

# **STORIES OF EMPOWERING CHILDREN THROUGH EDUCATION**



**Names and location of the children have been changed to ensure child safeguarding**

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# PREFACE

*“Education is the foundation for better future” ~ Elizabeth Warren*

Education enlightens the minds and gives a broader perspective to deal with any odd situation. It plays a vital role in empowering and builds resilience in overcoming obstacles. Childhood Enhancement through Training and Action (CHETNA) and Toybox Charity joined hands in 2019 to empower street-connected children through education. The pilot project Street to School was initiated in the North East district of Delhi to enroll 500 students in Government school and ensure their retention.

The purpose of the Street to School project was to make education accessible to the marginalized and destitute children. Over 500 children were benefitted through the intervention of the project. Children showed enthusiasm, passion, and great zeal towards studying and enhancing their knowledge. As the children were progressing, the world was hit by the most tragic pandemic of all time. The spread of the coronavirus outbreak devastated the mundane activities of the world. The most far-reaching impact was on the education sector. Due to the abrupt closure of schools and a huge transformation from classroom learning to remote learning left a void in the lives of street-connected children. Quality education and schools are the distant dreams of underprivileged children. Impose the nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the lethal coronavirus exasperated the problem.

This book is the representation of how street-connected children through their intellect, compassion, responsible and optimistic behavior successfully tackled the problems faced not only by their families but also by the community at large. This book contains twenty real-life stories of street-connected children who have set examples of bravery, honesty, uprightness, and positivity through their outrageous and commendable acts. These case studies reflect how children even in the toughest phase did not comprise their education and how they continued their learning's even with fewer resources. These children are the unsung warriors of the world.

## Conquering the world through bravery

Twelve-year-old Pinki resides in the slums of North East Delhi.. Her family comprises of 5 members including her parents, one elder brother, and one younger sister. As her father was born blind, he is unable to help the family financially. Pinki and her mother are the breadwinners of the family. They earn a meager amount by cutting the extra threads of local garments. Through Street to school intervention, she has been enrolled in a Government school.



During the span of lockdown, her family went through a rough phase. There was no source of income and the family was in a hand to mouth situation. Their problems increased manifold when her brother fell sick. Due to the lack of money and nearly zero savings, there was a big question mark on his treatment. She took a wise decision and asked her family to admit her brother to a Government hospital; since in the lockdown, doctors were not easily available and refused to give a treatment. After a lot of persuasions, her brother was admitted to a hospital and got treated. Gradually, he recovered.

However, Pinki's studies were put on hold due to the closure of schools but she continued self-studying by reading books and doing work assigned to her by CHETNA's educators. Our little Pinki correctly proves the statement, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interests". Due to her mature act, she saved her brother's life, she has gained potential to think and take the right decisions at the right time.

After the lockdown uplifted which was imposed to prevent the outbreak of the coronavirus, her family's condition became even more miserable. Her father passed away a few months back and since then there is a constant problem of ill health among her family members. Her mother has not resumed working and they are only able to earn a handful of income by selling some toys near a traffic light. However, she has continued her studies online with our educators. She constantly completes the work assigned to her by the school and our educators. She gives prime importance to her studies and she stated, ***"I like studying, I want to go to the school at the earliest. I miss playing and studying with my friends."***



# *Optimism is the key to happiness*

Eva along with her 5 family members lives in a shelter home in North East Delhi. Her family consists of her parents, one brother, and one sister. Her father spends all his money in consuming alcohol, because of which the financial expenses are taken care of by her mother. In India, walnuts are also sold without its outer shell. Eva's mother earns a handful of income by cracking these walnuts.



Childhood is a glorious period that reminisces by everyone. But Eva's childhood has been spent in a lot of hardships. She never went to school because of her family's financial condition. During an outreach of street to school project, CHETNA's educator had an conversation with her. While briefing her about the project, she showed enthusiasm towards studying. After a lot of effort and hard work, she was enrolled in class 3 in a Government school.

During the lockdown regime, her family lost all the sources of income and was going through a grueling time. Her father became violent as he was unable to get alcohol, whereas her mother's work was also put on hold. They were struggling for meeting their ends meet. Even after standing in long queues under the scorching heat sometimes her mother had to return without food because by the time her turn comes to the food used to get finished. Some days, they had to sleep on empty stomach. Even after so many of hardships, she did not lose hope and spread positivity in her family. She strongly believed that everything will be fine soon and the world shall overcome through this pandemic. Meanwhile, she lost the track of her studies as her phone became dysfunctional. She revised whatever was taught to her in school and education club.

