



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

At Bahaal Foundation, we believe that everyone deserves the opportunity to live with dignity, mobility, and hope no matter the challenges they face.

Bahaal Foundation was born from a deep desire to create space for people with spinal cord injuries to reclaim their lives with freedom, dignity, and hope. Over the past few months, that vision has started taking shape in powerful ways.

Over the past months, our team has been working on the ground, listening to lived experiences, and building solutions rooted in care, inclusion, and innovation. From peer support to mobility training and awareness campaigns, every initiative has been a step toward changing the way rehabilitation is approached in India.

The road ahead will have its challenges, but with a committed community, strong values, and a shared vision, we're confident that Bahaal will continue to grow as a space of healing, empowerment, and resilience.



We're thrilled to share this milestone with you! 🌱

Our initiative, Spine in Motion, a flagship project of Bahaal Foundation, has been selected for a seed grant from The Pollination Project, a global foundation that supports grassroots changemakers working to uplift communities and create a more compassionate world.

This grant will enable us to expand our efforts in wheelchair mobility training for individuals with spinal cord injuries, helping them regain control, autonomy, and confidence in their daily lives. But this isn't just about physical movement; it's about restoring freedom, dignity, and hope.

We're incredibly grateful to kanthari, an institute that empowers social visionaries through leadership training. It was there that the seed of Spine in Motion began to take root, with the right skills, mindset, and mentorship needed to bring it to life.

A special thank you to Seva Dhama for being a vital partner in our pilot mobility training program in Karnataka. With their support, we were able to train 6 individuals in crucial mobility skills, transfers, propulsion, positioning, and outdoor navigation. But what they left with went far beyond skills: they rediscovered self-belief, strength, and a renewed sense of possibility.



From the Founder
Sijo Varghese

When we talk about spinal cord injury (SCI), the focus often starts and ends with physical rehabilitation. Wheelchairs, physiotherapy, and surgeries are crucial, of course. But what is often left unspoken is the invisible pain: the mental and emotional toll of living with a life-altering condition.

As someone who sustained a spinal cord injury at the age of nine, I have lived through both the visible and unseen battles. Grief, isolation, anxiety, shame, fear of becoming a burden, these feelings often take root long before the body starts healing. Yet, mental health support is rarely part of the care pathway.

At Bahaal, we believe that true rehabilitation must go beyond physical recovery. That is why we are working to build inclusive spaces where psychological healing is just as important as strengthening muscles. Where survivors can speak freely, seek support, and learn tools to rebuild not just their bodies, but their sense of self, purpose, and dignity.



During our recent visit to Akkara Foundation, we were deeply moved by their unwavering dedication to serving individuals affected by neurological and developmental disabilities, particularly those impacted by the Endosulfan tragedy in Kasaragod.

Founded in 2018, this organisation has grown exponentially, providing early intervention, therapy, psycho-social support, and community outreach to thousands.

Our experience at the Akkara Foundation left us inspired by their vision, humbled by their warmth, and motivated by their impact. We look forward to exploring collaborative initiatives that enrich both our missions and bring meaningful change to those we serve.

Our recent visit to Fireflies Community in Kasaragod, Kerala was both inspiring and deeply affirming. Rooted in empathy, creativity, and youth-led action, Fireflies is a vibrant organisation that creates safe and inclusive spaces for young people to express, connect, and grow. Through initiatives like Chimminikood, their community hub, they facilitate art, mental health awareness, life skills, and social campaigns that truly make a difference on the ground.

Their work strongly resonates with the values we uphold at Bahaal Foundation, particularly in areas of inclusion, resilience, community empowerment, and mental well-being.

This shared vision opens exciting possibilities for collaboration, where Bahaal's focus on spinal cord injury rehabilitation and accessibility can intersect meaningfully with Fireflies' strengths in community engagement, creative outreach, and youth development. We look forward to building bridges together for a more inclusive and compassionate future.





Inspiration on Wheels - Mr. Gokul Nair



Gokul Nair, a paraplegic with transverse myelitis, was born in Kerala and grew up in Nagpur, Maharashtra. In 2018, while pursuing his undergraduate studies, he contracted a stomach infection. During treatment, the infection spread to his spinal cord, damaging the nerve cells and leading to paralysis from the chest down.

During his stay in the ICU, a lack of awareness among hospital staff led to the development of a bedsore in the sacral region. After being moved to the general ward, the neurologist recommended physiotherapy. However, the physiotherapist only assisted with basic exercises and provided no guidance on long-term rehabilitation or recovery methods.

Upon discharge, Gokul returned home, where he became entirely dependent on his family for daily activities. For the past five years, his younger brother has been his primary caregiver, helping with bathing, wound care, and transferring him from bed to wheelchair and vice versa. Gokul was not given clear information from the hospital regarding the prognosis of his condition. Holding on to hope for a full recovery, he did not consider pursuing rehabilitation.

