

SHB SOCIAL FOUNDATION



DIRECTOR'S REPORT 2025-2026

It all begins with Listening!

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About SHB Social Foundation

A contemporary author, aware of the challenges and pressures of modern times, has succinctly put it: *Light may be travelling fast but darkness is always there, awaiting its arrival.*

Almost everyone today is dealing with stress, loneliness and uncertainty but rarely shares with close ones. There are reasons galore but the most common is the fear of being judged after opening up.

As a result, the communities that once held people together are shrinking and spaces where people can speak freely have become a necessity.

For 12 years, SHB Social Foundation - has sincerely attempted to satisfy this necessity. We are based in Pune and work in the mental wellness space within the community. This is not just our motto but also the means for building a compassionate society where people of all ages can share, find clarity and feel supported.

We aim to change perceptions through active listening. Our flagship programme, **Listening Post**, an emotional distress-calming space, is offered both as a walk-in space and through a telephonic helpline. Additionally, we offer various support programmes to the community focusing on compassion, self-care, and emotional and social life skills.

Highlights of 2025-2026

Meet our new advisory board members

We are delighted to welcome **Ms. Gargi Sharma** and **Mr. Sriram Iyer** to our Advisory Board.

Ms. Gargi is a distinguished design entrepreneur and brand strategist with 35+ years of leadership across design, corporate, and social sectors. Her expertise brings a valuable lens to how we shape our own brand and communication. Mr. Sriram is a senior finance leader with global stints at Accenture, Cisco, and Symantec, with a rare creative dimension as a published author and produced playwright. His financial acumen will strengthen our organizational planning and governance. Along with our current existing members, we feel, we are represented with a good enthusiastic and passionate team to take us forward in our next phase. We look forward to their guidance and support as we continue to grow our impact.



More people found us this year

This year, we took our message further. We created **two short films**, one bringing to life the story of **Who We Are** and what we stand for, and another shining a light on **Listening Post**, our emotional distress support programme. Both are available on YouTube, giving a window into the work we do and for whom it is meant.

We also ran an awareness campaign on radio across six cities in India with support from **TFCI – Tourism Finance Corporation of India**, a Delhi-based organization. This year was a special focus on student distress. It sparked conversations about mental health during commutes, at home, and in quiet moments of the day.

Radio helped us reach people in familiar, everyday spaces with a simple message: **You Are Not Alone**, and help is available. We received a wonderful response - two out of every three people who contacted the Listening Post helpline this year were reaching out for the very first time.

“Choose Life” – an appeal for funds to create a suicide awareness film.



Many of us probably know a family suffering the pain of a member's suicide. It is devastating, and more common than we speak about. This year, we launched the **“Choose Life”** fundraiser to create a film on mental health awareness and suicide prevention for young people. September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and we started the appeal in September 2025.

The film is meant to open conversations and build understanding among students, parents

and teachers. The goal is simple: help young people know they are not alone, sense it when someone needs support, and *Choose Life*.

The response to the fundraiser was heartwarming. We raised enough to begin. We will keep you posted on this as we go along. It's our definite agenda for the next two years.

Our Swedish Visitors

For over five years now, we have welcomed social work students from Sweden as part of a cultural exchange with the **Sweden India Project**. This year, two batches came to spend time with us, learn about our work and share their own.

These visits prove productive for the visiting students as well as us. The students get a first-hand look at how emotional distress support works in an Indian context, the social fabric, the cultural nuances and the unique challenges people face. They observe conversations, ask questions, and openly engage with our volunteers and team.

On the other hand, their perspectives, shaped by very different social and cultural contexts, push us to reflect on our own work. The conversations are free-flowing, honest and often surprising. Over five years, these visits have grown into a meaningful bridge between social work practices across cultures. It also reminds us that the human need for connection, support and to be heard is truly universal.