After the lockdown is uplifted, there is no drastic change in her family's condition. Her mother is still anxious about their survival and searching for a source of income. However, she now goes to school to collect and submit worksheets. She even tries to get in contact with our educator through her friend's phone sometimes. She is putting forth all her efforts in continuing her studies. education gives us a ray of hope in surviving through difficult times. It teaches us to build resilience and stay optimistic. Eva sets an example of being optimistic even in turbulent times.

## *Turning problems into solutions*

Reeta, 11 years old girl lives with her 7 family members her parents, two brothers, and two sisters in the slums North East Delhi. Their lives are spent under a lot of hardships; both her parents work day and night to meet their bare necessities. Her father is a rag picker and her mother works in a factory. Reeta and her sister look after the household chores and also go along with their mother to the factory. She and her siblings have been enrolled in a school through the intervention of Street to School project.



As COVID took a heavy toll on everyone's life, the street-connected families are the worst sufferers, her family's work was put on hold and ration and food were scarce. Initially, for a few days, they survived on savings, but as days progressed their survival became difficult so they had to borrow money from their relatives. But the money they accumulated was not sufficient for their survival, so they decided to go to their native place. Since the situation was critical, and there was no means of transportation, the family was furious and anxious about their travel. Rita was disappointed to see the anxiety of her parents; eventually, she called CHETNA's educator who told her about the free transportation services provided by the Government and various non-profit organizations. She hurriedly gathered all the information, and informed her parents. Rita through her diligent act made her family travel safely to their native place.

Education is the most powerful weapon; it gives us an outlook and approach to tackling problems efficiently. With great shrewdness and maturity, Rita helped her family to come out from the rough phase.

Currently, it's been a month since they have returned from their village. Although there is no drastic change in the situation, her brother has started working in a factory and can earn a meager amount. The family manages to meet their basic requirements. However, Rita and her sister have resumed studying, since their phone has become dysfunctional; they had to go to the school to collect worksheets weekly. She is passionate about studying and says ***"I wish this pandemic to end soon so that I can go back to school and the education club. I want to play and study with friends."***

## ***Tender shoulders, huge responsibilities***

Vinod along with his 4 family members resides in the slums of North East Delhi. His family consists of his mother and 2 siblings. A long-ago his father passed away due to some chronic illness. His mother is the bread earner for the family, she sells toys in train. He also helps her mother in selling toys. Whereas his sister looks after the household chores and his brother is involved in gambling.



Vinod always inclined studies but due to his financial problems, his mother was not able to afford school fees. Through Street to School intervention, he was enrolled in a Government school in class 3. He is a hard-working and studious child, he is always curious about learning new things. He constantly goes to schools and never misses out on an opportunity of coming to the education club. The early closure of schools due to the lockdown left a void in his life. His family's situation became terrible and they were going through a hand to mouth situation. His mother was anxious about their survival so she started begging, for a few days he also accompanied her mother. But later, Vinod realized that begging is not a solution he even made his mother understand and asked her to stop begging. He took the responsibility of managing a two-course meal for his family. He stood in long queues and collected food that was distributed free by the Government. After a few weeks, his mother fell sick and there was an additional expense of medicines. His family was extremely stressed and anxious about meeting the expenses. But Vinod did not lose hope and with a lot of patience and perseverance, he made a wise decision of selling slippers door to door with his brother. He was able to earn a handful of money each day. From that money, he bears all the medical expenses of his mother.

Meanwhile, he continued his studies by collecting worksheets from school, since he did not have an access to smartphone; irrespective of his critical situation he continued his studies. He says ***“education has enlightened me and made me mature enough to take wise decisions. I cannot leave studying.”***

Currently, there has been no drastic change in his family's condition. However, his mother's health has improved slightly so she has also started selling slippers with her sons. Vinod is putting forth all his efforts in continuing his studies.



## *Hope amidst the crisis*

Thirteen-year-old Ram resides with his 6 family members (his parents, two brothers, and one sister) in the slums of North East Delhi. His mother is the sole breadwinner of the family, she works as domestic help. His father works very often as a labourer. His father spends all his earnings in consuming alcohol. So the financial burden has fallen on his mother's shoulder. Looking at the terrible condition of his family, he also started pulling the sand carts in the construction sites to help his family financially.



During CHETNA's outreach, our educator saw him and asked him about his studies, he then narrated his story and family's condition. The educator of the street to school project convinced his parents and got him enrolled in class 4. After his enrollment, his parents understood the importance of education and got their other children also enrolled in school.

