the institution of United Way, during his first trip to India while setting up the Principal office in India. He and his wife, Michele Griswell, made an initial, generous investment of a quarter million dollars from their personal wealth, which enabled United Way Worldwide to initiate the expansion plan.

Bengaluru was one of the key Tier-1 cities identified given the fact that several US corporations had a presence there, who understood the significance and value of a United Way to a community. It took a couple of months to identify suitable volunteer Board Members, who were leaders in their specific fields of work and respected community members. United Way training, creation of the by-laws and obtaining registration followed and we officially registered the organization as an Indian NGO in 2008. Mr. Ashwini Kumar became the first CEO of the organization, and the official launch took place October 2008.



The Founding Board Members of United Way of Bengaluru were a committed group of leaders who believed in the mission of United Way; and more than that, they believed in the power of collaboration and selfless service. Each of them contributed their time, talent and treasure for the success of the organization. They brought their business expertise and experience to the table and carved out

projects and programs most critically needed for the community of Bengaluru.

As one of the first requirements, my fundraising outreach effort led me to Dr. Gururaj "Desh" Deshpande and Mrs. Jayshree Deshpande, leading philanthropists of Indian origin living in Boston, who have a genuine love for community-building and faith in the United Way model. Their major-gift investment enabled us to cover the overhead costs of United Way of Bengaluru for a couple of years while I continued to seek funds from other sources.

'Wake the Lake' program received a lot of visibility for the passion invested in it by employee-volunteers and their companies, as well as sports and media personalities. Other programs for addressing education, financial stability and health issues have also made a huge impact. The organization has achieved commendable growth under the leadership of Manish Michael and the guidance of a stellar board. I wish United Way of Bengaluru continuous success as the leading community-building organization.





## The First Sprouts

Excitement,  
exploration,  
experimentation...

**2018** - Achieving scale

- Wake the Lake
- Born Learning Campaign
- Integrated Rural Development
- Student United Way

**2011** - Fundraiser conducted for 100 heart surgeries for school children

**2010** - Corporate quiz "Our insight for their sight" conducted to raise funds

**2010** - Tree plantation drive in association with Qwest

**2009** - Nesting ourselves, finding office space

**2009** - "i-care" walkathon at Cubbon Park to raise funds

**15th July, 2008** - United Way Bengaluru registered











Photo credit: Gareth Hoover

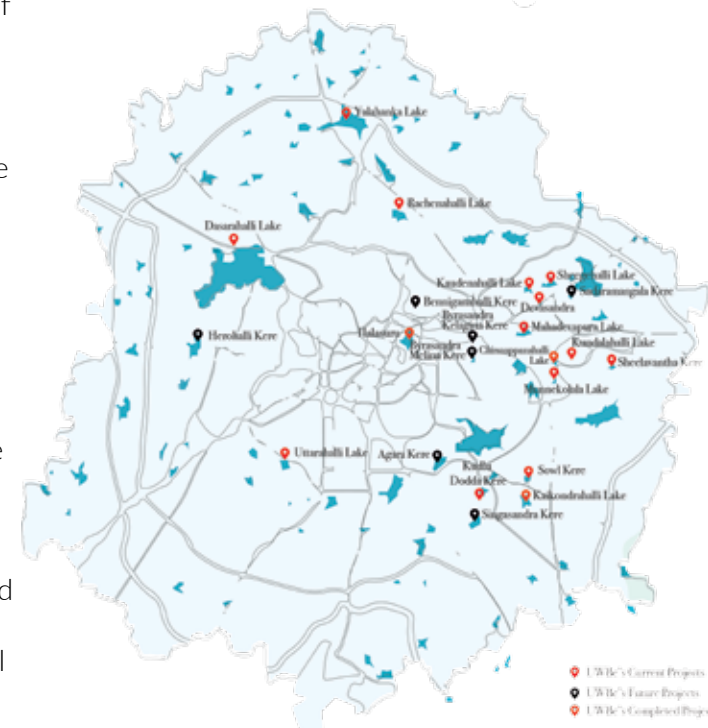


## Branching Out

Bengaluru has a symbiotic relationship with lakes. Devoid of a river source, the city has been traditionally dependent on its series of well-planned lake systems for water. Lakes were at one time, the lifeline of Bengaluru. From 380 lakes in 1970 we now have only 81 which have some hope of revival.

Urbanization, with its attendant fall-outs such as construction, encroachment, waste and sewage disposal in and around the lake beds resulted in the gradual decline of the lake system of Bengaluru.. From seasonal fresh water lakes, many of the lakes of Bengaluru turned to perennial waste water sources. The once proud lakes of Bengaluru became heavily polluted with sewage and industrial waste significantly reduced water levels. The disappearance of lakes threatened the survival of millions of people with loss of livelihood of the local fishing communities, poor water quality, increased environment-

related health issues and reduced bird migration as they lost their sanctuaries. This problem was severe enough to give United Way Bengaluru reason to partner with various stakeholders for Wake the Lake. The government of Karnataka was the biggest patron and showed strong commitment towards saving lakes. The gaps lay in the fact that community interface was lacking, a gap that United Way Bengaluru sought to fill. In this effort several entities of Bengaluru who were already at work in individual lakes were approached and their support for Wake the Lake was sought.