In 2021, Gokul secured a job with Amazon as a customer service associate. The role required him to sit for extended hours, up to nine per day, which resulted in another pressure sore, this time in the buttock region. Despite medical advice and undergoing plastic surgery, the wound did not heal and has continued to trouble him for over four years.

In December 2022, Gokul relocated to Kochi, Kerala, while continuing his work with Amazon. After a brief conversation with him, we recommended that he visit a rehabilitation centre in Edayaramula, Kerala.

In just a short span of time, Gokul has made remarkable progress. He can now independently transfer from his wheelchair to the bed and vice versa. He has also regained the ability to use the washroom and bathe without assistance. With regular wound dressing, his bedsores have shown significant improvement. Once his leave period ends, he plans to resume work from the centre itself, allowing him to continue his rehabilitation alongside his job.

The change in environment has had a positive impact on Gokul's emotional well-being, which in turn is contributing to his physical recovery. His journey reflects not only resilience but also the importance of access to proper rehabilitation and holistic care.



It was a privilege of meeting Dr. Mohammed Shanil, co-founder and managing trustee of EISAR Foundation Trust, along with his wife, a dedicated partner in the foundation's mission. Our conversation shed light on their extraordinary journey, values, and the transformative work they are leading under the EISAR banner.

As leaders, they blend visionary ambition with ground-level empathy, steering EISAR toward a future where inclusion is the norm, not the exception. Their leadership gives hope that change is both possible and already underway.



Spine in Motion: Upcoming Wheelchair Mobility Training in Kannur, Kerala.

In a significant step toward promoting mobility, independence, and inclusion for individuals with spinal cord injuries, Bahaal Foundation in association with the National Center for Assistive Health Technologies (NCAHT), IIT Madras, is set to conduct a 5-day intensive wheelchair mobility training at Karunya Charitable Trust for the Disabled, Kannur, Kerala, in August 2025. This initiative is proudly supported by The Pollination Project Grant.

The Spine in Motion program, known for its evidence-based and peer-led training approach, aims to equip wheelchair users with essential mobility skills that foster confidence and social participation. This upcoming session will mark a collaborative milestone, blending NCAHT–IIT Madras's technical expertise with Bahaal Foundation's grassroots experience and community trust.

The training will feature hands-on modules designed to enhance everyday mobility, including:

- Basic and advanced wheelchair handling
- Transfers and navigation over obstacles
- Safe outdoor and road mobility
- Peer mentorship and self-advocacy techniques

By offering a practical, intensive, and inclusive learning environment, the program will empower participants not just to move confidently in their wheelchairs but to reclaim autonomy in their personal and social lives. The choice of Karunya Charitable Trust as the host venue reflects a shared commitment to accessibility and inclusion in disability spaces. Bahaal Foundation, with its deep engagement in spinal cord injury rehabilitation, will play a crucial role in outreach, participant support, and follow-up, ensuring the impact of the program extends well beyond the five days of training.

The Pollination Project, known for funding grassroots changemakers, has enabled this initiative through its generous grant support, making it possible to offer this high-impact training free of cost to participants. As preparations move forward, the organisers are confident that this initiative will serve as a model for similar programs across the country, where assistive technology, peer support, and localised community care come together to create real change.





Upcoming Plans for Bahaal Foundation (Next Quarter)

- Pair newly injured individuals with trained peer mentors who have lived experience of spinal cord injury, to provide emotional support, guidance, and motivation during the early stages of rehabilitation.
- Train and support family members and caregivers through structured workshops on physical care techniques, mental health, and self-care.
- Organise a pilot program to conduct hands-on, inclusive, and skill-based sessions using tools like Canva and mobile apps to teach design thinking, storytelling, and content creation.
- Spread awareness in educational institutions through live workshops, media, social media, and community events.
- Launch a fundraising campaign to support infrastructure, medical equipment, and assistive devices.
- Set up a small team to track, analyse, and respond to disability-related policy changes in India, and publish simple briefs to keep the community informed and engaged.
- Conduct Spine in Motion wheelchair mobility training program in association with NCAHT-IIT Madras at Karunya Charitable Trust for the Disabled.
- Expand our team with staff, volunteers, and experts in rehabilitation, advocacy, and fundraising.
- Collect and publish inspiring real-life stories of SCI individuals reclaiming independence, in text and video formats, to foster hope and visibility.

Stay Connected & Support Our Mission

Your support plays a vital role in restoring freedom, dignity, and hope for individuals with spinal cord injuries. Join us in making a difference by visiting our website and following us on our social media pages. Stay updated on our initiatives, success stories, and upcoming events. Together, we can create a more inclusive and empowering future!



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Bahaal Foundation is now officially registered as a Section 8 not-for-profit organisation