In the wake of lockdown, Ram became responsible and strongly overcame all the problems. As the family was dealing with the scarcity of finances and food. He started selling vegetables in a nearby park whatever meager amount he used to earn he kept it with himself because his father became violent and spent all the money on consuming alcohol. He tactfully kept a track of all his accounts and spent the amount efficiently. His mother managed to get two times meals from the school to feed their stomachs. He also filled E-coupon form and availed ration that was distributed free by the Government. During all this, he did not neglect his studies and ensured that he stays in constant contact with our educators. In his spare time, he used to complete the work assigned to him and submitted his worksheet in school. Education gives us the ability to transform problems into solutions. Ram has become capable of doing something worthy and it also escaped him from falling into any fraud activities, as he efficiently kept the account of his earnings.

Presently after the lockdown uplifted which was imposed due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, his family's condition has improved slightly. His mother has resumed working and his father has also started to work. Whereas he is now focusing on his studies only, he doesn't work anymore; he looks after his siblings and household chores and spent all his time in studying.

## Education breeds confidence

Rishita hails from Bihar and her family comprises 5 members her parents, and two siblings. Due to some family problems, her father came to New Delhi seven years back, since then they have been residing in the slums of East Delhi. Her father is a rickshaw driver and her mother is a housewife. Both her siblings are enrolled in a school but Rishita's enrollment was put on hold as her documents were incomplete. She used to stay at home and helps her mother with household chores.



She accidentally came to CHETNA's education club and showed her interest in studies. Through the project's intervention, the responsibility of enrolling her in a school was taken by the educators, her documents were completed and she was enrolled in class 6. She is extremely studious and gradually became the leader of the education club.

Her family went through a tough time during the span of lockdown. Her father's work was put on hold. However, he started selling vegetable door to door and was able to earn a meager amount for the family. Since her father is illiterate he had a problem in keeping the accounts. So Rishita took the responsibility of helping her father in keeping a track of the accounts. She used to go along with her father to sell vegetables and took the charge of maintaining the accounts. The outcome of Rishita's education saved her father from getting into any trouble. Education breeds confidence and our little Rishita correctly proves it. Through her education and confidence, she is ready to overcome any odd situation not only for herself but also for her family. Her education proved to be helpful for her family, her father was saved from falling into any kind of false activity.

Presently, there is a slight improvement in her family's condition. Her father has resumed driving a rickshaw and they can meet their basic requirements. She has also started studying online and completes all the work assigned to her by the educators. She also helps her siblings in completing their worksheets provided by the school. She says ***"I forced my father to get the phone recharged so that I can continue studying. Education is vital and I can't compromise with it."*** Rishita and her parents now realize the importance of education and her parents now encourage all their children to study and have a bright future.

## *Empowering young minds*

Nisha lives with her two sisters, and her mother in a rented house in East Delhi. Four years back, her father abandoned the family and remarried. When her mother came to know about this, she along with her three children came to New Delhi and started residing at her relative's adobe. But after a few months, the relatives started creating problems so they shifted to the slums of East Delhi. Her mother works as domestic help in three households to support her children and meet the basic necessities of the family.



Nisha stays at home and looks after her younger siblings and household chores. She always wanted to study but due to the innumerable responsibilities that she had on her tender shoulders, she was unable to do so. During CHETNA's outreach, she met our educators and showed her fondness for studies. Through street to school intervention, she was enrolled in class 5.

The whole world faced a crucial time during the epidemic, and street-connected families were worst hit by the coronavirus outbreak. Nisha's family was one such family that fallen on hard times. Her mother's work was put on hold and Nisha fell extremely ill because of the scarcity of ration. For a few days, they survived on the ration that was left with them but gradually their survival was at stake. Nisha then heard about filling an E-ration coupon for availing free ration that was distributed by the Government. She by herself filled the form and attached all the necessary documents, because of which the family was able to get ration. The landlord was also creating trouble for them by asking them to pay the rent. Nisha then told the owner about the Government guidelines that strictly prohibit the owner from taking rent. Education widens our approach and instills critical thinking ability in us. Nisha helped her family during the time of crisis, because of her knowledge and confidence they were able to satiate their hunger and also she saved her family from paying the rent.

After the lockdown is uplifted, her mother resumed her work and she goes to a few households for work because of which they can feed their empty stomachs and she can get medicines for Nisha. Now they have to also pay the rent so she can meet out her expenses. Nisha's mother said the household owners have been very supportive during this time.



## Self-awareness leads to prosperity

Residing in the slums of East Delhi, nine years old Rakhi live with her six family members her parents, and 3 siblings. Her father drives a rickshaw and her mother works as domestic help for meeting the needs of the family. Prior to her intervention with Street to School project, she used to look after her siblings and did household chores. After meeting the educator of the street to school she showed her inclination toward studies and she was enrolled in a Government school. Her brother was also supposed to be enrolled in school in March but due to lockdown, it has been put on hold.