Programme Updates

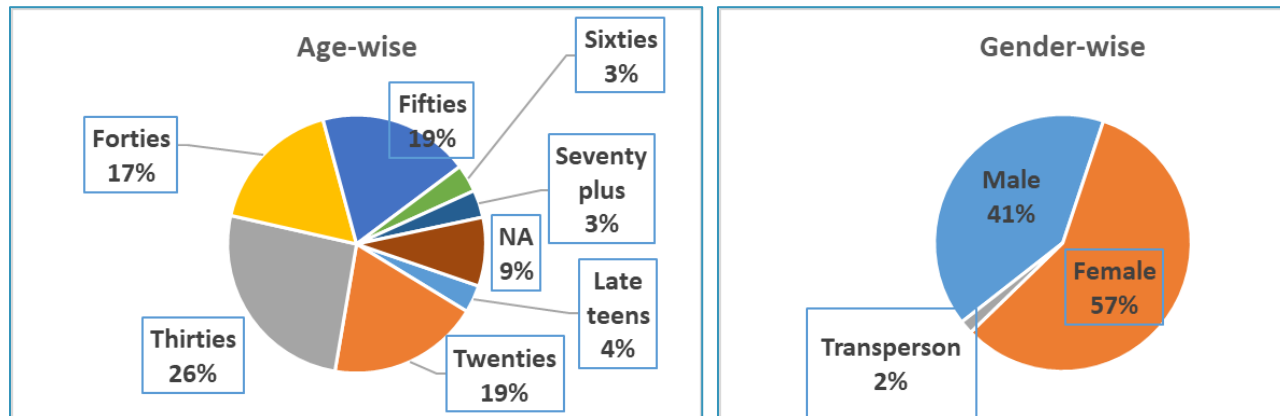
Listening Post

Listening Post is the free emotional support programme offered by SHB Social Foundation for anyone seeking help. It has been operational since 2014 and offers a calm, safe space to share, think out loud, and slowly find clarity through the emotional fog. It is entirely volunteer-run so far. Every volunteer is trained in-house to hold a non-judgmental space where callers and walk-in visitors can speak freely without fear of judgement.

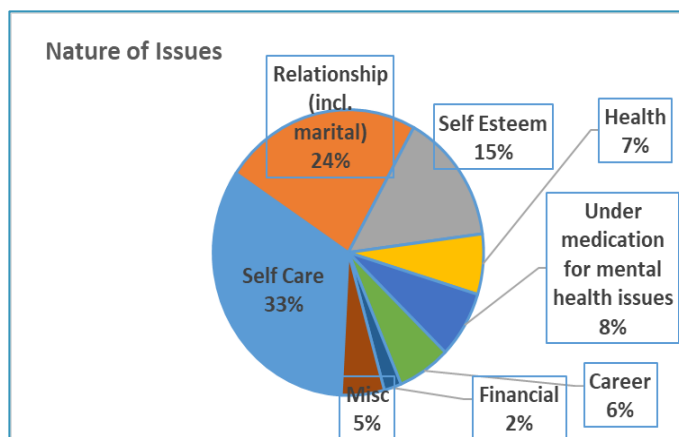
Over the years, we have seen what consistent support can do. We have seen many people who regularly reach out to Listening Post move towards a more settled place. All it took was a few patient hearings.

Between April 2025 and March 2026, we had **754** calls and walk-in conversations with different individuals from various parts of the country. While most calls and walk-ins were from Maharashtra, calls also came from Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu.

Some demographics:



More than half of those who reached out were between their twenties and forties. This is an age of enormous pressure: completing education, building careers, navigating new relationships, raising families, all in an environment of growing competition and shrinking support systems. There is a lot to carry and fewer people to carry it with.



Across 754 conversations this year, people came to us with things they could not easily share elsewhere. A struggling relationship, career worries, questions about their own sense of self and the quiet ache of loneliness.

People also reached out about health and financial pressures. The range tells us that the struggles of daily life are varied, deeply personal and rarely spoken about enough.

Anxiety and loneliness were the feelings people most commonly came to us with. Hurt, fear and a sense of being overwhelmed were close behind. They are signals that people need a space to breathe, to be heard and to think clearly.

Senior Wellness

We launched our **Senior Wellness** programme in 2022 to address this gap. The UN has declared this *The Decade of Healthy Ageing*. The timing feels just right.

This year, we conducted cognitive screening and assessment of 30 seniors in collaboration with a digital health company using their digital platform designed to provide insights into cognitive health.

We are also currently rebuilding the programme to include activities for seniors in a fun caring way. The need to feel joy and connection is universal. We hope to make it more structured and better equipped to serve a growing need. We would love to share more soon.