Lake island, Rachenahalli Kere

Photo credit: Gareth Hoover

## Wake The Lake

Wake the Lake is a flagship campaign of United Way Bengaluru to revive the dying lakes of Bengaluru. The campaign is a strong demonstration of collaboration between civic bodies, corporates and citizens for a larger good. Wake the Lake has been successful in drawing in corporate and citizen support to add to the considerable resources and work that Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is already doing. The role of Wake the Lake has been primarily to:

- Monitor the lake to keep it free from garbage, effluents and other pollutants
- Revive the eco-system in and around the lake by creating micro climate for aquatic flora and fauna
- Bring about community ownership through active volunteerism.

Mahesh H C, Senior Manager, Community Initiatives, says, "Both our strength and challenge lies in getting the stakeholders together. Collaboration is the key. The activities that we have taken up for Wake the lake have resonated among lake communities. Kere Deeptsava, Kere Sankranti and Lakathon have built a platform to bring the stakeholders together and celebrate lakes."

Sunil Gowda, Member, Team Mahadevapura, says, "Mahadevapura Kere has come alive because of the efforts of BBMP, United Way Bengaluru, the generous corporate sponsors and the community. The initial activities are ensured of being sustained because a sewage treatment plant is being installed. The project will recycle contaminated water and send clean water back to the lake and we will always have clean water in our lake."



Dhananjaya adds, "The will of our local leaders to revive the perishing lake of Mahadevapura has changed its fate. We as the community are also enthused to contribute our efforts and keep our lake healthy because the benefits will accrue to us."

"As a part of the beautification process of our lake, our plantation partner United Way has now planted about 1000 varieties of flowering and medicinal plants across the lake. It has been a task to convert a huge lake with a large amount of garbage into a botanical garden. It is our lake and we are committed to maintaining it," says Mr. Sukumar, Seegehalli Lake Development Trust.





### **UWBe's role in reviving Bengaluru's lakes - a case from Uttarahalli**

Five years ago, Uttarahalli Lake in south Bengaluru was in the danger of sliding into a dump yard. The BBMP had revived the lake, but lack of community engagement was turning the revived lake into a withering wasteland. The lake was staring death in its face and could easily have been reduced to a blue dot on old maps. None of the residents in the area would venture into their locality's only "commons" that they owned. It was a hub of anti-social activity.

At that time, UWBe, as part of their innovative 'Wake The Lake' campaign launched in 2009, identified Uttarahalli as one of the lakes they had to nurture back to life. They explored corporates in the vicinity, who would be interested in injecting life into the lake and making it safe and accessible to the public. It was a challenge since corporates are more enthusiastic about funding educational and health projects. UWBe convinced Ingersoll Rand about the absolute necessity of maintaining a lake rich in biodiversity and which serves as a recreational space for residents. They stepped forward to take up the mantle of financing the rejuvenation and maintenance of Uttarahalli kere.

Subsequently, UWBe created awareness about the dying lake through pamphlets in newspapers and organising a Lakethon - a walk around the lake. Three hundred citizens participated in this event, happy the lake was being freed up for them. At the event, UWBe motivated and empowered the local community members to involve themselves in managing the lake. They helped in forming the Lake Walkers Association (LWA), with the Late Vishwanath as its first president. The local corporator also lent his support to the LWA. BBMP too swung into action after witnessing the active participation of the community in taking care of their kere and constructed facilities such as a toilet for the elderly and children, walking paths, set up benches and a sewage treatment plant. UWBe and LWA entered into a tripartite agreement with the BBMP to give them the official nod to maintain the lake on a daily basis.

In Uttarahalli, besides organising the community together, UWBe has helped in enhancing biodiversity, ensuring the water body is clean and encouraging more citizens to come forward. UWBe's model of intervention involves tying up with the local lake citizen groups and entering into an MOU with the BBMP to revive the lake.

Today, Uttarahalli Lake is a perfect successful model of UWBe's work in waking the dying lakes of Bengaluru. The lake is an active, recreational spot for daily walkers, with a thriving ecosystem teeming with fish, ducks and birds. UWBe also conducted eye care and diabetes camps at the lake taking into account the sizable senior citizen population in the area. Uttarahalli Lake is just one of the lakes UWBe has helped in getting back on its feet. Under their 'Wake the Lake' project, they have actively participated in the revival of 20 lakes in Bengaluru.

*Uttarahalli Kere*

*Case reproduced from "Breathing Life into Lakes in Bengaluru, The United Way", a United Way Bengaluru publication.*

*Photo credit: Gareth Hoover*





Photos credit: Mihir K V, avid bird watcher,  
and lake community member  
Location: Mahadevapura Lake

## Voices of Wisdom, Voices that Matter

### Justice N K Patil, Retd. Judge of Karnataka High Court

“All the relevant stakeholders need to get together in conserving and preserving the lakes. That is the way forward. Every lake has peculiar characteristics and features that need to be examined and an action plan has to be developed and executed in a steadfast manner. There must be more awareness and public-spirited campaigns like yours. You must not relent and must continue the campaign for a better Bengaluru. I appreciate the interest and efforts being put in by UWBe in protecting Bengaluru's lakes.”