The coronavirus outbreak has created havoc in street-connected families. One such family is of Rakhi, due to the lack of financial resources there was adversity of food and ration. Her mother had to stand in long queues under the scorching heat to avail of free food that was distributed in schools through Government. They were somehow managing their survival when Rakhi fell sick. The family was anxious about bearing medical expenses. But Rakhi did not lose hope and she did not want to be a burden on her family. So she along with her friend went to a Government dispensary and bought free medicines for herself. After a few weeks, her health started to recover and she was able to help her mother. Her parents were glad to see, Rakhi is an independent and responsible person. Her concern towards her parents shows her maturity and potential of understanding her parent's situation. Education doesn't only helps in mental development rather it also develops emotions and understanding. It gives us an approach to deal with hardships effectively along with quick decision making. Due to her poor health and persistent situation, her studies were disturbed but as soon as she recovered she started to study by connecting with our educators. She stated that ***"My studies gave me strength and resilience to overcome odd situations in life; I want to study more and support my family."***

After the lockdown was uplifted, her family's condition has improved significantly. Her parents have resumed working. She has also recovered and her studies are also back on track. She has received stationery and hygiene kits from CHETNA and also her phone was recharged through our educator. She says, "I am grateful to study again."



## ***Evolving decision-makers***

Ten years old Roza lives with her 5 family members in the slums of East Delhi. She belongs to a small town in Bihar. Her father is addicted to intoxicants, he used to get drunk and beat everyone in the house. Frustrated with the everyday violence, Roza's mother took her children and came to New Delhi. Since then they have been residing here with their maternal grandmother who is 55 years old. Her mother works as a rag picker and can earn a handful of the amount on which the family survives.



Whereas, Roza stays at home and looks after her siblings and household chores. Through Street to School intervention, she was enrolled in class 3 in a Government school. She struggles with her studies and did not know how to read and write, but she is a hard-working child, she constantly goes to school and also come to the education club.

During the lockdown regime, the family was going through a tough time but it became even worse when she and her sister fell sick. Her mother was clueless about how to bear the medical expenses. Roza's grandmother did not support the family and ill-treated them. She felt depressed upon seeing her mother's anxiety. She asked her mother to take her and her sister to a nearby Government hospital, where they can get free treatment. Since it was the period of COVID, and even in Government hospitals, it was mandatory to get a COVID test. Roza and her sister had to go through the test, fortunately, they were tested negative. The doctor then gave them the treatment and after a few weeks, they started to recover. All this while, her studies were disturbed, she did not even have access to the smartphone. After her recovery, she took help from her relative and asked for their spare phone. She was able to arrange a phone; all her siblings' study from the same phone. She stated, ***"I have gone through a tough phase, but my education instilled optimism in me. I want this pandemic to end soon so that I can meet my friends and go to school and education club."*** Currently as lockdown is uplifted and the world is adopting to the "new normal", her family's condition has improved slightly. To earn a significant amount her mother in the day picks up rags and at night she works as wrapping the toffees in decorative boxes. She has started studying and teaches her siblings also, they all complete the work assigned to them by educator.

## ***Honesty is the best policy***

A nine-years-old Fiza, resides in the slums East Delhi , with her 5 family members her parents, 1 younger brother and 1 elder sister. Fiza's father and paternal grandmother are addicted to consuming intoxicants because of which they used to become very violent and harassed her mother physically and mentally. Her mother is a strong and independent woman; two years back she left her husband behind and came to New Delhi along with her three children. Since then, her mother became the breadwinner of the family, she works as domestic



help in a few households and in her spare time she also works as a rag picker to get some extra earnings. Fiza and her sister look after the household chores and their younger brother. Through street to school intervention, she and her siblings were enrolled in a Government school.

Due to impose of the nationwide lockdown to prevent the deadly coronavirus, her family's situation got miserable. Her mother's work was put on hold. They were deprived of availing any Government support as they lack a few necessary documents. Her mother was distressed about their survival. Meanwhile, his brother also fell sick and there was an additional expense of medicines. Fiza got furious on seeing her mother struggling, so she decided to support her mother financially. She started working in a nearby general merchant as a helper. Once, in the absence of the owner, she did the transaction and kept the track of the accounts. She returned the money to the owner on his arrival and also showed him the accounts. The owner was overwhelmed by her act of honesty and praised her. As it is truly said, "Honesty is the best policy", Fiza through her uprightness and morals astonished everyone. Education not only gives us knowledge but rather it also shows us the right path and gives a dimension of making quick decisions at the right place.

