



# Project Report 2019

# 2019 at a glance

870 +



Volunteer hours

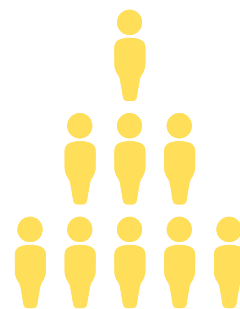


40 +

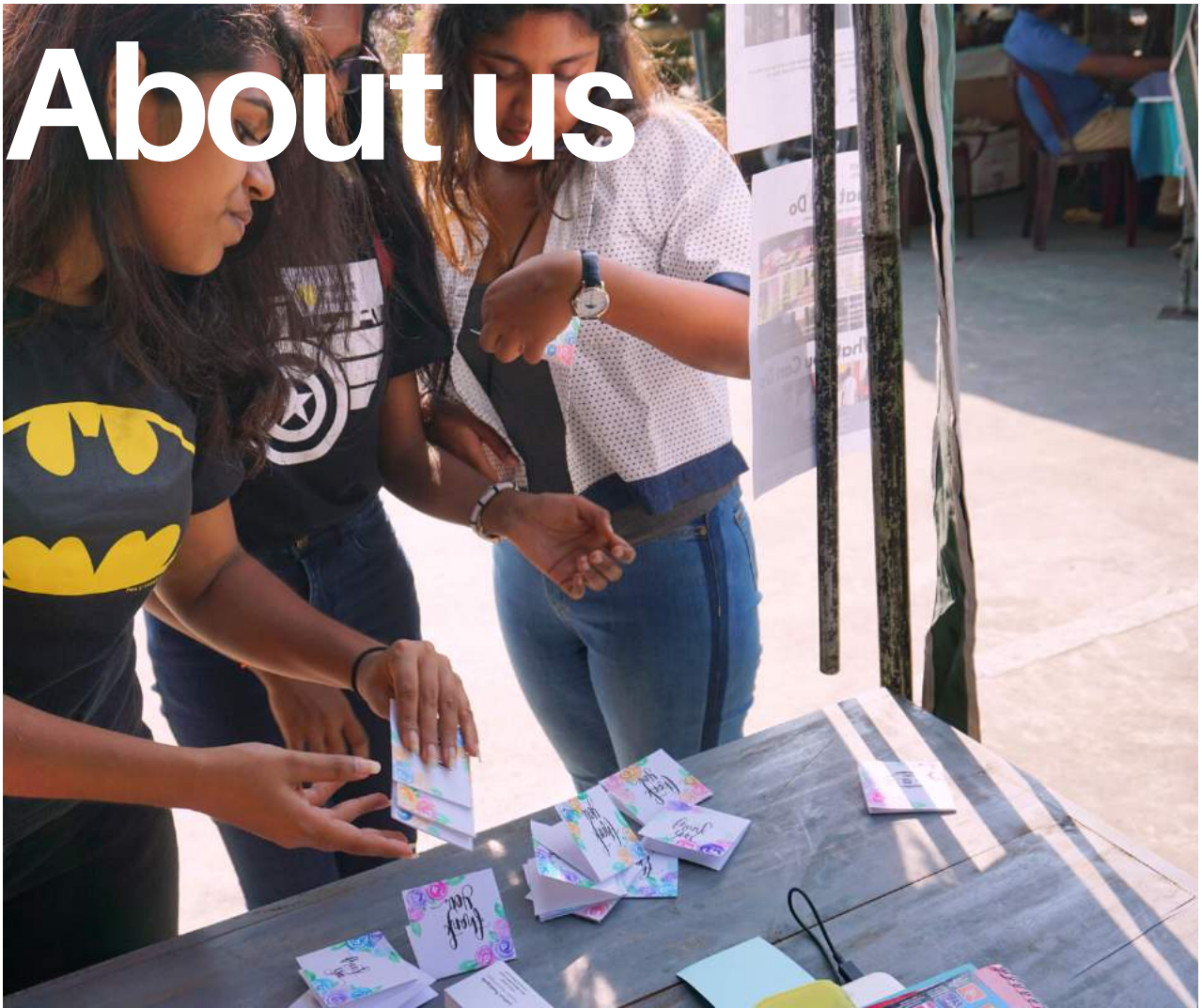
Sessions at the  
Adolescent Unit of the  
NIMH

50 +

Active volunteers



# About us



Project Bloom has its beginnings in 2017, after a group of like-minded school-leavers decided to spend their time volunteering at the Adolescent Psychiatry Unit of the National Institute of Mental Health in Mulleriyawa, Sri Lanka. The goal was simple: to spend time with the adolescents and carry out activities such as teaching simple maths and English or helping them create art, to hopefully ease the discomfort associated with being in a health institution. It also provided an opportunity for the kids to meet and interact with people other than the many health professionals they may come across during their stay at the NIMH.