### B V Satish, Chief Engineer, Lakes, BBMP

“In 2011, UWBe approached the BBMP to help us in our efforts to revive the lakes. We have to thank them for supporting us for the past seven years. They get funds for us to maintain and sustain the lake for a year. UWBe is responsible for stirring up local citizen groups to care and preserve their lakes. They have played a crucial role in creating a sense of ownership of the lake among the community. They are maintaining nearly 16 lakes for seven years now.

The solution for keeping our lakes alive is to decentralise and set up small local STPs in each block. Laying bigger UGD trunk lines is not the answer since it will be expensive and problematic to find land. Local small STPs can trap the sewage and put treated water into the rajakaluves.

The future does not look bleak for lakes. There is a lot of awareness today and the government is keen to protect them. We hope more funds will be sanctioned to keep our lakes thriving and alive.



**Professor TV Ramachandra, Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Center for Ecological Sciences, IISc, Bengaluru**

“ In the 1800s, the city had 1,452 water-bodies in an area of 741 sq km. The temperatures recorded in Bengaluru at that time were 14 to 16 degrees in May, and there were reports of apples growing at Palace Orchards. We have killed the city in the name of development.

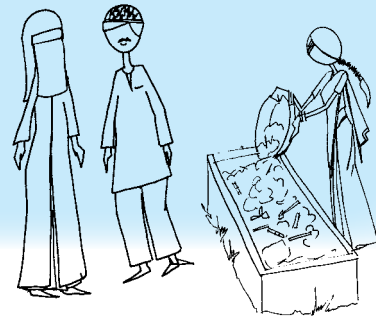
The mismanagement and apathy by the bureaucracy is the root cause of the problem. Bengaluru is on the verge of dying. There is 1,005 percent spike in concrete area, 88 per cent loss of vegetation and a 79 percent dip in water bodies.

No lake can survive without community participation. Kaikondrahalli and Jakkur are classic successful examples of the sustained effort of communities in reviving lakes. Local people need to participate in maintaining Bengaluru's lakes, but they need to improve their knowledge about the lake environment.

**Leo Saldhana, Coordinator and Trustee, Environment Support Group**

“ We have seen the good work UWBe has done in collaboration with BBMP in maintaining the rehabilitated Uttarahalli Lake. ESG is working on the revival of Subramanyapura Lake and its watershed and has invited UWBe to work on the watershed common to both lakes. This watershed includes the last remaining forest stretch inside Bengaluru city, and till recently was replete with grazing pastures, streams and plenty of ponds and wells. It has now been severely encroached and waste water is flowing from massive residential complexes directly into the lakes.

The Hebbal Lake revival model of developing constructed wetlands in the inflows into the lake is an answer. Planting hyacinths, bamboo and typha grasses, and other water based or water-tolerant species will not only help remove excess nutrients in the water but would also provide fantastic biodiversity rich corridors.



**Yellappa Reddy – Eminent Environmentalist and Former, IFS office**

“ I am happy to be associated with the environment initiatives of the United Way Bengaluru team. I appreciate the enthusiasm and commitment of UWBe staff who go all out to learn and implement most relevant ideas. I have witnessed the change that UWBe as an Organisation created on the ground across several lakes, Nandi Hill and its valley, and Bangalore University. These have become unique benchmarks. I wish them all the best in their future journey.

**S Vishwanath, Director, Biome**

“ After a lot of awareness building programs conducted by different stakeholders, fortunately, of late, it seems like the stench from the polluted death traps has woken Bengaluru up from its stupor. Several initiatives are underway to restore Bengaluru's lakes.

Through a partnership model of working, government bodies such as BWSSB, BBMP, KLCDA, NGOs like United Way of Bengaluru, corporates, water experts, legal experts, volunteers and communities living around the lakes have come together to find integrated water management solutions to revive our dying lakes.

Today, we have access to so much data. Our interventions with communities have led us to believe that if communities are provided with the necessary information, they can manage their water resources in a participatory, regulated and negotiated manner.

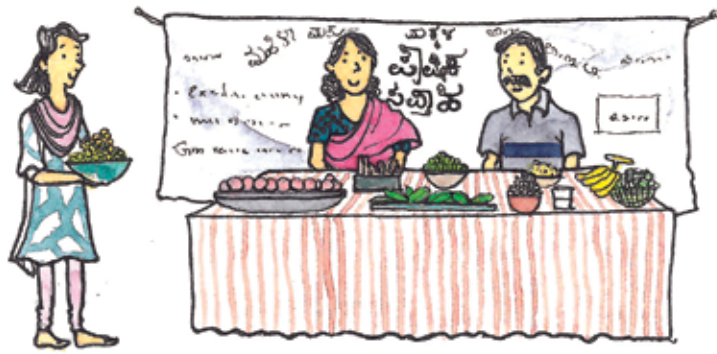
Ultimately, the power of keeping a lake in good condition lies with the community, since it is they who will benefit from it. A healthy lake is a source of immense biodiversity. And, biodiversity is critical for our planet and its citizens.