After the lockdown uplifted, her family situation has substantially improved. Her mother has resumed working in a few households; apart from money she also gets food and clothes from the households, the owners are really supportive and helpful. Her brother's health is also improving gradually.

## *Little feet taking big steps*

Residing in the slums of East Delhi, Stuti has a large family of 9 members her parents, two brothers, and four sisters. Her father works as a rickshaw puller. Due to the large family size, her father's income was not sufficient to meet the needs of the family, so her mother was compelled to work. Her mother cut the extra threads of the local garments and is able to earn a handful of the amount. Her elder brother and sister also work in a factory to support the family financially.



Through the intervention of CHETNA's Street to School project, Stuti and her other three siblings were enrolled in a Government school. Her mother wants her children to study and she never allows them to skip school. Her mother actively attends all the parents' meetings that are held in school or in contact point.

The lockdown disrupted the mental and economic condition of the people. Stuti's family was miserable sufferers during the lockdown. Her parents' and sibling's work was put on hold. They wanted to go to their village but due to the lockdown, they couldn't go. There was a scarcity of ration and money in her family. "We have never witnessed such days", said her mother." To meet their needs her father started selling fruits, but due to the strict guidelines Police took away their cart. Her father was extremely distressed, upon seeing his father's anxiety she asked him to go to the police station and file a complaint against this unlawful act. Her father reported against the illicit act and he got his cart after a week.

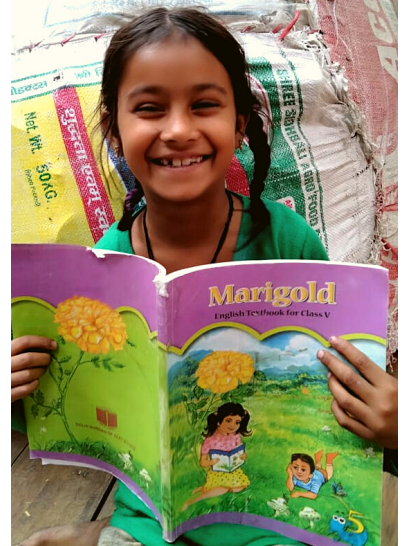
Stuti's intellect and great advice saved her father from getting into big trouble. As it is rightly said by Albert Einstien, "Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think". Stuti's courageous act shows how she has cultivated an optimistic thinking and right decision making for which her education can be best responsible.

Currently, there has been no drastic change in her family's financial condition. Every day is still a battle for them. Her father works hard all day and night and earns a meager amount, due to the large family size it the money earned is insufficient to meet the basic needs of the family. However, Stuti and her siblings have resumed their studies, they get worksheets from school and after completing it they submit it.



## *An act of compassion*

Sunita along with her family resides in the slums of East Delhi, in a rented house. There are 7 members in her family her parents, 2 brothers, and 2 sisters. Her mother is the bread earner for the family; her father doesn't work. A few years back, her father came to Delhi in search of a livelihood, but he was unable to find any work. Her mother cut the extra threads of the local garments. CHETNA's educator met her during an outreach, where she showed her eagerness towards studies. So our educator contacted her father and asked him to get her



enrolled in a school, but with a heavy heart his father said “I do not have enough money to feed her from where will I pay her school fees?”

Upon hearing this, our educator convinced her father to get her enrolled in a Government school. After a lot of effort and hard work put forth by the street to school educator, she got enrolled in class 3rd. Since then she regularly goes to school and also comes to the contact point for studying. She takes a lot of interest in studying.

Prior to the lockdown, her father was not employed and after the lockdown, her mother's work was also put to an end. Her family had to face the adversity of food and ration; they were unable to avail of any Government support due to lack of some necessary documents. Her mother fell sick during the lockdown, which aggravated the family's problems. The whole family was anxious about their financial crisis. Her mother was admitted to a nearby Government hospital and gradually she recovered. During all this, Sunita diligently took the responsibility of taking care of her family. She looked after all the household chores and her siblings. After completing all the household work, she used to go to the hospital and took care of her mother. This act of Sunita shows empathy and compassion toward her family. Education transforms our behavior and gives us a sense of doing things sensitively. After the lockdown, there is no dramatic change in her family's condition. The pandemic made her father understood his responsibilities and started to work as a labourer. He earns a handful of income and the family is only able to meet its basic needs. Nonetheless, Sunita got her phone recharged and is now able to study online. She stated, ***“I want the pandemic to end soon so that I can go to school and study freely. I miss my friends and teachers. I do not want to study online.”***



## Real life warriors

Residing in the slums of East Delhi, nine years old Zafar has 8 family members his parents, brothers, sister-in-law, sisters, niece and nephews. His father is a laborer and his mother is a domestic help. Their live is spent under a lot of hardships and difficulties. Due to the lack of documents and financial crisis, he couldn't get himself enrolled in school. CHETNA took an initiative and got him and his elder sister enrolled in a school. Since then he and his sister goes to school.



