

# Unsung, but a superhero to homeless kids

Priya Menon | TNN | Feb 11, 2019, 06:01 IST



Children play at the Sri Arunodayam Charitable trust that shelters people with learning difficulties.

CHENNAI: When Iyyappan Subramaniyan established Sri Arunodayam Charitable Trust in 2002, the objective was to provide shelter to abandoned children, and adults with learning difficulties. Besides shelter, the trust now provides special education and vocational training to its 115 residents. Subramaniyan is working towards raising funds to construct a new home for its female residents, who are

currently staying in a rented facility.

"My elder brother, who had intellectual disabilities, passed away when he was 15. We were then living at a village in Tiruvarur. My family did not have the knowledge or resources to help him," says Subramaniyan, while explaining what made him establish the trust. "We started in 2002 with just a three-year-old boy."

Most of them were children abandoned at hospitals or railway stations. "Some were also left in cradles as part of the cradle baby scheme," he says. Of the 115 residents, 80 are males. "Though we cater primarily to children - our youngest resident is only six months old - we provide shelter to homeless adults with intellectual disabilities. Our oldest resident is now 35," he says, adding that the trust runs entirely on donations from individuals and state government grants.

"In 2016, I was honoured with the Humanitarian Award by US-based World of Children. I have pledged the award money of \$85,000 to construct a home for the girls," he says.

The new facility will be built next to the boys home, and can accommodate 100 girls. "We plan to have dormitories, dining hall, special education classrooms, physiotherapy, medical care and vocational training facilities in the building," he says.

"Though we are starting the construction on February 27, we need more funds to complete it.

The total cost of construction is estimated to be 2.5cr."

Aarti Madhusudan, founder, Governance Counts, which helps develop governance strategies for organisations, says that the trust has created a safe space for abandoned children. "It is unique as they now have better life with a safe and comfortable space to live," she says.