\*Interviews reproduced from “Breathing Life into Lakes in Bengaluru, The United Way”, a United Way Bengaluru publication













## Getting Strong



*"Our anganwadi was dilapidated and in disrepair for several years. Parents were not keen to send their children here. United Way Bengaluru helped to restore the building and now the children love coming here because they have toys to play with and learn while having fun." - Shanta, Teacher, Siddapura anganwadi for 23 years.*

*"I teach children English and art at anganwadis as part of my volunteering efforts. I recently read a scientific article that said music encourages brain development in children. During one of my visits, I played songs for them on my guitar. The children started dancing; even the shy ones. We sang nursery rhymes together, and the room was lit up with their smiles.*

*When I fling my graduation cap into the air next year, my most beautiful memories will be my association with these children." - Sonali Ajwani, student volunteer.*

It is important to enable school readiness for children before they begin formal schooling. While children going through the private education system are equipped with this readiness, the same is not true for other children. And yet, this need not be so, as there is a platform available, which holds the potential to enable school readiness within the government system.

Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) is a strong demonstration on the part of Government of India to enable holistic attention for children from 0-6 years, and their mothers, through *anganwadis*. While nutrition and healthcare are the core services offered at *anganwadis*, they also have a mandate to provide basic learning to children before they enter regular schools. However, inadequate infrastructure and facilities prevent this objective from being achieved to its fullest potential. This points to a need for involvement from stakeholders outside of the government.



United Way Bengaluru, in partnership with Women and Child Development Department has initiated a campaign in selected urban and peri-urban *anganwadis* to add value to the existing facilities and activities in the area of the imparting early childhood education. Born Learning Campaign, a flagship program of United Way Bengaluru.

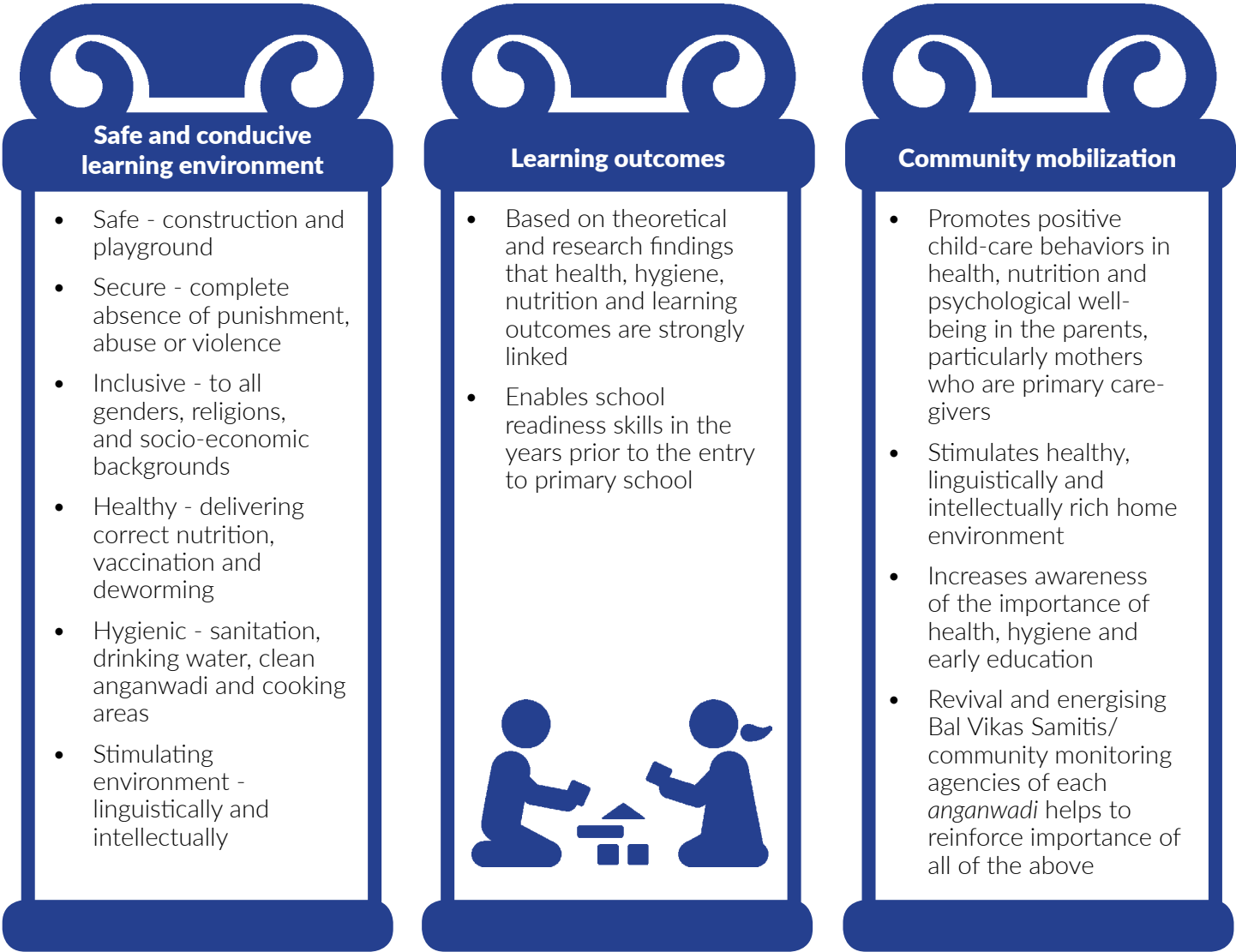
### Objectives

- Ensure access to an optimal learning environment for the children
- To provide access to appropriate health, hygiene and nutrition awareness through the active involvement of the community stakeholders, specifically- the parent groups, as health, hygiene and nutrition have a significant impact on the learning outcomes among children.