Since our inception, we have carried out more than 90 sessions in total at the NIMH, a 10 day training workshop on the basics of utilizing art as therapy as well as participation in other workshops conducted by individuals and organizations which focused on the basics of counselling communication. Along with our grass-roots approach to matters, advocacy for adolescent mental health awareness through social media has also played an important part in our project.

We are positive that the contributions of our volunteers have had a lasting and beneficial impact on the lives of many.

# NIMH Sessions



## KEY FACTS

- Our main volunteering initiative.
- Sessions carried out at the Adolescent Unit of the National Institute of Mental Health, Sri Lanka.
- Takes place on Sundays, from 4 to 6 pm.
- 40 sessions in 2019.

## WHAT WE DO

Our volunteers gather at the NIMH to deliver pre-defined or unstructured sessions to the inpatient adolescents at the Adolescent Unit consisting of academics, arts and crafts, art therapy and other stimulating activities.

**3** GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



# NIMH Sessions

## VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

We take volunteer feedback seriously. It is an important tool we use at Project Bloom to continuously monitor the quality of the sessions we deliver. Volunteers provide us with important feedback on how we can improve the sessions; and helps us in planning future activities by gauging what works and what doesn't.

We collect feedback as part of an online, anonymous, post-session volunteer survey.

**Based on 144 responses in 2019:**

To what extent did volunteering at the session meet your expectations?

**4.4/ 5**

0 - Not Met  
3 - Partially Met  
5 - Fully Met

How much of an impact did your volunteering have at the session?

**7.6/ 10**

0 - No impact  
5 - Moderate impact  
10 - A great deal of impact

How friendly and approachable was the volunteer supervisor?

**4.9/ 5**

How likely are you to recommend Project Bloom to family and friends?

**9.6/ 10**

0 - Unlikely  
10 - Very Likely

[→ See the feedback summaries in full](#)

# NIMH Sessions

## VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

### Based on 144 responses in 2019

A few anonymous comments from our volunteers:

### Expectations

"I expected a collaborative experience where we help bring some light to these patients through organised activities."

"Helping out the kids and making them feel at home."

"I expected to spend time with the children and connect with them in [a] hopes that they can know what it's like to socialise with people from outside."

"To be honest I expected the kids to be in a much worse condition based on what I've heard. I thought it would be hard for me to actually get close with them and feel what they are going through."

"My expectations were not fully met since we could not have a one on one conversation with the patients."

"I was expecting to teach arts and have a friendly environment."

"I was under the impression I'd be working with younger kids, towards the age group like 7-10. Other than it was more or so what I expected."

"I expected more activities, yet the stuff we did was very fun for both volunteers and patients."

"Was not aware of the schedule today however the art therapy tremendously exceeded my expectations."

### Suggestions

"Ensure that everyone reads the lesson plan prior to the session, and possibly get a qualified academic with experience to tutor for the session, especially when dealing with advanced content. Maybe show videos to further explain and captivate. Also the content could be adjusted to be more generalised, practical and more along the lines of life skills."

"In my view, the session could be improved if there were a specific set of volunteers for the Sunday session as the children at NIMH tend to get comfortable/friendly with only one volunteer and would expect to continue with them throughout any sessions and they would be uncomfortable to meet with a new volunteer in every Sunday, given that the concern of the child is of utmost importance I hope this suggestion is taken into consideration."

"By starting on time. Make sure all volunteers arrive on time."

"It would be better if all volunteers are asked to speak in Sinhalese. Because this will affect the pace of them getting connected with kids and may delay kids expressing themselves to some extent."

"No improvements needed."

"Longer and proper environment for meditation session."

"If we were briefed on the WhatsApp group prior to the session about what we would be doing."

"I would prefer if we could pre-plan what we are going to do so that everyone is aware of it, and no one would be lost. Also if she volunteers put in more team effort and show togetherness."

"Session was perfectly handled and coordinated by the volunteer supervisor."

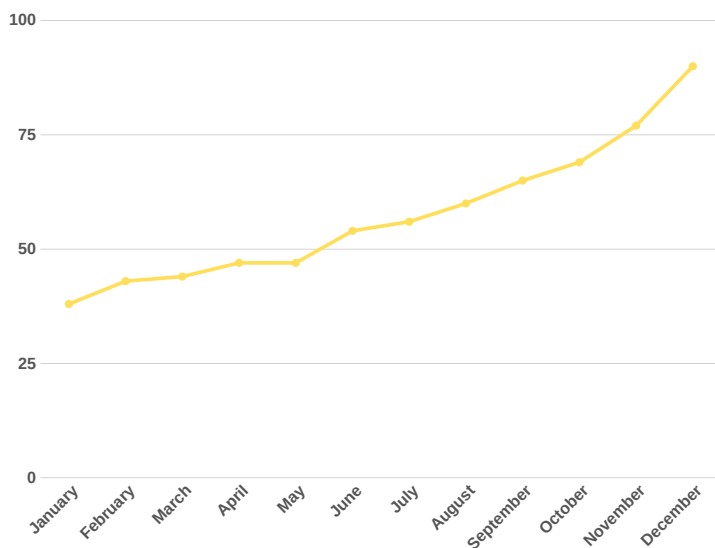
[→ See the feedback summaries in full](#)

# Our Volunteers



Volunteers are the lifeline of our project. From a humble start of around 5 volunteers, we now have a volunteer base of more than 90 volunteers, of which 50 or more are consistent and active.

