



# VConnect Foundation

Annual Report

**April 2018 to March 2019**



# Introduction

VConnect Foundation is an NGO, which is a parent support group for parents of children with hearing differences. We work with parents of children who have chosen 'Listening and Spoken Language' as the communication option and these children are using hearing devices, such as cochlear implants, hearing aids or bone anchored hearing aids. VConnect purpose is to provide hope, support, guidance and empowerment to a cross section of parents from varied backgrounds and income levels. All our events and workshops are conducted free of cost for all parents.

VConnect was founded in 2007, by Vahishtai Daboo and Fatema Jagmag, both parents of children with hearing loss, who are also experts and practicing professionals in the field enabling children to listen and speak.

## Strength of VConnect Foundation

VConnect now has over 1000 parents spread across various circles located across India and Internationally. To support these parents, we have created various circles consisting over 50 parents. Each of these circles are managed by Circle Coordinators and VConnectors (who are parents). They are guided by the core team to manage their circles effectively. VConnect has a network of WhatsApp groups for each of the circles where regular query solving about various aspects of the child's hearing loss are discussed and solved.

There are a total of 12 circles: VConnect Foundation Circle, Mumbai (has 5 circles), Pune, Vidarbha, Gujarat, Delhi, Bangalore and Kenya.

## Focus areas in 2019-2020

VConnect's core focus areas this year ...

**Mental Health** is a very important ingredient of our parent support group. A series of one day workshops are being planned by VConnect's mental health team in collaboration with Ummeed Child Development Center, one of the India's leading NGOs, much respected for its work in the field of children with disabilities. These workshops will be conducted with the intention to 'Empower and Construct Hope' for parents of children with hearing differences. They will include parents learning about themselves and their child and the important things they do for their child through fun games and conversations.

**Mainstreaming** and all aspects of mainstreaming children with hearing differences is another large focus area this year. We want enable parents to achieve this by creating a **Mainstream Guide for Parents** of children with hearing differences.

Continuing to facilitate and support VConnect parents to attend **Monthly Online Webinars** by the Listening Together, a not for profit U.S. based organisation, to provide parent education on the various aspects of 'Listening and Spoken Language'.

# Our Activities in 2018-2019

## 12<sup>th</sup> VConnect Annual Day

The 12<sup>th</sup> VConnect Annual Day was held on February 10th at Smaaash. It was a day out with a host of activities and events which were well thought out for children and parents. It was very fruitful as it fulfilled our objectives to inspire, provide hope and empower parents. It created opportunities for parents to have meaningful interactions with their children while they played with them. Smaaash gave us a good package for over 185 of the VConnect parents and children. It was a delight see the joy on the faces of one and all. The passion with which everyone was singing the VConnect Anthem together was heartwarming.

**Ms. Nishtha Dudeja, Miss World in the deaf category, was our Guest of Honour.** Mr. Sharukh Irani a TV, Drama & Advertising personality, who has been our patron and supporter, did the honours of introducing the guest of honour. Nishtha's inspiring and heartwarming speech about her journey, struggle, hard work and the dedication of her parents in helping and encouraging her gave a lot of hope and inspiration to all the parents present there.

Parents were then split into groups where an interactive activity on Parent Empowerment was conducted. This gave parents an opportunity to think, pen down and share, motivate and connect with each other to build their own network of support. The invigorating morning culminated with the eagerly awaited lunch boxes for one and all, giving parents and children yet another opportunity to interact and connect during lunch.





## Courses Completed by 2 Members of our Team

### **Mental Health Training Programme**

We are delighted to announce that our Executive Committee Member, Vibha Shah has successfully completed the “Mental Health Training Program”, a 1 year course conducted by the Ummeed Child Development Center, Mumbai. The course centers around the narrative therapy approach for counselling families and children and consists of intensive week-long sessions in four blocks and weekly half-day supervision throughout the year, conducted by experts in the field.



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***Congratulations!***

The importance of #Mental Health in today context cannot be over-emphasized for the psychological well-being of families and children. Counseling using the Narrative approach – a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling with children, young people and families- encourages children and families to rely on their own skills to minimize problems that exist in their lives. The focus is on assisting people to create stories about themselves and about their identities that are helpful to them.

It is our constant endeavour to provide a holistic approach for supporting and empowering our families, and Mental Health is a big area of focus going forward. We now have 2 members of our core who have undergone the training from Ummeed to provide counseling and one more member has been selected for the next program.

# Listening & Spoken Language Specialist

VConnect Foundation is delighted to announce that Co-Founder & Managing Trustee, Ms. Vahishtai Daboo, is now a Listening and Spoken Language Specialist Certified Auditory Verbal Therapist (LSLS Cert. AVT). This certification is conferred on her by the Alexander Graham Bell Academy, U.S.A., an independently governed, subsidiary corporation of The Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (A.G. Bell). LSLS Cert. AVT is the gold standard and we are proud that Vahishtai has achieved a goal she has embraced for many years.