### Born Learning - the unique elements

Born Learning is built on three pillars that make it a holistic intervention. They are:





Stakeholders from various sections of society are brought together and include partnerships with governments, corporates, local communities and society at large. Smita Sharma, Senior Manager, United Way Bengaluru, says, “This program is extremely significant as it is aligned with the Integrated Child Development Scheme. Through focused interventions towards the early childhood learning education, we augment the huge efforts being made by the program so that its full potential can be attained. By enlisting corporate and volunteer support, community participation and government’s direction, we nurture a sense of ownership among all stakeholders in society.”

David Kumar, General Manager, United Way Bengaluru, adds, “We recognise India’s demography as an asset rather than a drag force. Born Learning is perfectly positioned to strengthen this, given its focus on early childhood learning. It is also very important to be in line with government policy for this and follow the ECCE Guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

Born Learning and its relevance has resonated with stakeholders, be it the government or corporate funders who have prioritized education for their social responsibility activities. Rajesh Krishnan, COO, United Way Bengaluru observes, “Any program that is run in a stand-alone fashion, away from the mainline government-led initiatives, will be a short-lived one. Hence, we have very clearly aligned all our activities to the SDGs and to Government of India policy. All our activities are scalable and replicable. Born Learning is a very strong example of this.”

Born Learning has been scaled up to other states of India, in partnership with the Women and Child Development Departments. Manish says, “Our linkage with the government is strong. In Karnataka particularly, this year we were partners of the WCD Department for their Children’s Day celebrations, Makkala Habba, which was a joyful week-long event for children, held at Cubbon Park, Bengaluru. The event showed that the department had reposed their faith and associated with us.”

Born Learning will be an area of focus for United Way Bengaluru in the years to come. “It is our priority to scale-up and ensure that the importance of early childhood education is understood in its entirety and becomes a norm.” says Manish.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/national\\_ecce\\_curr\\_framework\\_final\\_03022014%20%282%29.pdf](http://www.wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/national_ecce_curr_framework_final_03022014%20%282%29.pdf)

## Snapshots from the Ground

### Gautami - Community Volunteering

Gautami (28) works as an accountant with a neighbourhood doctor who also donates to the Siddapura *anganwadi*. She encourages Gautami to teach at the *anganwadi* everyday. Gautami says it gives her immense satisfaction and happiness when she comes and spends a part of her day with the tiny tots, who love her presence.



### Play blocks mobile phones - Manoj & Abhishek

On a normal day at their *anganwadi*, children learn about everyday objects through play blocks. Manoj and Abhishek love converting blocks into mobile phones and speak into them. Their teacher says, “It is admirable how quick witted and creative children get when they have access to good learning material. Our *anganwadis* have become an integral part of children’s development.”

### Savitha - Alumni Mother & Volunteer

“Both my children went to *anganwadis* as my husband and I went to work. Today they are both in college and hope to secure good jobs. I come to this *anganwadi* whenever I find time and volunteer because I know how important it is for children to have a safe place like this.”





### Widening the landscape

United Way Bengaluru, by the end of five years had already prioritised water, environment and education as issues vital to the wellbeing of communities across urban and rural areas. There was also a learning that Bengaluru was home to large numbers of rural people who were migrating to cities in search of work. Their core competence was farming, and yet, they were coming in to cities to taken on menial daily wage labour. This was because rural living was untenable owing to lack of quality of life, amenities and failure of agriculture. It was time to do a rethink.

There appeared to be an urban focus even among corporate entities that were investing in development. United Way Bengaluru began giving sharper focus to rural development and what is more, integrating all services together so that rural living could have access to the best of urban facilities. Thus, access to health even in remote locations, microfinance for women in order to empower them with economic mobility and skilling and education for youth came on to centre stage. A look at how it happened...

*Refurbished Anganwadi*



Before



After











## Putting Down Roots

### Integrated Rural Development

“Our anganwadi is the hub for development programs in the village, as everybody in the village visits it for one service or the other. This helps me identify the women to form Self Help Groups (SHG) and also deserving students to benefit for the scholarship schemes. I coordinate with the local NGO which is associated with United Way and educate women about being a part of SHGs. Many students are able to study further and become graduates because of the scholarship they are receiving from UWBe.” says Baby, anganwadi teacher at Bisavanahalli who plays a key role in identifying and integrating the rural development program in the village.

The first integrated rural development program was seeded in 2015, in 23 villages of Yelesandra Gram Panchayat, Bangarpet taluk, Kolar district merely 100 km from Bengaluru. Despite their proximity to Bengaluru these villages were challenged by several issues related to access to health, livelihoods and basic amenities. The program has now scaled up to 100 villages in Dodballapur, Bangarpet, Devanahalli and Alur and Nelamangala taluks. With support from corporate partners and local NGOs, United way has been able to address some of the most critical issues faced by rural communities, which have been prioritized as the following:

- Access to health
- Early childhood success
- Economic mobility
- Youth success

“Our mission is wide and inclusive. In order to stay true to it, we feel strongly that rural communities must not be left out. We have to look at their needs with sensitivity and insights, and tailor programs for them. We have achieved this to some extent and will be expanding on the programs in the future,” says Arogyaraju, Manager, Community Initiatives.





