# ANNUAL REPORT

-



## Ideal Hope for Radiant Night 2015: Celebrating All Abilities

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March 14, 2015

## Greetings from the Prime Minister

*I am delighted to extend my warmest greetings to everyone attending Radiant Night 2015, hosted by the South Asian Autism Awareness Centre (SAAAC).* 

Autism affects thousands of Canadian families. Since 2008, the SAAAC has raised awareness and provided support to South Asian families impacted by autism and related developmental disorders. I commend the SAAAC for rallying the community together in support of this noble cause. This highly-anticipated gala is a testament to the fellowship and goodwill of Canada's South Asian community.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I commend all the staff and volunteers associated with SAAAC for their laudable work. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable evening and every success in meeting your fundraising goals.

Sincerely,

*The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P. Prime Minister of Canada* 



## **A NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Yes, there were many new challenges in 2014, but one thing has remained constant since the inception of SAAAC, and that is the overwhelming community support we receive.

Thank you all for your continued support of this organization over the past six years. As a community you have given so much to help us keep moving forward into 2015. You have volunteered your time, attended our events and consistently chosen SAAAC to be an organization you support. Today we are continuing to serve over 120 children, youth, and families impacted by autism while working to reduce autism stigma in the South Asian community. None of this would be possible without your support.

This past year SAAAC has placed a special focus on empowerment throughout all of our programs and services. We have established job skills training programs for adults--empowering young adults to work and connect with their communities. Companies such as Cineplex Entertainment, Law Office of Meleni David, and InForce Life Financial Services have provided valuable opportunities to help SAAAC students gain real world work experience.

We have reiterated the value of parents as the key to a child's progress through our parent training workshops. Covering topics from communication to behavior management, SAAAC continues to provide the tools that parents need to be their child's best resource.

This year we have launched Project InForm as a springboard for bringing autism awareness to a very broad audience. This initiative seeks to help South Asian communities across the globe engage in dialogue around issues surrounding autism in order to reduce stigma and encourage early intervention. By empowering communities with information, we hope to foster inclusivity and acceptance of individuals with autism and related disorders. SAAAC is doing vital, life changing work in the community it serves. Empowering individuals, parents and communities is giving us the opportunity to make this work go the extra mile and have a lasting impact. Yet, every small victory that SAAAC has is rooted in the generosity of the people who support it. It is the volunteers who go above and beyond in their contributions and the donors who selflessly give that allow us to continue the work we started six years ago. Thank you to everyone for your time, your contribution and your well-wishes. We humbly look forward to your continued support in the coming year.



President , Mr. Krish Thurairajah Vice President , Dr. Shivajan Sivapalan Secretary, Ms. Meleni David Treasurer, Mr. Suresh Tharmaratnam Director, Dr. Lindy Zaretsky Director, Mr. Emil Alphonsus Director, Dr. Jonathan Bertram Director, Mr. Logan Kanapthi Director, Mr. Tony Balasingham Founder & Executive Director, Ms. Geetha Moorthy Advisory Board, Mr. Blayne Lastman Advisory Board, Ms. Karen Mortfield

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## **2014 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW**

In our ongoing efforts to maintain accountability and transparency our annual reports are made available every fiscal year, including our audited financial statements. Figures can also be found on Canada Revenue Agency charitable organization's website . The trust you

place in us is incredibly important, and we want to reassure that your contributions are essential in fulfilling our shared mission of serving individuals and families living with autism.



## *Total Income: \$317,790*

## Sources of Expenses



## *Total Expenses:* **\$443, 405**

\*All figures are compiled from our fiscal period April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014

\*\*All figures consolidated for SAAAC is audited by Alphonsus & Associates Chartered Licensed Public Accountants in Canada.

\*\*\*SAAAC operated in a deficit for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014 as a result of an expansion of staff and an increase in programming opportunities provided. SAAAC was able offset the deficit using the surplus from 2013.