The LSLS Cert. AVT. is of international repute and Vahishtai is only the fifth Indian to date to have achieved this honour. LSLS professionals are certified by the A.G. Bell Academy for Listening and Spoken Language after completing a stringent, continuing professional education program and supervised, mentored practice over several years. Certification requires successful completion of a comprehensive examination.



The Listening and Spoken Language (LSL) approach is a communication opportunity for infants, toddlers, and young children with hearing loss and their families. LSLS Cert AVTs focus on education, guidance and the rigorous application of techniques, strategies, and procedures that promote optimal acquisition of spoken language through listening. Professionals who hold the LSLS certification offer specialized services based on standardized educational preparation, core knowledge, and verification of professional experience are equipped to work with children of all ages, including infants and toddlers, children in preschool and kindergarten, and school-age students.

Founded in 1890 and headquartered at the Volta Bureau in Washington D.C., A.G. Bell advocates for listening, learning, talking, and living independently with hearing loss. A.G. Bell advances their cause through parent chapters located throughout the United States, international affiliates, and professionals.

# A Series of Workshops on 'Benefits and Concessions' for Children with hearing loss were conducted as follows:

1. On 3<sup>rd</sup> March, **World Hearing Day**, VConnect conducts the **8<sup>th</sup> Workshop on Benefits & Concessions for children with hearing loss**, in collaboration with 6 leading centres in Gujarat Asian Speech and Hearing Clinic, L'iL ear Foundation, Shabda Brahma, P.H.C Hearing Health Care, TARA Foundation and Swar Sudha at AMA, Ahmedabad, organised and supported by Dr. Mallikarjun.

Over 140 parents attended the workshop in Ahmedabad. Parents were empowered with information and knowledge about the benefits of the disability certificate, the UDID card and how they can be obtained. In depth details about the concession and benefits given by the government in respect to train and bus travel, how to avail the income tax benefit for children and their caregivers, and the details about the various concessions and accommodations available in education for all the different school boards. This was followed by an interactive panel discussion. The workshop was conducted by the VConnect Team: Ms. Fatema Jagmag, Co-founder and Trustee, Ms. Vibha Shah, Committee Member, Ms. Jigna Sanchania, VConnector Central Circle, Ms. Julie Thakkar, Programme Coordinator, Mr. Akshay Chandan, VConnector Gujarat Circle and Mr. Ramu Vadapalli, VConnector Thane Kaylan Circle. The experts who represented their centres were Dr. Mallikarjun & Deepti Mallikarjun, Dr. Bela Prajapati, Dr. Leena Vishwakarma, Dr. Rupali Mathur, Dr. Navin Patel and Mr. Amit Anand.





## **2. 7th Workshop at AURED, Mumbai on 'Concessions & Benefits' to their parents on 16th February 2019**

VConnect was invited to present to parents and staff of AURED. It was attended by 12 parents of AURED and some AURED staff. The VConnect Team was welcomed by the AURED Coordinator Armaity Khambatta. Vibha Shah, Executive Committee member and Jigna Sanchania, VConnector conducted the workshop along with Dildar Dalvi, VConnector South Mumbai Circle and Vahishtai Daboo, Co-Founder & Managing Trustee VConnect Foundation. The session was informative and interactive. Each parent was given handouts for the Concessions & Benefits in each of the areas related to their requirements.



## **3. 6th Workshop at the Education Audiology and Research Society (E.A.R.) Mumbai on 23rd January 2019**

An informative and interactive workshop was conducted at the E.A.R. center, at Mumbai which benefited 45 parents and the centre's entire staff. It was conducted by Vibha Shah, Executive Member of VConnect Foundation and Jigna Sanchania, VConnector of the VConnect Central Circle. They spoke about 'Accommodations and Concessions' available in the areas of Travel, Income Tax and School boards. They also explained the procedure to get the disability certificate and the UDID card and its importance. The response of the parents and staff at E.A.R. Centre was overwhelming with them wanting more such workshops at their centre.



**4. 5th Workshop on 'Concession and Benefits' was held on 6th January 2019, at Bangalore.**

The workshop was held in collaboration with 'Medikeri Super Specialty ENT Center.' It was attended by over 50 parents. The workshop was a great success with lots of interaction between the parents and panelists who were ENTs from various programmes across Bangalore.



**5. 4th Workshop on 'Concessions & Benefits' held at Nagpur on 20th October 2018**

Lots of parents from the entire Vidarbha region attended the workshop and found it extremely beneficial. During the session parents were empowered with the concession and benefits given by the government in respect to train travel, bus travel, income tax benefit and education for various boards. They were also explained the way to get disability certificate. This workshop was conducted at Nagpur in collaboration with the Somani Speech and Hearing Center.