### Reaching health to the unreached

Ramappa (38) had itchy skin and some unusual white patches on his back. Bhanupriya (14 months) came with her mother who was concerned that the child had not stopped coughing for the last few months. Gowamma (50) had fungal infection on her feet.

They all live in a remote village that has lack of access to health facilities. United Way Bengaluru has set up a mobile health care facility which goes to 24 villages every week diagnosing, treating and educating people about health and hygiene. A well-equipped vehicle with ample stock of medicines and first aid, doctor, nurse, pharmacist and a driver travels across these villages.

“There have been times when people have called for us from their farms on our way and we have stopped to attend to them. I have once rushed to a village to help a person who had collapsed due to epilepsy and got him treated. We regularly check and treat him even now.” recalls Radha the pharmacist. “People here are not aware of basic facts and cannot distinguish between communicable and non-communicable diseases. In some villages they still brush their teeth with mud and limestone.” says Dr. Lakshmi Narayana. This program is very beneficial to those who cannot afford to travel to the primary health care centre,” says Dr. Lakshmi Narayana



“We identify pregnancy and get the women registered at the hospital. Other diagnoses we do are diabetes and blood pressure which many times are undetected,” adds Deepa the Nurse attached to the van.

“This facility is a boon to many of these people. We are planning to identify some proactive youth who know their village and its people well to reach deeper and motivate people to utilise this service better,” says Srinivas, Program In charge.



“We don’t even have buses or autos to reach the nearest hospital in Konenahalli which is 10 kms away. People in our village wait for the mobile health van to come every week and are solely dependent on it for healthcare.” Shankuntala, former President of the Gram Panchayat.

### Economic mobility

United Way has enabled economic mobility for rural communities by identifying areas relevant to their capacity and aptitude. Given that levels of education and skills are not at optimum levels, they have been supported with credit and skills for running micro-enterprises, and for pursuing skill-based occupations e.g. animal husbandry, tailoring etc. There is anecdotal evidence that it is helping the communities to stay rooted to their homes and that it is stemming distress migration.

## When women support each other, incredible things happen!

### Sunitha (30)

"I was a small-time flower seller going door to door and selling flowers and did not know how to run a business. With the help of the self-help group and financial support I have become an independent woman. Now I have a shop in Rajankunte and make enough money to sustain my family. I pay my son's school fees, buy him clothes and anything I need with my own money."



### Ratnamma (31)

"I purchased a sewing machine and have my own tailoring shop with help of the capital I received and after joining the SHG, I've learnt how to manage money and differentiate between capital and profit. This has given me the ability to earn money and give attention to my children staying at home."



### Thimakka (65)

"I have improved my petty shop and earn my living along with my husband. My three daughters are married and don't live with us. This shop helps me sustain my life. Being an independent woman, I have set an example for my daughters to stand up for themselves and earn their living."

### Radhamma (50)

"I coordinate with other business women in my village who sell sarees and stitch clothes to go to the city and bring accessories and other things that are in demand in our village. This fancy shop I run has taught me how to take decisions on my own, support my family both financially and otherwise."









## Youth success

***“We cannot always build a future for our youth, but we can always build our youth for the future” - Franklin D Roosevelt***

Youth empowerment holds the key to strengthening the country's future in a macro and a family's livelihood in a micro perspective. United Way has recognised that there are challenges among all youth for accessing higher education or equipping themselves for livelihoods. With active support from corporate donors, youth are being supported with need-based support, based on their capacity and aptitude.

Sindhu aspires to become a lecturer and has applied for a M.com seat in Bengaluru says “I could not have aspired for a master's degree if I did not get the scholarship. I want to become a lecturer and encourage more girls like me in villages to study and become self-sufficient.”



Yallappa had to discontinue school owing to economic challenges. He received driving lessons and obtained a driving license. He now owns his own light commercial vehicle and delivers water cans to petty shops in his village, earning Rs. 12,000/- per month.



Jyothi who is a 4<sup>th</sup> year electrical engineering student preparing to take GATE exams so that she can go abroad and study says, “I will be the first person to go abroad and study in my family if I can secure a masters seat in a foreign university next year. My sister and I could complete BE and dream big because of the scholarship support we have received.”

Vijayalakshmi, who was a homemaker, has acquired training as a beautician from a leading institution in Bengaluru. She is now employed at a beauty salon and earns Rs. 10000 per month. She also takes on home-based services from trusted clients. This gets her additional income.

Volunteer engagement encourages United Way to drive forward with more community development activities and events like Nandi Habba, Kere Deepotsava and Day of Action, which were driven by volunteers, have demonstrated the power collective action. They were joyous events, but beyond that, they showed that like-minded individuals coming together can be the seeding of powerful movements like Wake the Lake and Born Learning have become.



