

(Inculcating life skills education in street-connecting children through sports)

Pandemic evoked innovation in SURE Project: Adapting new ways

Our beneficiary lives in an environment where there is a minimum amount of exchange of information and there is no awareness about certain issues. As we foster to nurture and shape the future of our beneficiaries, it is essential to make them aware citizens and also inculcate leadership qualities amongst them. In this regard, our educators conduct support group meetings every month to spread awareness to children about child rights, child laws, child helpline numbers, and discussion on children's problems. Before the pandemic hit the world, every activity was conducted differently at the education club. Support Group Meetings were conducted where we ensured the maximum number of participation from the children; discussions were taken in length along with conducting some activities.

As the terror of COVID grew and the nationwide lockdown was imposed to curb the outbreak of coronavirus, all the activities conducted at the education club transformed. Since our educators were confined to working from their homes, virtual meetings became essential. It was a perplexing situation for our educators to conduct support group meetings. These meetings were conducted virtually through video calls, and conference calls with a refinement in the agendas of the meeting, as health became an important point of discussion. Since many of our beneficiaries do not have access to smartphones and even normal phones; it was a tiresome process to conduct these meetings with those beneficiaries. To ensure that all our beneficiaries reap the benefits of these meetings their phones were recharged and through the help of their peers they attended these meetings.

Gradually, the repercussions of COVID started to take a downfall and our educators started going on the field for conducting day-to-day activities. Instead of one big group, the meetings were conducted into multiple smaller groups where children put forth their issues and concerns regarding their studies, financial constraints, family issues, and issues related to communities. The mitigation steps were taken to ensure the eradication of these issues. Meanwhile, children developed leadership qualities and gained confidence. Even after going through such turbulent times, we tried to stay connected with our beneficiaries in some or another way.

Strengthening the voice of children: Support Group Meetings

The Sports for United Resilience (SURE) project was started in the year 2019 as a pilot project to improve the lives of street-connected children through sports and alternative education to overcome daily life challenges. The project comprised of several activities like parents meeting, Support group meeting, home visits, inter sports matches, Annual day celebration, etc. The project is executed in West and South Delhi with 400 street-connected children who are indulged in working. As the project was gaining momentum, the world was hit by the worst pandemic of all time. Unfortunately, the major period of the project was spent under the regime of pandemic and as the lockdown was imposed to curb the outbreak of COVID-19; all our activities transformed about the situation without hampering the project's goal.

With the changing times, it's essential to change and upgrade oneself. The technological revolution was significant; all our activities of the project were carried out virtually. Our team members upgraded their skills



"Awareness is the greatest agent for change".

and involved innovation while conducting activities. We initiated the process of mobile recharge with the internet of our beneficiaries so that they do not have to face any hurdles in connecting and learning life skills lessons. During these depressing times, it is vital to ensure the mental health and well-being of the children. We conducted a week-long virtual summer camp which included fun activities to boost the morale of children.

As the SURE project moved towards its completion, the evaluation of the project was also conducted virtually by conducting activities with the team members, various stakeholders, and beneficiaries. Although, the major tenure of SURE project was spent under lockdown we were successful in accomplishing its objectives of transforming the lives of children through sports and games.

Empowering children through education

Education is the basic right of every child, and we have to ensure that no child is denied their basic rights. Under the SURE project, there are 6 education clubs in West Delhi. Since all our beneficiaries are working children and they have left studying due to the financial constraints, and family pressure to earn money. To ensure their right to education, 60 children have been enrolled in Open Basic Education through CHETNA.

Open Basic Education is the distance school education system to caters to the needs of working children. Looking at the interest and enthusiasm of the children, they were enrolled in OBE in classes 3rd, 5th & 8th according to their levels. Our educators taught these children Maths, Hindi, and English throughout the year according to their syllabus. Even during the span of coronavirus, children continued their studies through online learning.

In February, children appeared for OBE exams. Behind this, there was a lot of effort and hard work put forth by the educators. To make children well prepared for the exams, the educator has to divide children according to their level of knowledge. Some children did not even know the basics. Our educators made a WhatsApp group of children studying in class 3rd, 5th, and 8th through which they



used to teach children about the basics of Maths, Hindi, and English. The educator had to do planning beforehand to teach children as these children are working.

In the whole process, our educators also faced some problems like:

1. Children went to their native places during the lockdown.
2. Children returned to work and it was difficult to get leaves for the exams.
3. Travel with children to the head office during COVID

Our educators and children were determined to study and appear for the examination, so they overcame these hurdles by doing continuous home visits to get updates about children from their relatives who have gone to their native places, by contacting children through phone at their convenience and availability. Our educators ensured that while traveling children follow all the preventive measures of COVID and maintain social distancing as their health is our priority.

