



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF KERALA

Billionaire philanthropist and founder of Sobha Limited, PNC Menon has committed half of his wealth to charitable organisations, starting in his hometown of Kerala, India.



PNC Menon regularly visits the Sobha Academy.

Earlier this year, the Global Citizen team got a firsthand look at how Sobha Limited, led by billionaire philanthropist and founder PNC Menon, is taking philanthropy to new heights in his hometown of Kerala, India. In 2006, Sobha, under the aegis of its CSR arm, Sri Kurumba Educational & Charitable Trust, founded Graamasobha, ushering in holistic growth at the grass-roots level, focusing on education for girls, female empowerment, healthcare, environmental initiatives, and providing care for the elderly and needy. Through these initiatives, the Trust has transformed the lives of thousands of underprivileged citizens through its innovative growth model, which has a bottom-up approach towards poverty alleviation.

SOBHA ACADEMY

Established in 2007, Sobha Academy is a world-class CBSE English medium school which admits 90 eligible girls annually from disadvantaged communities each year. With classes from LKG through to level 12, the program aims to empower and enables youths to break away from the vicious circle of poverty, neglect, deprivation, and exclusion by providing them with an inclusive, high-quality education.

The school facilities are equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure, including immersive learning and play zones, international-standard sports facilities, sustainable vegetable garden, two libraries, and dedicated computer, math and science labs with real-world equipment and specimens. The spacious classrooms are filled with natural light to create a positive and airy atmosphere for an optimal learning environment. Children are also encouraged to explore their creativity through clay modelling, painting, and various other arts. Students are provided free academic support tools, such as books, stationery, school bags, transportation, uniforms and undergarments, as well as food, healthcare and hygiene essentials. Family counselling is also available to ensure the students are supported in their home and social environments.



From left to right Mr. Ravi Menon – Mr. Jagadish Nangineni – Mr. Tarek Al Kaaki Mr. PNC Menon – Mrs. Sobha Menon- Mrs. Andrea Antal – Mr. Moayad Alborno

SOBHA ICON

Sobha Icon is a full-time secondary programme with a focus on science and commerce. Icon's focus is on the empowerment of society via education, particularly for women at the lower strata, providing the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Students are given quality resources, facilities, and services, including food and hygiene kits. The holistic program works as a social catalyst, providing karate and yoga training, leisure and educational trips, and compulsory skill-based professional development training. Parent engagement is also at the forefront of student success, with mandatory monthly parent-teacher sessions to ensure communication and success of this social transformation through a systematic, sustained, and qualitative intervention.

Remarkably, as of March 2022, Sobha Icon graduates secured scholarships worth over INR135 million from major universities, such as Asoka University, Sonepat, Azim Premji University, Bangalore, and many more.

SOBHA HEALTHCARE

Established in 2007, Sobha Healthcare has redefined the limits of primary healthcare institutions anywhere in the country. Providing leading health services, the facility has a full-time general medicine doctor, a general physician, a dentist, and consultant ophthalmologist, as well as a fully qualified team of paramedical staff and healthcare workers.

The Centre provides free annual medical screenings and treatments for Sobha's project staff, migrant work workers, Sobha Academy and Icon students and their parents, Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust employees and family members, as well as beneficiary families within the local geographic area.

During the COVID pandemic, the Trust donated 50 beds to the Kizhakkencherry first line treatment centre, as well as providing PPE kits and N95 masks to the surrounding communities.