## Statement of Financial Position as at March 31, 2014

ASSETS	
Current Assets	\$154,611
Capital Assets	\$9,370
Total Assets	\$163,981
LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	\$24,320
Balance from previous year	\$139,661
Total Liabilities	\$163,981

## Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets as of March 31, 2014

REVENUES	\$317,805
EXPENDITURES	
Program & Therapy Salaries	\$280,280
Event Expenses	\$72,701
Rent/ Utilities	\$47,304
Management & Administration	\$43,220
Total Expenditures	\$443,505
Excess of Revenues over expenditures	(\$125,700)
Balance, Beginning of Year	\$265,361
BALANCE, END OF YEAR	\$139,661

# T.E.A.M. PROGRAM

Teaching to Employ Adolescent Minds

It's easy to forget that kids with autism will one day become adults with autism. There are many different services for kids and youth with the disorder, but once a young person leaves high school all those avenues of support dry up. Suddenly, a lifetime of support is gone and all the milestones achieved are squandered. If appropriate services are not found, we will see young adults become inactive and isolated from community life. This can lead to a host of tragic consequences from increased rates of depression and aggression to severely strained family dynamics.

Autism is a lifelong disorder and therefore needs a lifetime treatment plan. Building essential life skills, community integration and employment should all be part of a plan that supports development into adulthood.

TEAM is an effort to provide training and job skills coaching for young adults; the program allows them to build their employment profile and find a job placement. By training and providing job coaching support for these individuals, TEAM programming can give our students an opportunity to build full and productive lives for themselves.

In 2014, SAAAC began a 24 week program that looked to provide employment assistance to 12 young adults living with autism. The program was powered by a \$42,000 grant from the Opportunities Fund Enhanced Employment Assistance Services funded by the federal government.

The program enabled us to find employment for six students at various organizations. Special thanks goes out to the Law Office of Meleni David, Inforce Life Financial Services, Cineplex Entertainment, and SPSYN who gave our students opportunities to exercise their skills and reach their potential.



## **CALLING LOCAL BUSINESSES!**

We request local businesses and corporations who are interested in creating a more inclusive, open and accommodating workplace to contact us for available work placements with your organization. We want to stress that our students are not looking for charity, but rather an opportunity to prove that they can be productive and contribute to society.



### **BRIAN - PHILOSOPHER**

18 Years Old, Enthusiastic, Passionate, Knowledgeable



**MAATHUMAI – ARTIST** 19 Years Old, Neat, Accurate, Detail Oriented



**ADHAVAN – GREETER** 18 Years Old, Helpful, Charismatic, Productive



JANANI – ADMIN ASSISTANT 21 Years Old, Tech-Savvy, Multi-Talented, Instinctive



VINEETH – DATA ENTRY CLERK 18 Years Old, Upbeat, Decisive, Quick



**JEBIKKA – SINGER** 18 Years Old, Delicate, Consistent



VIDHUSAN – BOX OFFICE HELPER 18 Years Old, Social, Caring,



**AKILAN – CHEF** 20 Years Old, Friendly, Hardworking, Perfectionist



**JONATHON – PAINTER** 19 Years Old, Creative, Skillful

People-Person



**THANUJA – FLORIST** 17 Years Old, Punctual, Efficient, Dedicated



**ABIRAMI – SALESPERSON** 19 Years Old, Persistent, Expressive, Lively

## PROJECT INFORM

A series of autism awareness campaigns for newcomers and recent immigrants.

ne of the most frequent questions SAAAC receives from the public is why do we have a special focus on South Asian families. There are diverse families and communities that live with autism, so why target South Asians in particular? To answer these questions we must understand that cultural beliefs and traditions play huge roles when families are seeking help and making important decisions for their child. From our six years of experience in the community, we have seen how certain cultural barriers have impacted how families understand autism and how they access services. Recent research shows that challenges are heightened for recent immigrants because of the psychological, social, cultural, language and economical barriers that they face. Challenges faced by this vulnerable group can reduce parents' ability to aid their child's development. In particular, stigmas associated with special needs in various South Asian cultures encourages isolation and silence, and it prevents families from getting help sooner.