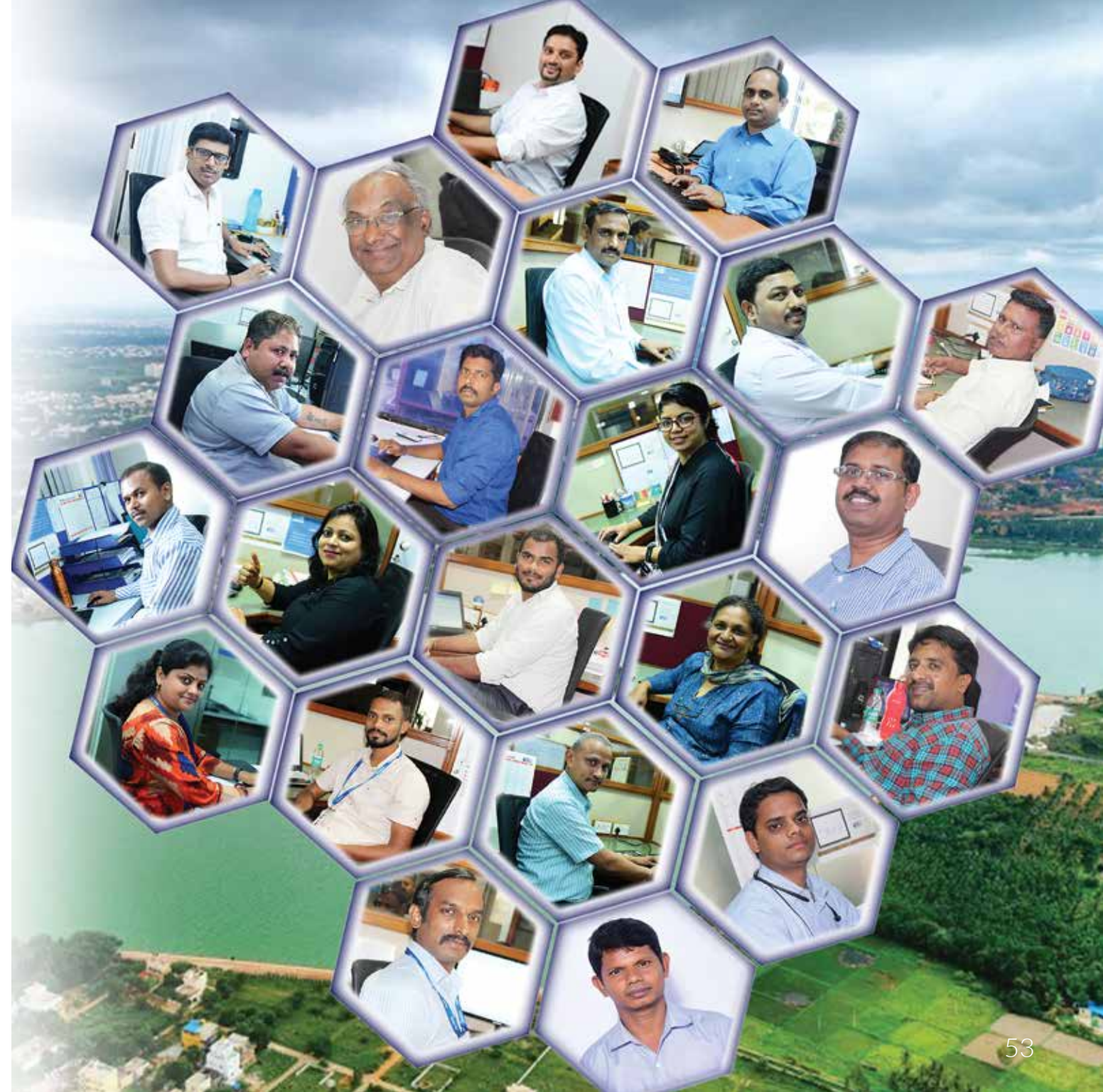


## Giving Shade

### Face to Face with Rajesh Krishnan, COO, United Way Bengaluru

It's been an amazing two years at United Way Bengaluru and for someone not from this sector United Way helped me understand the complexities of this sector in a short time. I realise that we at United Way are very uniquely positioned to act as driver of collective impact. While working under the realm of our parent organisation the local chapters do have a fair degree of flexibility which provided a chapter like Bengaluru to address challenges closer to the communities we are present there by making us relevant and also a recognized player.

Our strength includes our competency as a smart and intelligent match-maker wherein we are able to map funds to community needs. Besides playing the role of mapping, we also take complete ownership of the projects. At United Way Bengaluru campaigns on critical issues are conceptualised through a collaborative approach, efforts to raise awareness undertaken with the communities and importantly emphasis is on simple solutions to resolve these issues. All the initiatives are driven keeping in mind communities as the centre-piece.







## In Conclusion

It is evident from the above sections that United Way Bengaluru is a need-based organisation that is alert to community needs and responds to them. By bringing stakeholders together and ensuring financial transparency, strict compliance to accounting norms and statutory requirements, the organization has earned credibility of funders and communities alike.



**Manish Michael**  
CEO, United Way Bengaluru

Corporate donors recognize these strengths and have partnered consistently with United Way Bengaluru for their CSR initiatives. United Way has, in order to move forward into the next decade, has deepened focus and structure. Manish shares the redefined direction for United Way Bengaluru in the coming years in his closing note.

United Way Bengaluru has over the last decade, built a strong network of communities. We have identified complex issues and broken them down into simpler forms and activities, which make it easy for communities and corporate entities to come together and make a difference. We have co-created solutions to the issues through collaborations and sharing of resources, technical expertise and effort.