During the span of lockdown, his family saw a rough phase of their lives. Due to the large family size, there were a lot of problems. His parent's work was put on hold. His family did not have a ration card (an official document for availing ration at a subsidized price) because of which they were devoid of availing any kind of Governmental aid. Zafar took the responsibility of feeding his family on his tender shoulders. He used to stand in long queues under the scorching heat to get food. Every day he was at the risk of getting COVID as the place used to get extremely crowded and nobody followed the guidelines of social distancing. But still he was firm in collecting the food for his family. This act of his shows his compassion towards his family members and his courage in overcoming any odd situation. He sets an example of courage, determination and passion; if we are determined to do anything, we can achieve it.

Presently, the lockdown has uplifted, his family situations has drastically improved. His parent's have resumed working and he has also received books from school and started studying. His mother told our educator that their family's situation has remarkably transformed, now they have sufficient ration and able to earn money to meet their daily requirements. Zafar is now in class 4 but he is still facing difficulties in his studies so with the support of CHETNA's educator he completes his worksheet provided to him from his school and submits it. As his family condition improved he has started showing interest in studying and gradually he is performing well. He now only focuses on his studies and stated ***"I do not wish to witness such days ever in life again. I miss going to my school and meeting my friends. I want the pandemic to end soon so that I can go to school and to the education point"***.

## ***Necessity forces to be responsible***

Eleven years old Pintu resides in the slums of East Delhi, with his 8 family members his parents, 2 brothers and three sisters. His father was diagnosed with tuberculosis because of which he is unable to do any work. His mother is a breadwinner of the family. She works as a rag picker and sell toys. Pintu and his sister also support their mother for more financial stability. His elder sister who is 15 years old doesn't go to school. Through CHETNA's initiative he and his younger sister who is 6 years old were enrolled in



school, since then they regularly go to school and also come to the contact point for studying. Pintu is more inclined towards studies and he is very active also because of which he got an opportunity to be a part of Jaipur's educational workshop.

The lockdown created havoc in Pintu's life. His father due to his ill health was not employed before and his mother's work was also put on hold. There was a huge crisis of ration in his family. His family does not have a ration card (an official document for availing ration at a subsidized price) because of which they were unable to avail any Government assistance. The family survived on the half-cooked food that they got from school. His father's condition started depleting day by day, they took him to the Government hospital and he was admitted there. His mother also fell sick. At times, they used to sleep empty stomach. Looking at the miserable condition of his family, he and his sister started begging and working as rag pickers. They were able to get RS.100 to 150 in a day. The family is surviving on this meager amount. He works hard all day and night to support his family financially due to which his studies are being neglected. Looking at his family problems, he at times becomes anxious and feels stressed.

Currently, his family situation has improved. His father's health is better and he has been discharged from the hospital, although he is still not able to work. His mother has resumed her work, and she manages to earn a nominal amount of 200-250 in a day. As compared to the time in lockdown, he has reduced his hours of begging, now he focuses more on studying and playing with his friends. He will soon get books from the school, and he is able to get his phone recharged because of which he can now continue learning online.

## ***Budding leaders of the future***

Thirteen years old Nancy, resides in the slums of East Delhi with her 7 family members her father, grandmother, one sister and 3 brothers. Her father is handicapped and her mother has left them as she was addicted to alcohol and she used to fight with everyone in her family. Each day is a struggle for the family to survive. Her father works as rag picker and is able to earn a handful of amounts. She looks after her younger siblings and house hold chores. Even her grandmother does not support the family. Looking at the miserable condition of the family



she and her brother also started working as rag pickers, but Nancy always wanted to study and go to school. During an outreach, CHETNA's educator met her and she told us "my Grandmother will never allow me to go to school, because if I will go to the school then who will take care of the households chores." But our educator convinced her family and she was enrolled in class 5.

In the wake of lockdown her family saw a rough time. Her siblings fell sick as there was an adversity of food and ration due to lack of money. Nancy filled an E-Ration form and availed free ration from the Government. She not only supported her family but also filled forms for many other families in her community. Her father was proud of her and said "I want her to study more". Nancy has inculcated leadership skills in her and also, she became responsible. Education has given her an approach to think analytically and take right decisions at the right time. She managed to get medicines from the dispensary for her sibling's treatment. Meanwhile, she continued her studies online, she sincerely completed all the work that was assigned to her by the educators and she also completed and submitted the worksheets given to her by the school.