In an effort to address these needs, SAAAC, in partnership with Ninety9Thirty Creative Consulting and Tamil Health Association has launched Project InForm, a series of autism awareness campaigns for newcomers and recent immigrants.

Led by Creative Director, Ajayen Paramalingam, and Lead Research Coordinator, Priya Nadarajan, Project InForm will promote

A) general understanding of autism and B) promote early screening for autism amongst South Asian communities. These goals will be achieved in several parallel and successive phases by focusing on destigmatizing disability and educating the general public about early screening and diagnosis.

The following objectives will direct the development and implementation of appropriate strategies to achieve our goals in the coming year: 1) Identify barriers and/or gaps in current practice in autism screening and diagnosis in the South Asian community

2) Promote use of accessible and appropriate screening tool(s) for autism in the South Asian community

3) Develop accessible educational tools for the South Asian community with low health literacy

We hope Project InForm will provide new comers and recent immigrants with vital resources about autism in simple to understand and easily accessible formats. Ultimately, we hope this initiative will ensure immigrant groups such as South Asians are not marginalized when it comes to accessing autism information because the cost of such neglect will be one that is too high.

## How are we taking on this ambitious project? With your help!

Funding for Project InForm is made possible by fundraisers organized by Ninety9Thirty and DBA Photography. Last year they developed Headshot Charity Events - a social entrepreneurial venture providing professionals, company teams, entrepreneurs and students the opportunity to have professional head-shots taken for their online profiles, such as LinkedIn. Many supporters came out to the event and raised \$1,000 for Project InForm. The funding helped create a series of posters that illustrated some general symptoms of autism using culturally relatable characters and language.

## **OUR LATEST WORK**

Communication Challenges உரையாடலில் சந்திக்கும் சவால்கள்



Repetitive Behaviours and Narrow Interests ஒரு சில விஷயங்களில் மட்டும் ஈடுபாடு, செய்ததை மீண்டும் மீண்டும் செய்யும் குணநலம்



Difficulty with Social Interaction மற்றவர்களுடன் பழகுவதில் சிரமம்



Latest funding helped create a series of posters that illustrated some general symptoms of autism using culturally relatable characters and language. The goal is to raise enough funds to complete a series of up to 15 images. If you are interested in learning more about how you or your business can get involved to support Project InForm please email us at **projectinform@saaac.org** 

## SAFE PROGRAM

SAFE Program helps families integrate into the larger mental health and child development sector through the following ways:

 Help families understand what treatments, interventions, and programs are offered by various service agencies

 Articulate the nature, goals, and expected results of various treatments, interventions, and programs offered to individuals with autism

- Ensure that families have applied to all applicable funding opportunities
- Help clarify questions posed by government documentation and/or grant applications in order to facilitate understanding and engagement with documentation
  - Create support plans for each family that efficiently address each family's need
    - Facilitate family support group discussions
- Facilitate workshops that focus on various aspects of autism management

## **PARENTS KNOW BEST** GIVING PARENTS THE TOOLS TO SUPPORT THEIR LOVED ONES

This year, SAAAC was able to strengthen its social service support for families with increased parent/caregiver training, support group discussions, and funding application support. Parents were able to learn and participate in a combined 30 hours of training that included Introduction to ABA principles; Speech-Language Empowerment; Food & Nutrition -amongst others. Led by dedicated volunteers Tharini Tharmalingam and Kavita Bala, SAAAC also held monthly support group discussions where parents and caregivers were able to discuss their personal experiences with autism. Support groups present opportunities for parents and caregivers to create strong bonds between one another. These discussions encourage a greater sense of community and reinforce the fact that our families are not alone in their journey. One of the challenges many families face before arriving at SAAAC is in understanding how to complete various applications: from education and medical documents to funding forms. In 2014-2015, SAAAC's case manager, along with volunteers in the field of social work, were able to help families secure \$30,000 in funding. Families can use this funding to get much needed services for their loved ones in their communities.