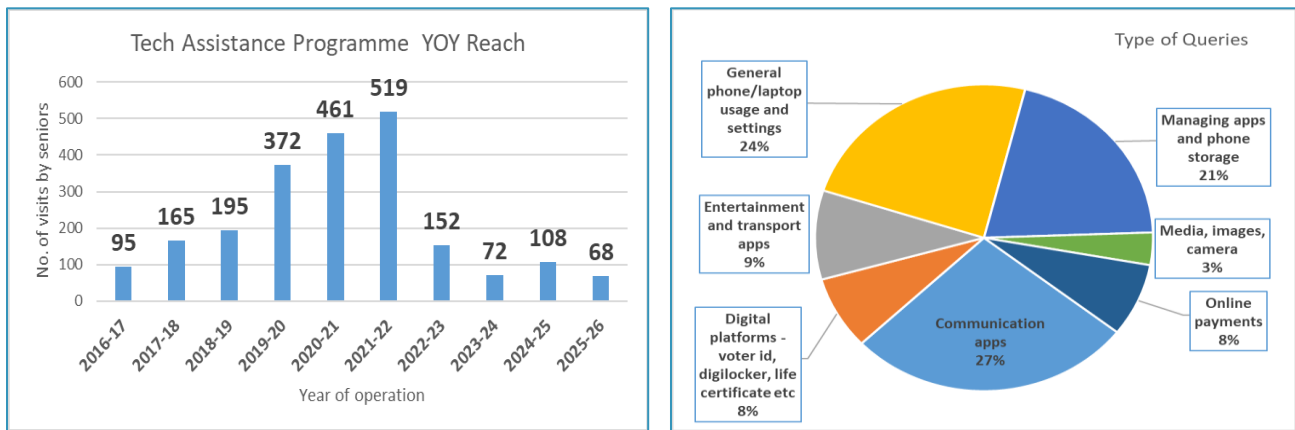
Technology Assistance for Seniors

This year, our Tech Assistance Programme for seniors turned 10. What began as a simple idea, a space where seniors could get help with everyday technology, has grown into something bigger. It's a community. A routine. A reason to look forward to the week.



Every session is unhurried and welcoming. No question is too small and no one is made to feel they are falling behind. Seniors come with their smartphones, laptops and tablets. It's heartening to see them leave a little more confident than when they arrived.

In 2025-26, we conducted 23 sessions for seniors, helping them with their tech queries and introducing them to new apps and digital offerings. Staying in touch with family through messaging and communication apps is their most common need. They need assistance in managing phones, organising storage and navigating settings. They also come to us for help with government platforms like Digi Locker and life certificates and to understand online payments and food, entertainment and ride-hailing apps. The questions have grown more varied over the years, reflecting their curiosity, engagement and willingness to keep pace with the fast-moving digital world.



In 10 years, we have witnessed real change. Hesitation has now given way to confidence. Seniors who once struggled with the basics, now explore new things independently and with ease. In a time when families live apart and daily routines can feel emotionally unfulfilling, that sense of purpose matters deeply.

The programme also creates a genuine connection between generations. Our young tech-savvy volunteers bring knowledge and learn patience while the seniors approach them with curiosity and gain new perspectives, leaving both richer.

For some seniors, these sessions become a small first step towards Listening Post – our emotional distress support programme. Trust builds slowly, with familiar faces and easy conversations. We are there when they are ready to share something deeper.

The people behind the work!!!

Everything we do is powered by people who show up consistently. Our volunteers are the heart of this organisation. Every activity, every programme is made possible by these individuals who generously give their time, skills and care.

This year, 24 volunteers contributed over 4,000 hours across our programmes and behind the scenes. They trained, they listened, they supported and kept things running. Many of our volunteers have been with us since inception. Some have completed almost 10 years and some have recently started their journey with us. All of them bring something valuable to the organisation.



Volunteer hours					
Year	Listening Post	Tech Assistance/ Reaching out to Seniors	Awareness Sessions/Training	Other Programmes & Admin	Total
2025-26	3119	185	556	354	4214
2024-25	2906	827	-	234	3967
2023-24	2753	128	330	745	3956
2022-23	2090	155	520	600	3365
2021-22	1494	266	30	NA [#]	1790
Total	12362	1561	1436	1933	17292

An important part of building this community is our in-house training programme for **Supportive Listening Skills**, now in its fifth year. The training prepares volunteers to manage the Listening Post helpline as compassionate, active listeners. It covers community context, intersectionalities, mindfulness, and the art of truly listening to someone. Our faculty are people who are deeply committed to the cause. Our volunteers come from all walks of life, with a willingness to listen without judgement and a commitment to showing up for others.

We are deeply grateful. This work would not exist without them.



Looking ahead

Twelve years on, the need for emotional support is greater than ever. More people are reaching out. More spaces are demanding our presence. And we are ready to grow.

We want to extend our helpline hours and take Listening Post to campuses, hospitals, community organisations, and beyond. Our Senior Wellness Programme will grow with more activities and

awareness sessions. And the 'Choose Life' film on suicide prevention awareness for young people is on its way.

None of this is possible without community. Our work has always been built on the generosity of people who believe in it -- volunteers who give their time, donors who contribute consistently and partners who open doors. To sustain what we have built and scale what we dream of, we need this support to grow with us.

And going forward, we are now of the strong belief that Listening Post is a need whose time has come. We are convinced that such a safe space needs to exist to help create conversations on fissures of society. We need to live in an inclusive and compassionate world, our children more so. Listening Post is bound to grow and we are building the momentum. We want to see a physical Listening Post, wherever possible in the Country and ensure that the helpline is available for longer hours for those who want to reach for it. We are now ambitious for the cause and believe that we can do it with your support. If any of you need a Listening Post in your organisation or educational campus, do get in touch, we are happy to set up one. Let's not sit and watch our youth struggle. We need action and we are ready. With your support, we will grow our services to reach every struggling person. Keep the donations coming. We need them to sustain our work. See how far your support has got us!

Thank you for believing in us!

Saathi Haath Badhana!




GET IN TOUCH

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