Presently, the family's situation has improved slightly. Her father has resumed working and begging and her brother has also started selling buckets and tubs. They are able to meet their basic needs form the handful of amounts that they earn. Nancy is in constant contact with our educators through her friend's phone and she shows eagerness in studying. Nancy stated ***"I miss going to the school, I do not want to do household chores. Education has empowered me and given me strength to overcome any odd situation in life. I want to study and play with my friends."***



## ***Fearless and responsible children***

Ten years old Mehmood, resides with his 4 family members his mother, maternal grandmother and a younger sister. Due to some chronic illness his father passed away a long time back. Since then, his mother has become the breadwinner for the family. His mother works in a cloth factory. He stays at home and looks after the house hold chores and his younger sister. Studying has always been a distant dream for Mehmood due to his financial conditions. During an outreach session, he met CHETNA's educator and he showed his interest in studies. Through street to school initiative he was enrolled in class 4 in a Government school.



The epidemic COVID-19 disrupted everyone's life, early closure of schools and the increasing the unemployment created innumerable problems for the children and families. Mehmood's family too fallen on hard times due to the lockdown imposed to prevent the outbreak of the deadly virus. The family was in a hand to mouth situation. Looking at his mother's anxiety about their survival, he thought of an idea. Since his mother works in a cloth factory where she cut the extra threads of the local garments, he asked her to do the same thing from home. His mother started to work from home and was able to earn a handful of amounts. The family survived the lockdown under a lot of hardships. But fearless Mehmood supported his family and kept the environment positive. During his spare time, he used to study and also teach his sister. As it is truly said "Where there is a will, there is a way", Mehmood was determined to take his family out from the grave situation and through his intellect and sensibility he responsibly took decisions and implemented them. His education can be best complimented for inculcating decision-making skills in him.

Currently, the lockdown has uplifted but the danger of corona virus is persistent. There is a slight change in Mehmood's family condition; they are able to meet their basic requirements. However, Mehmood has also started focusing on his studies. He completes all the work assigned to him by our educators and he also completes the worksheets provided from the school. He says ***"I want things to get back normal soon so that I can attend school and meet my friends."***



## ***Schools benefitting families during crisis***

Eleven years old Sona, along with her 6 family members her parents, one younger sister and two brothers resides in the slums of East Delhi. Her father is a cobbler and her mother cuts the extra threads of local garments. Her parents work hard all day and night still they survive under a lot of hardships. Sona also helps her mother in household chores. Through CHETNA's initiative, she was enrolled in a Government school. As the whole world undergone through the grueling times, everyone faced problems.



The street connected families struggle for their survival even in normal times, their grievances increased manifold during the regime of lockdown that was imposed by the Central Government as a preventive measure to control the spread of corona virus. Sona's family was highly affected, as the family lost all the source of income and they were in a hand to mouth situation. Her parents were anxious and depressed by seeing their children starving. They borrowed money from their relatives but it was not sufficient to meet their needs in a long run. Sona was concerned about her family condition and their survival. In India, when a student is enrolled in a Government school, the Government deposits a nominal account in the bank account of the child every month, to encourage and motivate them to study. Sona, asked her father to withdraw the money from her account. Her father withdrew the money because of which the family was able to satiate their hunger for a few days. They also went to their native place and started doing farming. Sona's enrollment in school proved beneficial for the family during the crisis. India is a country where educating a girl child is demeaned and given insignificant importance, but educating girls is not only helpful in shaping their careers but also it gives a sense of empowerment to the whole family. There has been no drastic change in Sona's financial condition, after the lockdown uplifted. The family has came back to Delhi from their native place. Nonetheless, her father has resumed working but he is able to earn a nominal amount every day. Her mother's work has yet not started. However, Sona has started to focus on her studies again. She is in a constant contact with our educators. She completes the work assigned to her by the educators and she also completes the worksheets provided to her by the school.

## Ensuring self-sustainability

Ensuring self-sustainability Preeti, an 11 year old girl resides in the slums of East Delhi with her 8 family members her parents, grandparents, one elder sister and two younger siblings. Preeti's father is unemployed and spends all the money on consuming alcohol He spends all the money on consuming alcohol, her mother is the breadwinner of the family. She earns a meager amount by working as domestic help in several households. Preeti along with her grandmother sell toys on traffic signals.