As we move forward, SAAAC looks to create a more comprehensive service coordination plan for families. We want to help families develop overall treatment plans, manage multiple services, link formal and informal supports, and generally help them navigate the developmental health system in an effective, strategic way.



## MICRO-BUSINESS PROGRAM

Investing for Success, Creating a Micro-Business Run and Operated by SAAAC Students

Earlier this year, in the process of helping young adults find work with community businesses, it dawned on SAAAC staff and volunteers that we could create our own business and employ SAAAC students. It was an ambitious venture that looked to include SAAAC students in all parts of the business process: from product creation to packaging to taking inventory to marketing & selling.

For years, SAAAC students created custom jewellery, greeting cards, and mugs in our arts program, so naturally these were the first products we wanted to sell to the public. Four students were selected for the pilot program and were given a special project – to design and package festive gift baskets for the holiday season.

Proceeds from purchases went to paying the wages of students involved in the project. Students were taught to work in teams, exercise their creative skills, and follow instructions. Ultimately, we sold 100 gift baskets and raised \$2000. Each student received \$350 for their participation in the month long initiative.

Building on this work, SAAAC in collaboration with Enactus UTSC (University of Toronto –Scarborough Campus), will expand our initiative with the goal of creating a more viable and sustainable business model for our participants. The larger goals of this initiative are to produce and sell customized goods under the brand "You Auta to Know". Five or six students will be hired as contractors under SAAAC to operate and promote "You Auta to Know" products as a micro-business. We hope this venture will not only raise awareness of autism in the community, but also opportunities for more meaningful employment and independence for young adults with autism.







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## VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

101 active volunteers; 10,000 hours volunteered; 100 hours of training provided

Volunteers are SAAAC's greatest resource. Since 2008, incredible individuals have donated their time, energy, and talents to help families impacted by autism. This year we saw an active volunteer base of 101 volunteers who performed 10,000 hours of service. These generous community members worked in various capacities to support SAAAC services and families. Whether it was working one on one with children and young adults; organizing fundraising

efforts; or helping clean up our centre, volunteers have played a huge role in SAAAC's becoming a valuable community resource. Our services are not possible without all these great people! SAAAC looks to continue its strong tradition in the coming year by providing quality volunteer experiences that inspire, teach, and create strong bonds with the community.





## Volunteer Testimonials

"Becoming a #saaacvolunteer has been a great decision. It's helped me learn more about Autism & directly give back to our SouthAsian community "

EXSO Photography - @xonive\_

" Creating & being part of a community, learning about #Autism & helping w/ destigmatization are few reasons why Im a #saaacvolunteer

> @thesaaac " Sahana Jeyakumar - @sahanaj

" Volunteering @thesaaac made me realize how closely knit we can be as a community. #saaacvolunteer " Achu Sri - @achu\_blah

"Witnessing individuals with autism light up like a billion fireflies after successfully completing a task #saaacvolunteer @thesaaac " Nishantha - @DefinitelyNisha

"While volunteering @thesaaac, the children were my teachers. I learned so much from them; about life, love, and community #saaacvolunteer " Nadeesh - @NadeeshMusic

" Volunteering with @thesaaac allowed me to give back to my community by helping families learn more about autism. #saaacvolunteer " Ajayen P - @ajayen

" Volunteering @thesaaac opened up my eyes to the many talents kids with autism behold. #saaacvolunteer" DhivSasi - @dhivsasi

" Volunteering @thesaaac made me more empathetic to families of autism & allows me to make a difference in my community #saaacvolunteer"

Gowtham - @GowthamR05



## **DR. STEPHEN SCHERER** RECIPIENT OF THE EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AWARD

Dr. Stephen Scherer is a globally-renowned scientist who leads the Centre for Applied Genomics at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, the first of its kind in Canada. Considered one of the world's leading experts in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) research and genetics, Dr. Scherer is a distinguished Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Royal Society of Canada. He has won numerous honors and in 2014, he became one of two living Canadians to be selected to the Thomson Reuters 'Citation Laureate' list for contributions to the field of Physiology or Medicine. Dr. Scherer is widely recognized for his work on the genetic causes of ASD, and his findings are expected to accelerate autism testing and development of more effective treatments.