Strong Monitoring: A key to success

Sports for United Resilience (SURE) projects have been implemented in West and South Delhi since 2019. With 8 education clubs and 400 beneficiaries, the project has successfully been executed and is helping the children in building resilience to overcome the obstacles. As the COVID hit our lives and disrupted our daily activities, it has a huge impact on the lives of our beneficiaries. Many of our children migrated to their native places as their parents lost their jobs and there was no source of financial support for them. Our team members relentlessly tried to stay in contact with these children by calling them from time to time.

It is essential to check the progress of the project in regular intervals for accomplishing its desired goals swiftly. Considering this, the management team decided to physically verify all the beneficiaries at all the education clubs of West and South Delhi. A list of children from each education club was taken, and a team member from the management group went to the field to check the physical



presence of the children and build a rapport with them.

The physical verification of the children was done by individually going to the children's homes since many children were working and they were not available at that time. The

team members conducted some activities and discussions also to verify children physically. The children participated in the activities with full zeal and enthusiasm and told the team members about the learning they derived from the local games and sports.

Building friendships across communities

The SURE project's main objective is to inculcate life skills amongst street-connected children. In day-to-day activities, our team members conduct sports sessions with children in their education clubs. Gradually, as the lockdown lifted and things were turning normal, we conducted inter-sports club matches at the education clubs. These matches were played between the children of different education clubs together to encourage the spirit of competition, peer learning, building leadership, and effective communication skills.

These matches were completely organized and led by the children of each education club. From preparing the ground to de-briefing all the



major activities were led by the leaders of the team. The children are given the baton so that they can instill

leadership qualities and develop the confidence to present themselves and their teams in front of others.

Change is the necessity

Parents play a vital role in the lives of children. Their importance is essential in all the activities and decisions that children take in their lives. Similarly, in the SURE project, the parents of our beneficiaries are pivotal stakeholders. It is important to make parents aware of the progress of children, the importance of sports and games in the lives of the children, take their permission for allowing children to participate in various activities, etc. For the successful implementation of a project, it is important to build a relationship with the parents and also know their feedback regarding the project, problems that they face in their daily lives, etc.

Considering the advantages of building rapport with parents, a parents meeting activity was included in the SURE project which was



conducted once a month at every education club. Before the pandemic, these meetings were held in person and team members used to communicate with parents on several issues. As COVID intervened in our lives, how we conducted parents' meetings transformed. Our team members conducted virtual parent meetings through video calls.

Although the team members had to face a lot of problems like lack of access to smartphones, low or no recharge in the phones of parents, irritated behavior of parents due to lack of money and no jobs. Despite all the problems, our team members tried to get in contact with the parents and also discussed their problems, and tried to resolve them.

As the lockdown lifted, the team members conducted these meetings into small groups consisting of 4-5 parents to maintain the social distance and followed all the protocols of COVID. The project adopted adaptive management for conducting several project activities so that the goal of the project can be accomplished without any hindrance.

Budding leaders of tomorrow

Sports make us feel alive, it rejuvenates our mind and soul. The SURE project fosters to teach life skills to the children through sports, so under this project, monthly inter-sports club matches are organized and an Annual sports event is held to promote friendship, companionship, healthy competitive spirit, and inculcate leadership qualities amongst children.

On 8th March, the Annual sports events were organized where children from all the education clubs participated in sports like kho-kho, seven tiles, and dog in the bone. The friendly matches were held between children and CHETNA staff members. The winners of the games were children and they also explained the life skills that they learned from the



games. The whole annual event of sports was led by children, from preparing the ground to telling the rules of the games and taking sessions everything was led by children. The beneficiaries were motivated to lead the

event to inculcate leadership qualities in them and prepare them as leaders of tomorrow.

Before the event, a risk assessment was conducted to identify the possible risks associated with conducting annual sports on a large scale during the span of the pandemic. The risk assessment activity was conducted at each point with beneficiaries pointing out the major risk associated while playing on the ground and traveling to the venue. These risks were then measured based on the level of

occurrence and its severity. The children also found out the basic mitigation steps to overcome the risk.

Health is Wealth



Health is a state of complete physical and emotional well-being. Good health is central to handling stress and living a longer, more active life. Our beneficiaries' mental and physical well-being is of utmost importance to us. Under the SURE project, health camps were organized in West and South Delhi across all the **8 education clubs** in which more than **250 children** got their body checkups and received medicines free of cost. The importance of maintaining

cleanliness in and around the communities was also told to the children so that they can maintain hygiene and protect themselves from getting sick. The health camp was facilitated by **Dr. Rakesh Bansal, Dr. Arvind Kumar, and Dr. Madhuri**, children fearlessly told their body ailments to the doctors and they prescribed their medicines. Children also received health and hygiene kits after the health camp.

Children were extremely happy

after attending the health camps and consulting the doctors. Ram (name changed) stated that *"My parents do not have enough money to take me to a private hospital for consultation. I am glad to be a part of this health camp and I want such camps to be organized in the future also."* The parents of beneficiaries were also grateful to CHETNA for the health camps, Parvati (name changed), stated that *"I work hard all day and night to earn money, I feel bad when my children feel sick and I am unable to get proper treatment. I am happy my child was able to get a body check-up and medicines in the health camp."*

The initiative of the health camp was a fruitful activity for the project, as beneficiaries realized that the organization cares for them and they felt more connected to the team members. The parents also were extremely grateful and appreciated CHETNA for organizing the health camps.