An example for this is Wake the Lake. When we began the campaign to revive lakes, there was a general reluctance to participate as the issue seemed so complex and most stakeholders did not know where to begin. With the help of BBMP and technical experts we were able to devise simple solutions everybody could be a part of.

Born Learning is another example of United Way's ability to create platforms for participation. India places a lot of focus around education for children above 6-years of age. Very little was being done for children below 6-years, when in fact, the 3-6-year window is vital to prepare children for mainstream education. We therefore began engaging parents, teachers, and the community in a holistic manner to ensure that children engage in joyful learning in their formative years in anganwadis, which largely concentrate on providing food and healthcare.

Our corporate relations are not transactional but based on very solid foundations of mutual learning, transparency, collaboration and co-creation of spaces for people to come together. Our corporate partners consider us as credible partners owing to the rapport we enjoy with the government and the communities.

It was a lonely journey in the beginning, but as our team grew, so did our confidence. We have passionate members on our team and each member brings his or her own theory of change; everybody is committed social good. Their happy faces when they see the change they have brought about, encapsulates their sense of purpose in life.

Over the past decade we have built a lot of expectations into our stakeholders – communities, corporate and government. They are expecting a lot from us in the future. In response to this, we have engaged in designing a strategy for the future. From our interaction with communities, corporate partners, government and our board and employees, a clear direction has emerged that we need to be drivers of change working along with all stakeholders and be that table around which people can come together and solve their problems.

The expectations indicate a need for intelligent mapping of funds to needs and for someone who has understanding of ground realities to be the enabler. There is also a need to use innovations, be it technology, a different perspective or even



identifying new problems on the ground and giving it shape of a project.

The coming years will see United Way rising to the next level and broadening the understanding of communities and social good. According to Prof Amartya Sen, “The constraints to ever expanding freedoms are termed “un-freedoms” – barriers that could exist in economic, social or political realms of society. Thus poverty, malnutrition, poor sanitation, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, social deprivations, poor public facilities, intolerance, communalisation, ethnic centricity, repressive state apparatuses, lack of education, absence of health care, lack of security, corruption can all be termed un-freedoms.” United Way will seem to remove these barriers and ‘un-freedoms’ in a collaborative manner. Our focus on rural development will be our efforts to removing barriers. Migration of rural population to urban areas causes distress and disruption. When rural people are forced to migrate, they live very poor quality lives in urban areas and do not get the dignity they deserve. Removing barriers is about giving them a choice. We believe migration should be a choice and not a way out of distress. And the urban population is also not happy because the cities are getting overcrowded. We will strengthen rural areas and make opportunities available to them. Our focus will be on farmers as well. We will strengthen their skills, access to markets and strengthen youth for various livelihood options, including farming. United Way will continue to make it easy for people to come together.

At the end of these very fruitful years, and at the beginning of the next phase, it is time to thank the Government, United Way Board, team, corporate partners, communities, and NGOs which believe in our ability create impact.

*Naum Michael*  
Oct. 2018



“Congratulations United Way Bengaluru. May the 10 years ahead be even better than the 10 years that have gone by. It’s been a long 10-year journey where you have achieved a lot in this short time.”

*José Pedro Ferrão*  
International President  
United Way

### Visionary Board from Inception<sup>1</sup>

**BOARD MEMBERS  
2008 TO 2010**

- BALA WARRIER
- CHARU SHARMA
- JESSE JACOB
- NILANJAN BHATTACHARYYA
- NISHIT ACHARYA
- RAMACHANDRAN NATESAN
- SABU THOMAS
- SUNIL MOTWANI
- SUNEETH KATARKI
- SURESH SHANMUGAM
- SUZANNE SINGH
- TANSEN CHAUDHARY
- VIVEK NAGARKATTI

**BOARD MEMBERS  
2011 TO 2013**

- AFZAL SULAIMAN
- ANAND STANLEY
- B G MAHESH
- BALA WARRIER
- JESSE JACOB
- MERYVN RAPHAEL
- MURALI KESHAVAN
- PRASHANT PRAKASH
- SABU THOMAS
- SRIRAM V
- SUJIT SIRCAR
- SUNEETH KATARKI
- SUZANNE SINGH
- VIVEK NAGARKATTI

**BOARD MEMBERS  
2014 TO 2016**

- BALA WARRIER
- CHARU SHARMA
- JESSE JACOB
- NILANJAN BHATTACHARYYA
- NISHIT ACHARYA
- RAMACHANDRAN NATESAN
- SABU THOMAS
- SUNIL MOTWANI
- SUNEETH KATARKI
- SURESH NAIR
- SURESH SHANMUGAM
- SUZANNE SINGH
- TANSEN CHAUDHARY
- VIVEK NAGARKATTI

<sup>1</sup> Listed in alphabetical order

# BOARD MEMBERS 2017 TO 2018



PRASHANT PRAKASH  
Board Chairman



M P HARIHARAN  
Secretary



HARIHARAN NARAYANASWAMY  
Treasurer



SABU THOMAS  
Member



SUNEETH KATARKI  
Member



SURESH NAIR  
Member



DEBARATI SEN  
Member



K T CHANDU  
Member



B G MAHESH  
Member



LALIT AHUJA  
Member

# Team Speak







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