As a Canadian-grown scientist, well rooted in the Toronto community, SAAAC is both proud and grateful for his efforts and ongoing dedication towards the autism community.

### Why the Excellence in Research Award?

This award is envisioned to celebrate the accomplishments of researchers and to further encourage discovery and insight into the complexity of ASD.

The impetus for this award stems from the vital role research plays within the autism community, which often goes unrecognized. Yet, we owe our burgeoning understanding of the disorder to the recent findings in autism research. In the last decade we have been able to identify children at a younger age, provide more effective therapies sooner, and develop more targeted medications.

### Research Strengthens Our Community

Within our community, the discoveries of research have allowed us to move away from the erroneous blame we placed on mothers and fathers of children born with ASD. It has clarified our understanding of the obstacles involved in raising children with ASD and most importantly, it has helped us realize the importance of community support for these families. Such progress would be impossible without the ongoing discoveries generated by research within the autism field.

"Dr. Scherer's work gives our families the evidence to stop blaming themselves. And removing detrimental psychological constructs like guilt can be valuable to the treatment process." says Geetha Moorthy, Executive Director and Founder of SAAAC. "This award is to both celebrate Dr. Scherer's incredible body of work and to raise awareness of the complexities of ASD in the South Asian community."



## SAAACTIVE A HEALTHY OUTSIDE STARTS FROM THE INSIDE

Earlier this year, our long time community partners at Sequence Media expanded their services to include Event Management. Given the organization's continued commitment to help individuals and families impacted by autism, Sequence Media launched saaACTIVE – a series of sports fundraising events that not only helps raise autism awareness, but also creates a more active community.

Sequence Media's Creative Marketing & Events Coordinator, Kavitha Aryharan, wanted a change of pace from the traditional fundraisers she had been attending. "Most of the community events I attended required us to sit down, eat and drink…which is great, but I really wanted a change. One of the main goals of saaACTIVE is to create change through physical activity, and of course, a little bit of healthy competition. It encourages community members to get excited and get moving for a cause."

All proceeds from saaACTIVE events will go towards programming and projects that create a more active and healthy lifestyle for the children and young adults at SAAAC. The following are some of the initiatives saaACTIVE events will help fund: -sports and play workshops for students and young adults

-fitness room at SAAAC Centre

-fun and active workshops for SAAAC parents (parent ZUMBA, yoga, etc.)

saaACTIVE plans to organize events throughout the year, focusing on different sports to get members of the community (all ages and skill levels) to come out and participate. And the initiative is off to a great start! saaACTIVE has already organized volleyball and basketball tournaments: Spike-4-SAAAC (held in October 2014) and Slam Dunk-4-SAAAC (held in January 2015). Combined, the events have raised \$2200 for autism- related programming.

We are incredibly lucky to have great partners like Sequence Media. Through the saaACTIVE initiative, we hope to create fundraisers that are unique and fun, and help raise much needed awareness and resources for autism programs and services.

## **THANK YOU** THESE GREAT INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES MADE RADIANT NIGHT 2015 POSSIBLE.

Without Radiant Night, the majority of SAAAC's programs and services would not be possible. The families, volunteers, and staff at SAAAC are extremely grateful for these generous contributions. We thank you for making our work possible.

### EVENT SPONSOR - \$12,000

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- CI Investments

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- Allstate Suren Navaratnarajah
- OHM Wedding

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- Ink N Stationary Supplies
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- The CableShoppe Inc.

 New Jaasmin Banquet Hall and Convention Centre

#### TABLE SPONSORS - \$1,000

- RBC Royal Bank
- Dushahi Sribavan Law Prof. Corp.

