

Dr Nalini Subbaiah

SI Bangalore (SIB), India

Sowmya (name changed), a stone-cutter's 12-year-old, was breathless when she was spotted by Dr Nalini Subbaiah, who immediately generated Rs 25,000 to get her a heart operation.

Roopesh (name changed) was also pulled back from the brink when he was four. She gathered Rs one lakh for a congenital heart surgery. And seven years later, she contacted the same donor to get school fees for the traumatised child.

“These are the precious, valuable moments that stay with me,” said Dr Nalini. “Through networking, I feel good that I connected those that wanted to give with those that needed help.”



At 75 years, Dr Nalini Subbaiah is playfully called the “youngest member” of SI Bangalore. She has walked briskly through 18 SI years, in beautiful, Coorg-style saris, with peace in her eyes and grace in her step. She always comes across as a person in a hurry, as if she has a mission.

As the Founder President in 2002, she led just about ten members who had big dreams but timid ideas of selling newspapers to generate funds! Yet today, the club has completed projects worth lakhs.

“I was a practising paediatrician and was also in the building society, in touch with the rich, poor as well as middle class,” she said. Her mantra is networking. Asking for help should not limit us, she says. “When you want to do some good, there will always be someone wanting to help.”

Since then, she has got involved in almost every project taken up by SIB, tapping her vast energy, drive, contacts and whatever resources she could gather. She has made a mark in every local and national objective on the SI themes of Economics, Environment, Healthcare, Education and Peace.

What resonates most with her is “working and touching the maximum number of people in villages and collecting resources to help the underprivileged in urban schools too.”

The projects she remembers with pride include building 163 toilets for Rachaina Doddi and Anekal villages, talking to schoolgirls for gender sensitisation, conducting more than 5,000 immunisation sessions and taking up two school adoption programmes to enhance its infrastructure and provide food, computers, classrooms and drinking water units.

She does have some regrets, such as “hastily” building the first toilets, which are being used as sheds by the villagers! But she agrees that they were lessons well learnt and helped the club during its

second toilets project, which till today is being looked after by missionaries.

She glows with pride that the club has grown through the years with all the members. "We've come a long way," she says.

Just like her personality, her advice is simple and inspiring: "Don't expect that everyone will work with the same drive. Enthuse each member and take them all along." You should not always take up major projects, but inspire everyone to do what she can nearby and around her.

Ironically, her final advice best sums up her profound Idealism: "Do something Practical."