## 6. Workshop on 'Benefits and Concessions' held at Shruti School on 9th October 2018

The Workshop was conducted by Ms. Vibha Shah, Executive Committee Member, Ms. Jigna Sanchania, VConnector and Ms. Julee Raichna, Programme Coordinator. Executive Committee Member, Purvee Parekh who is also part of KDN Shruti School had organised the event. 79 parents attended the workshop.

During the session parents were empowered with the concession and benefits given by the government in respect to train travel, bus travel, income tax benefit and education for various boards. They were also explained the way to get disability certificate.



## 7. 'Benefits & Concessions' for children with hearing loss, on the September 2nd 2018 at Niwara, Sadashiv Peth, Pune.

Over 150 participants, which included parents and a few professionals benefitted greatly from the workshop. The workshop was conducted by Vibha Shah, Executive Committee member of VConnect Foundation, and VConnectors Prafulla Bargaje and Jigna Sanchania, Dr. Kalyani Mandke, Audiologist, Mandke Hearing Services, was present and supported the entire event from its inception. Also present were Fatema Jagmag, Co-Founder and Trustee, VConnect Foundation, Purvee Parekh, Executive Committee Member and Julee Raichna, Programme Coordinator. The





workshop - conducted free of cost - included detailed procedure and hand-outs on how parents can procure the Disability Certificate, the UDID card, claim deductions in Income Tax when filing their returns, procure travel concessions for railways & bus transport and concessions & accommodations in education in all the different school boards i.e. SSC, ICSE, CBSE, IGCSE. The Social Welfare officers Mr. Nandkumar Phule, retired General Manager Maharashtra State Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation & Ms. Rohini More, Medical Social Worker ZP, Pune spared their valuable time to attend the workshop and share their knowledge and information which was very valuable and helpful for all the parents. Further, the session was open to questions where all queries and doubts were satisfactorily answered. This was followed by lunch for all the attendees and the interaction between parents and presenters continued. Parents were exchanging notes and bonding with each other; the very purpose of VConnect Foundation to Enable, Empower and Support parents thereby to become successful contributing citizens in the mainstream.

## 8. Workshop on Concessions & Benefits for Children with Hearing Loss, at Dadar on Sunday, August 5, 2018.

The event was a resounding success, attended by 150 parents, who came in from Pune, South Mumbai, Thane, Kalyan, Dombivli, Navi Mumbai and many other areas. Many of them expressed their appreciation through their video and WhatsApp feedback messages which are up on our various circles and our Facebook page. The interactive question and answer session was extremely useful. Parents appreciated the slot that was given to them for the one on one session as well where the team answered their queries one on one. Every single VConnect event begins or ends with our VConnect Anthem which as sung here as a finale. Singing of the VConnect Anthem at every event truly resonates with the parents and the team and brings about a great sense of greater power and a sense of well-being amongst parents, knowing that they are not alone and that every parent there feels the same way.





# Series of Workshops on Empowering Parents

**As a part of this series, the following Parent Empowerment workshops were conducted:**

1. A workshop on the **'Importance and Skills of Assertiveness'** which is part of a series of workshops on **'Enabling & Empowering Parents'**, was conducted by Bapsy Patel, on the 22nd of April. The venue at AURED was given to us gratis for which we thank Aziza Tyabji Hydari for her continued support to VConnect Foundation.



The workshop was highly interactive with enthusiastic participation by parents. There was sharing and learning across all levels during the workshop with parents eagerly awaiting the next workshops.

2. Workshop conducted on **'POWER OF WORDS & ASSERTIVENESS'**. During the session, parents were empowered with the help of self-applied exercises, videos and interaction to understand the power of positive words that can be used in their daily life with themselves and their children, which can help them create healthy atmosphere. Furthermore, they were explained the importance of Assertiveness i.e. how to handle and act in any situation without getting disappointed and being aggressive. Parents were very happy to be a part of this and requested to conduct such more sessions in the near future. The workshop was conducted by our very own committee member Bapsy Patel & Programme coordinator Julee Raichna.





## Device Care & Maintenance Workshop

‘A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle’ says Father James Keller and VConnect Central Circle, made a small attempt to contribute in that direction.

A workshop on ‘Cochlear Maintenance & Troubleshooting’, held on 14 April 2018 in Ghatkopar was very well appreciated by parents in number. A representative from Cochlear guided the parents, while the children were busy creating their beautiful artwork. Parents now look forward to reunite for next VConnect Foundation workshops.