### DONATIONS TO RADIANT

#### NIGHT - UP TO \$999

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- Sheeran Athithan
- Eric Alexander
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- Tom's Place
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- Bala Immanuel
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- 1693596 Ont
- R.Patricia
- CIBC
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#### \$1000-\$1999(

- Karu Chinniah
- Haran Moorthy
- Yarlmetal Fabrications Inc.
- Emil Alphonsus
- Cambridge Group of Clubs

#### \$2000-\$2999(

- Dr. Seyan
- Blayne Lastman

#### \$3000-\$3999(

Inforce Life Financial Services

#### \$5000(

- Dr. Shivajan Sivapalan
- Office Exec

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#### FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

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- Devaki Muneeswararajah
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- Kanga Kangathran
- Mani Maren
- Mathi
- Ravimohan Somasundaram
- Ramaan Kangatharan
- Ronnie Solomons
- Subashini Nagulananthan
- Cherubim Gunaratnam

#### **MEDIA / DESIGN**

- SPSYN
- Pearl Media
- Sequence Media
- Ninety9Thirty Creative Consulting
- Photography by Kashfia Alam
- Tamil Culture Online Tamil Lifestyle
   Magazine
- Ninaivukal Moments of Events
- Canada Uthayan
- Asian Television Network (ATN)
- Canadian Multicultural Radio (CMR)
- Kathir Oli Media Inc
- Global News
- CBC Metro Morning
- Masalamommas Online Magazine
- Biztha
- eKuruvi
- Tamils' Guide Canada Tamils' Business
  Directory

#### **GRANT PARTNERS**

- Unity For Autism
- Autism Speaks Canada
- Employment and Social Development Canada
- Human Resources and Social
   Development Canada

#### SCHOOLS/ ORGANIZATIONS

- Sathangai Narthanalaya Students
   Association MAGICAL: The Tales
   of Disney Princesses
- Abinalaya Dance Group AYAA
- Silver Bells Team & Sponsors
- UTSG TSA | Tamil Students'
   Association
- Tamil Christian Church of Canada
- Bristo on Avenue Golf Classic Charity (Cindy Stern & Louis Nemes)
- Rotasa Catering
- DJ Enigma
- Tamil Health Association
- Canada Kanthaswamy Temple
- Sri Chandramouleeswara Shivaalayam
  Temple
- Waves of Colour Art Studio

#### **SUPPORTERS**

- Vijay Sapani
- Kishan Nitty (ARYA Canada Inc )
- Ragavan Paranchothy
- Kumaran Nadesan
- Manik Gunatilleke
- Allan Thurairajah
- Shamini Sivathasan
  - Siva Mathiabaranam

- Councillor Glenn De Baeremaeker
- Samy Ramachandran

#### **EMPLOYMENT PARTNERS**

- Cineplex Entertainment Ben Jeyanathan
- The Law Office of Meleni David
- Inforce Life Financial Services
- SPSYN

#### **GYM RENOVATION TEAM**

- Shankar Yogarajah
- Raveendran Arulampalam
- Thamilmaaran Ponnampalam
- Parents of SAAAC

#### ALL PARENTS OF SAAAC

## THANK YOU!

# "DIFFERENT, NOT LESS"

- Temple Grandin

**Ninety9Thirty Creative Consulting** is proud to have taken part in the design and creation of SAAAC's 2014 Annual Report. We are privileged to show how community support and passion has translated into valuable programs and services for countless families.

On behalf of all our clients, Ninety9Thirty is happy to have donated our expertise and services towards the creation of this annual report.

Best,

AJayen P Founder / ninety9thirty.com



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## CONTACT US

1-1970 Ellesmere Road, Toronto, ON, Canada M1H2W1 416.824.8847 | info@saaac.org



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2014**

Photography Credits: Sequence Media Group, Photography by Kashfia Alam, EXSO Photography Writer Credits: Rohan George, Priya Nadarajan, Anji Varatharajah, Kingston Yogendran Designer Credits: Ajayen Paramalingam (Ninety9Thirty Creative Consulting)