2019 has marked a significant growth in volunteer sign-ups:



Largest growth reported from July 2019 to December 2019:  
**56 to 90** volunteers

# Our Volunteers

## TESTIMONIALS FROM PAST VOLUNTEERS



Meena Landage

**24 HOURS OF VOLUNTEERING**

Studying Psychology at the University of Western Australia

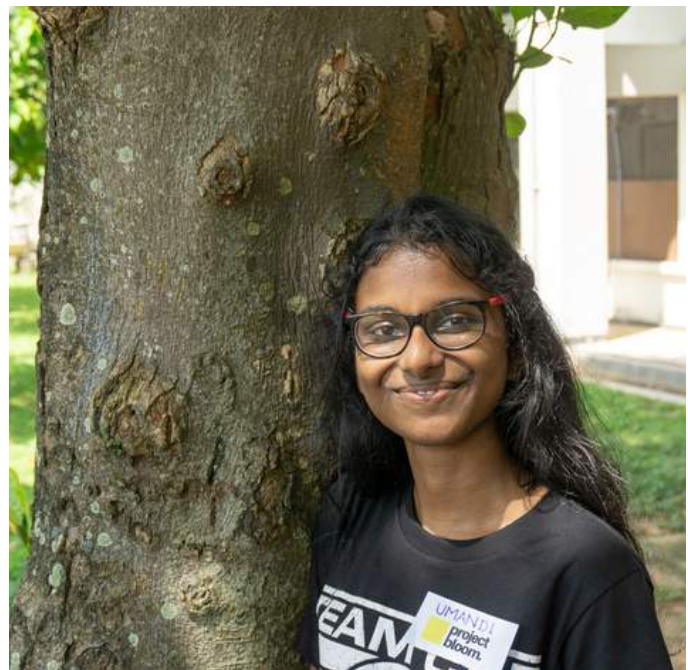
"Project Bloom has been an amazing experience. It's such a satisfying feeling when the kids say they love your presence and that they love what we do with them. Seeing their smiles and keeping them distracted from what they go through felt great. Joining Project Bloom was very helpful as my career will be something similar to my volunteer work."

Umandi Wickramaratne

**35 HOURS OF VOLUNTEERING**

Studying Medicine at SGU, Grenada.

"Volunteering at Project Bloom has been one of the most enlightening voluntary work I've ever done and visiting the NIMH and teaching children who are no different from us motivated me. At the end of the day, it's worth spending two hours of your time just to see them smile and I'm happy to say that Project Bloom is doing an incredible job by being a source of their happiness."





# Volunteer Training

## ART FOR THE SOUL.

Art as therapy is a proven method of alleviating the symptoms of depression, opening up lines of communication, reducing stress and is a positive distraction for many. Conducted by Art Therapist Elinor Assoulin (PhD, Art Therapy, reading), this 10-day-long experiential & intensive workshop series equipped the participants with the necessary skills in delivering art therapy sessions to adolescents.

This was a major milestone for Project Bloom; training our volunteers with practical skills to enhance our NIMH Sessions and organising a workshop of this scale were invaluable additions to our project.

'Art for the Soul' was a success; and was an eye-opener for many participants in terms of self-exploration. Applying the learnt skills at our sessions markedly improved both patient and volunteer engagement.

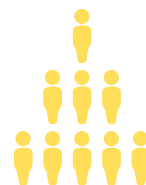
We are forever thankful to Elle for coming down to Sri Lanka to conduct this workshop voluntarily, as well as the NIMH for providing us with a training space.



TRAINING DURATION  
**40 Hours**



WORKSHOP DATES  
**5th February -  
17th February 2019**



PARTICIPANTS  
**10 Volunteers  
3 NIMH Staff**



FACILITATED BY  
**Elinor Assoulin,  
AThR**

# Volunteer Training



**ART FOR THE SOUL.**

## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Based on 9 responses

### Most valuable aspects

"The techniques and activities taught."

"The knowledge about activities that can be implemented when interacting with adolescents in the unit as well as any person dealing with a mental illness."

"Everything"

"The fact that we were able to learn a great deal about ourselves and explore the real us within in the journey of helping others."

Confidence in delivering art therapy sessions **before** the workshop.

**2.6/ 5**

Confidence in delivering art therapy sessions **after** the workshop.

**4.4/ 5**

The workshop lived up to my expectations.

**5/ 5**

### Improvements

Increase the content covered in the workshop, n=6

Allocate more time for the workshop, n=5

I will be able to use and apply what I learned in this workshop.

**5/ 5**



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