After a lot of struggle and efforts to convince her parents, through CHETNA's intervention she was enrolled in a Government school. Impose of the lockdown has disrupted everyone's life. Preeti's family had fallen on hard times. Her mother's work was put on hold and her father became violent and used to abuse everyone in the house. Her grandmother was also not able to sell toys. The family was in an extreme destitute condition. On top of that Preeti fell sick, she suffered from high fever. Her mother started begging and was anxious for Preeti's medical expenses. Fortunately, she recovered in a while as her mother got some medicines from the local dispensary. As she recovered, she realized begging is not a solution and she refrained her mother from begging. Both mother-daughter after a few weeks started making decorative hand crafts and went to sell it near traffic signals to meet out their basic requirements. All this while, her father became destructive and spends all the savings on consuming alcohol. Preeti and her mother had to hide their hard earned money from her father.

Presently after the lockdown uplifted, her family's condition has improved slightly. Her mother has resumed working, whereas her grandmother has also started selling toys, Preeti accompanies her grandmother and sells slippers. Her father still doesn't realize his responsibilities and now he has started consuming more alcohol and gambling also. Meanwhile, her education was disturbed, but she is now in constant contact with our educators. She says, ***"She says, "Education has given me an ability to make right decision at a right time."*** She never compromise with her studies. She also teaches her siblings in her spare time. She wishes the pandemic to end soon so that she can go back to school, study and play with her friends as she doesn't like to work.

## ***Tough times make children tougher***

Ten years old, Taru resides in the slums of East Delhi with her 9 family members including her parents, grandparents, two younger sisters and two elder brothers. Her father is a cart puller and her mother cut the extra thread of the local garments. Due to the financial crisis, Taru and her siblings stay at home and look at the household chores. During CHETNA's outreach, one of our educators met her where she showed her inclination towards studying.



Through CHETNA's intervention, she was enrolled in a Government school. Later, her siblings were also enrolled in schools through our initiative.

During the span of lockdown, her family was deprived of all the basic necessities as the family lost all the source of income. They were in a hand to mouth situation. Her parent's anxiety grew manifold every day. They were unable to avail any Government support due to lack of necessary documents. Initially they survived on their savings, but gradually as the days progressed their survival was at a huge risk. Taru then thought of supporting her family during the crisis, so she started selling fruits on her father's cart. She used to go door to door to sell fresh fruits. She maintained all the accounts and gave all the hard earned to her mother. Her mother was extremely proud of Taru, she stated "my daughter has become so sensible and mature that she took the responsibility of feeding the family, this is all because of her knowledge, which has made her wise and capable of taking right decisions at right time."

After the lockdown uplifted, there has been no drastic change in her family's condition. Her mother has not resumed working; she is still searching for some unemployment. Her father has started to work and is able to earn a meager amount. Her family is able to afford ration and other means of basic necessities. Taru sometimes goes to sell fruits, now she focuses more on her studies. She tries to get in contact with our educators and also completes the work assigned to her by school in her spare time. She states that, ***"Pandemic has taught me many things, my family has never witnessed such days and I do not want to witness such days ever again in my life. I want the pandemic to end soon so that I can study and play with my friends."***



## *An act of bravery*

The unpredictability of life can be foreseen and it's beyond anyone's control. Ten years old Akshay's life revolves around his 4 family members his mother, one elder brother and one younger sister, residing in the slums of East Delhi. During the span of lockdown, a misfortunate incident took place in his family; his father passed away after becoming a victim of a chronic illness. The responsibility of bearing the family's expensive fallen on his mother's shoulder. His mother works as domestic help in a few households. He stays at home and looks after his younger sister and household chores.



Through CHETNA's intervention, he was enrolled in a Government school. The family went through grueling times, during the regime of pandemic. They were in a hand to mouth situation. After his father's demise, the whole family was disturbed and was struggling for their survival. His brother started taking intoxicants in order to overcome from the stress and depression. Upon knowing this Akshay was concerned about his brother's health, he told everything to his mother. His mother then spoke to his brother and made him understand his mistake and asked him to stop taking any intoxicant. His brother did not listen to anyone and kept taking the intoxicants so much so that he fell extremely sick. He was admitted in a Government hospital, and after a few weeks he got recovered. As his mother was busy taking care of his brother in the hospital, Akshay started to work in a few households in place of his mother and whatever money he earned was all utilized in his brother's treatment. Akshay, was extremely disappointed with his brother's behavior but he prayed for his speedy recovery.

Presently, there has been no drastic change in his family's condition. However, his brother is recovering and has understood the ill effects of consuming intoxicants. His mother has resumed working in a few households. Meanwhile, Akshay took the responsibility of taking care of both his siblings in the absence of his mother and he has also started studying. Due to lack of access to smart phone, constantly getting in touch with our educators is a big hurdle for him.





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