

The gift of hearing

Hearing and listening are often taken for granted because we (most of us) have had them and used them since birth. Shihab, a bright little boy, was first diagnosed with hearing loss at age four and a half. It was devastating news for his parents, emotionally and practically, as they struggled to make ends meet daily. They could not afford to provide him with hearing aids and so the time elapsed.

Years later, at the [Government lower primary school Bevinamara Colony](#), Shihab, now an 11-year-old, sat through an English reading program offered by a volunteer group, Indradhnush, in partnership with [Valistus International School](#), Bangalore. It was observed that Shihab, an eager learner with an infectious smile, could not communicate at all. Was it too late to change his life?

This matter was discussed with the Headmaster of the Bevinamara school, Mr. Chandrsekhar SR, a man passionate about making a difference in the lives of his students. Upon his agreement, the Head of School (HOS) of Valistus International, [Mr. Venkata Suresh Lolla](#), a distinguished and learned personality with a heart of gold, was approached to discuss the issue and seek his help. Fortunately, the HOS's past student [Debojit Ray](#) was co-founder of Priocare Health Services LLP and head audiologist. His wife, [Dr. Alfiya Ray](#) also a co-founder and speech pathologist at Priocare Intervention, Bangalore. Upon recommendation from the HOS, they met with Shihab and his parents. Shihab went through a thorough diagnosis procedure and was recommended to get the hearing aids immediately as he was already of age. Any further lapse in time would result in him remaining without hearing and speaking for the rest of his life. With guidance from the audiologist, who made the entire treatment affordable, the volunteer group Indradhanush arranged for the necessary funds.

The blessed day when Shihab was going to get the hearing aids arrived. Would the aids work, and what would be Shihab's first reactions? On the day, the audiologist very patiently explained to the parents the details about the programmable device (hearing aids) and how it should be worn and cleaned. Shihab was then fitted with the hearing device and tested to ensure audibility.

For the first time, he could hear sounds clearly. He was tapping and clapping to listen to the sounds from his own hands. His joy knew no bounds, and the look on his mother's face was priceless !!





A big thanks to the headmaster of Bevinamara, Head of School Valistus, the wonderful doctor couple at Priocare Intervention, the volunteer group, Indradhanush, and individuals who contributed to this noble cause.

This experience is an excellent example of a teacher and student bonding. Clearly, it shows how various organizations can unite to make a difference in the lives of the lesser privileged.



Story and picture courtesy – Indradhanush Volunteer Group