## Workshop towards creating awareness and sensitization about hearing loss



On Sunday 9th December, Fatema Jagmag, the co-founder of VConnect Foundation presented at LAJA (a women organization, that works on women empowerment), “Tatva - Nurturing Thyself” about the organization, the importance of ‘Parent Empowerment’, the importance of ‘Newborn Hearing Screening’ and all the different activities and workshops that are conducted through the year to create hope, support and empower are parents. The event was attended by Vibha Shah, Executive Committee Member and Julee Raichna, Programme Coordinator.

## Monthly Online Workshops for Parents

VConnect facilitates and supports parents to enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching their children to learn to listen and speak by attending 'monthly online workshops' conducted by 'Listening Together,' a US based not for profit organisation founded by Dr. Uma Soman & Ms. Ahladhini Dugar. The workshops attended by our parents and VConnect team leaders are :

- 1) **Hear to Sing, Sing Along** : Introducing Music into Daily Routines by Cole Basas, M.A., LSLS Cert. AVEEd. It was attended by 9 VConnect Parents
- 2) **Every child should have the opportunity to learn the Language(s) of the Home and the Heart** by Uma Soman Ph.D., LSLS Cert. AVEEd. Over 35 VConnect parents attended the workshop.

## New Born Hearing Screening Programme

It has been our endeavour to screen new born babies at birth to detect for hearing loss. We started the new born hearing screening programme in 2012 and have **screened over 8000 babies** to date. Our programme continues to run in 3 hospitals in Mumbai.

## Help, Guidance & Donation towards Hearing Device

Regular help, guidance and counseling is provided to parents for their children's hearing devices, part from this aid was given to:

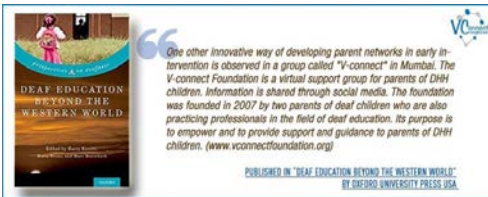
- Himanshu was helped with funding towards his cochlear implant processor
- We received 3 donated hearing aids which were donated to 3 deserving persons

## Gratitude to the Marshalls



Young Mikhail at the tender age of 6 made a request to his parents: Navroze Marshall & Parizad Marshall. He wanted his 6th birthday party to be special. Instead of receiving the usual gifts & presents he wished that his friends support VConnect Foundation by making a contribution. More than the amount of fifty thousand that he collected, it is the richness of the gesture that will stay with us forever. His sister Deanne had done the same for another NGO for her 10th Birthday. The Marshall family have always supported VConnect over the years. On behalf of all parents and children of VConnect we offer them our heartfelt gratitude.

## Recognition of our work



We are happy to share that our work was recognised by Oxford University Press USA in the book titled “Deaf Education Beyond the Western World” published in Feb 2019, mentioning VConnect Foundation.

Professionals from 19 countries, including Kalyani Mandke and Ms. Perna Chandeka have contributed in this book.



# OUR TEAM

## The Executive Committee

Vahishtai Daboo

Fatema Jagmag

Vibha Shah

Purvee Parekh

Bapsy Patel

Jamshed Daboo

## Core Team

Behroze Billimoria - Coordinator

Julie Thakkar - Programme Coordinator

Kashmira Surti - Administrator

## The Board of Trustees

Vahishtai Daboo - Co-Founder & Managing Trustee

Fatema Jagmag - Co-Founder & Trustee

Jeroo Buhariwala - Trustee

# YOUR SUPPORT

At VConnect we really want to make a difference to the lives of thousands of children with hearing impairment in and around India in our endeavor to successfully mainstream them at all levels.

**All donations to VConnect Foundation are 50% exempt from tax under section 80G of the Income Tax Act.**

**Cheques & Demand Drafts to be made in the name of 'VConnect Foundation'**

**Direct online fund transfers details are as under:**

A/c: VConnect Foundation

Savings Account

Account Number: 3014605126

Bank details: Central Bank of India, Colaba Causeway Branch

IFSC CODE: CBIN0281407

**For foreign donations:**

A/c: VConnect Foundation

Savings Account

Account Number: 3284711054

Bank details: Central Bank of India, Colaba Causeway Branch

IFSC CODE: CBIN0281407



## Trust & Contact Details

**Name of the Trust:** VConnect Foundation

**Registered Office:** C-216, Bunyaan, Seth Moti Shah X Lane, Byculla (E), Mumbai 400 027, India

**Correspondence:** R-7, Cusrow Baug, Shahid Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400001

**Legal Status:** Charitable Trust

VConnect Foundation is a registered not-for-profit company under section 25 of the Indian Companies Act (1956) and has tax exempt status in India under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act (1961).

**Contact No:** +91 9820409019

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**Linkedin:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/vconnect-foundation/>

**Instagram:** <http://www.instagram.com/vconnectfoundation>

**Instagram Handle:** @vconnectfoundation