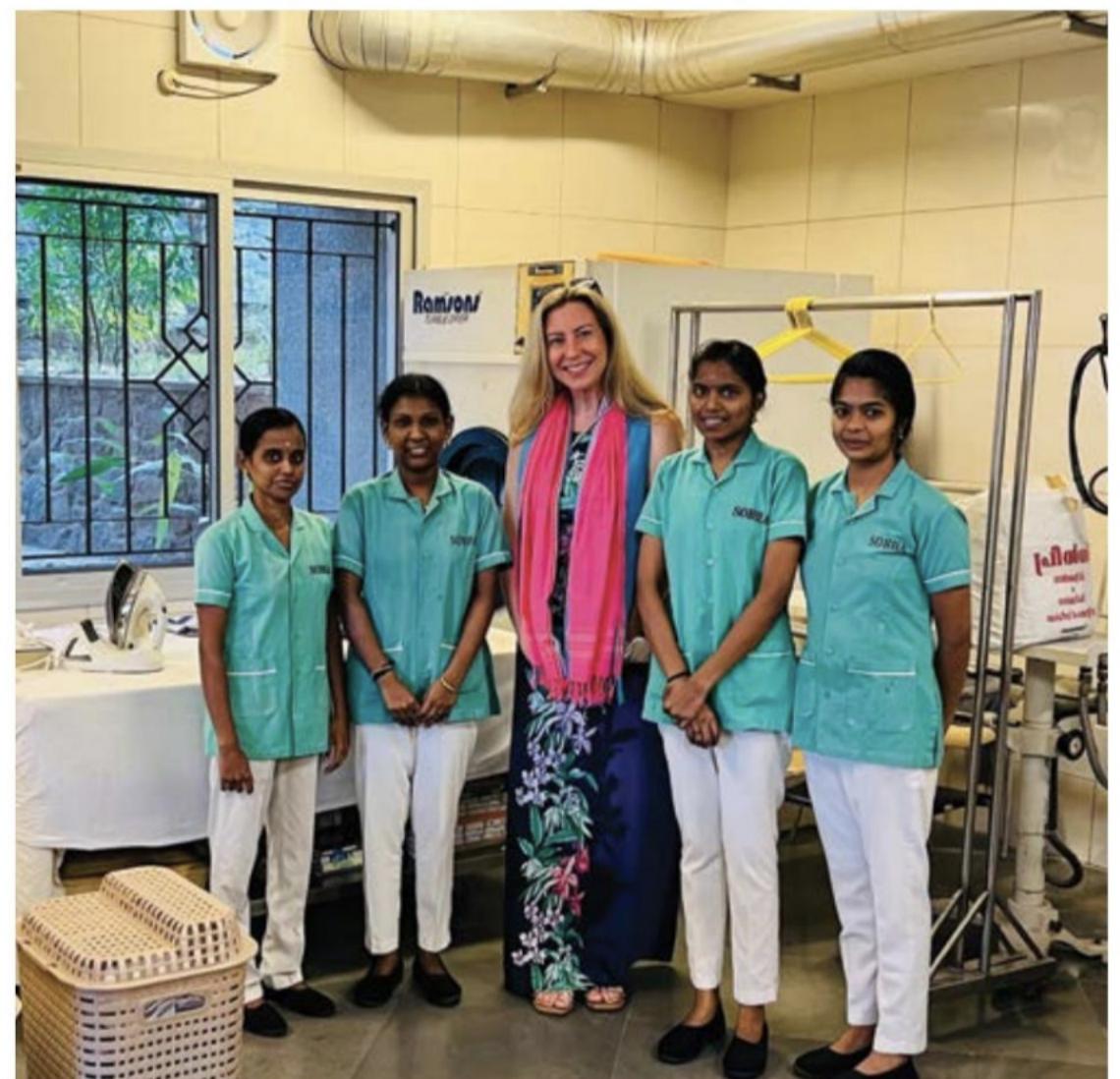


Image caption: Global Citizen's Andrea Antal with the staff at Sobha Hermitage.



PNC Menon and the students at Sobha Academy.

YOUNG MOTHER REHABILITATION PROGRAM

The Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust further dedicates its resources to helping young widows and their children live together in safe accommodations with an opportunity to further their education and seek employment.

At no cost, the women earn fair wages to help them build their own financial security while gaining useful skills through employment at the Sobha Academy, at which their children are also enrolled in school.

The women also receive counselling and support should they wish to remarry, complete with social rehabilitation. To date, the program has aided over 35 widowed mothers and 63 children, complete with basic monthly living allowances, clothing, medical support, and other personal accessories, and education.



From left to right Mr Tarek Al Kaaki Mr PNC Menon
Mrs Sobha Menon Mrs Andrea Antal Mr Moayad Alborno



SOCIAL WEDDING PROGRAM

One of the country's greatest societal barriers is the inability to provide marriages due to the rate of poverty.

Many parents fall into the debt-trap as they are forced to take on loans to pay for wedding dowrys that they cannot afford to repay.

The Trust has introduced a social wedding structure, conducting over 600 weddings to date, saving families from financial ruin, in order to help them begin their married life, along with marriage counselling both before and after marriage.

COMMUNITY CARE

Sobha is committed to the wider community, offering a variety of community feeding programs, and social activities at the dedicated Community Centre.

The Centre has also been utilised to act as a medical facility and base for flood victims while their homes were being constructed.





Global Citizen's Tarek Al Kaaki and Andrea Antal with students at Sobha Academy.



The communal gardens at Sobha Hermitage

GREEN INITIATIVES

As part of its diverse CSR initiatives, Sobha's green philosophy has been widely adopted across all of its efforts. Across several campuses, over 2,220 tree varieties have been planted, and all facility construction produce a minimal building footprint to maintain the natural foliage and environmental surroundings. Rainwater is conserved and utilised to cultivate the vegetable and herb gardens and paddy fields. A solar energy plant minimises electrical use, and drainage and waste management measures are in place for sanitation. 2022, an impressive two tons of paddy and 4.6 tons of organic fruits and vegetables were produced.

With many more projects underway, the Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust has gained international recognition for its wide-reaching impact on the local economy and social development in and around Kerala, sparking local changes within the standard school systems, healthcare facilities, and environmental awareness. As the Trust continues to expand and build upon their legacy, there are many new programs planned in the next few years, including the Sobha Digital Academy, a Social Development Centre, as well as ongoing upgrades to their existing facilities.

“Feed a man, clothe him, give him decent quarters to live, and you’ll find a man with self-respect, ready to contribute and become a productive human being.”

**PNC MENON
FOUNDER & CHAIRMAN
Sri Kurumba Educational and Charitable Trust**