Reaching to children through home visits

Home visits are an integral part of the SURE project. During these unprecedented times, our beneficiaries underwent a grueling phase. Before the outbreak of COVID, our team members conducted home visits to call children to the sports club, to interact with their parents at a personal level, and to strengthen the bond with children by providing psycho-social support. Home visits were beneficial for the team members as well as our beneficiaries because they helped them to engage with each other in a better manner. During the span of lockdown, these home visits were conducted virtually through constant calls and video calls. The well-being calls were highly essential as they



gave us an update about children and their parent's present situation and also it kept the bond of our team members and children intact. As the lockdown lifted, our team members focused more on the home visits as gathering beneficiaries at one place was not a viable option. Through home visits, our team members kept a constant follow-up with children's work, their present situation, and financial condition. As many children went to their native places, team members had to face a lot of challenges as their numbers were also not reachable. Team members went to their relatives' places and tried to stay in contact with the beneficiaries.

Lending our helping hand through emergency response

The second wave of COVID-19 scuffles the country, the street-connected families knock-down at the verge of struggling for their survival. A year earlier the situation was intense, a year later the situation became terrorizing as this time there were fewer helping hands that reached the helpless people. Apart from the projected activities, the SURE team should have courage and with great zeal and enthusiasm came to the forefront to help the people who were in dire need of ration. The distribution drive was conducted under the vigilance of the local authorities to execute the drives in an organized manner. All the team members

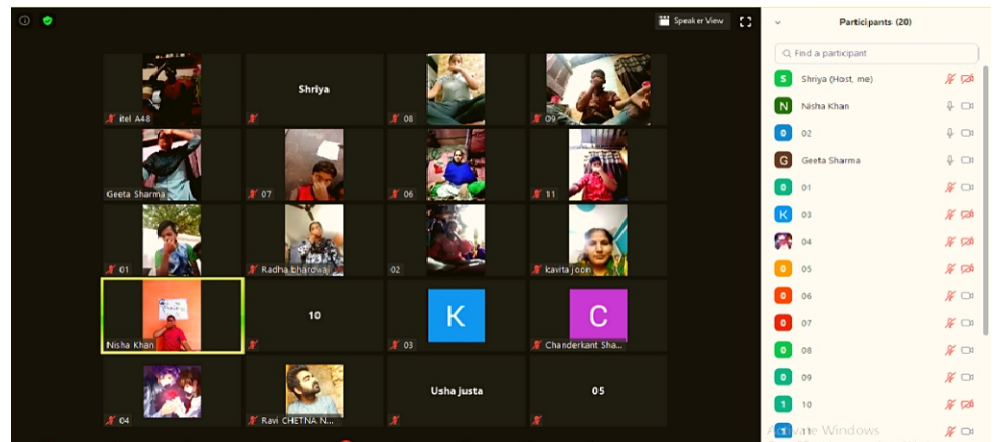


were given PPE kits while distributing to protect them from the outbreak of the virus, as their safety is our utmost priority. The

homeless families were provided with dry ration packets which were sufficient for a family of 5-6 members for 2 weeks, considering the mental stress that children go through during this abysmal situation they were provided with play items and stationery kits for continuing their education. As these children and families do not have access to hygiene materials, we provided them health and hygiene kits which contained masks, sanitizers, soaps, brush, and toothpaste. The smile and relief seen on the faces of these families and children after receiving the help is our driving force towards spreading good deeds.

As the saying goes, "there is a silver lining amid dark clouds". The State Government announced a state-wise lockdown in light of the exacerbating COVID cases in April. Everyone was confined to their homes; once again technology became the savior. Under the SURE project, as we interact with the working and disadvantaged children it was a troublesome task to connect with them virtually but through the relentless efforts of our team members, we were able to teach 10-15 children the use of zoom application in each sports club. Gradually, we initiated and organized a summer camp for children to engage them creatively and make their span of lockdown fun. The summer camp was conducted for 7 days in which each day our team members took the one-hour long session on yoga classes, art and craft from waste materials, mask making, quiz competition, storytelling and report writing

Exciting times during lockdown



for Balaknama news. Children showed great zeal and enthusiasm and more than 40 children participated in the activities, they learned various new and innovative things and released their mental stress. The

summer camp was fruitful in inculcating some creativity amongst children and also acted as a stress buster during these turbulent times.

Fire broke disaster

As we were coping with the consequences of the COVID, some of the communities experienced devastating fires. In Shaheed Camp, a massive fire broke in mid-night at a cloth factory, and 30-35 households got severely burnt. All the belongings of the people were burnt and hampered. They were left with nothing, in a moment their shelter, food, clothing, and other essential materials were completely burnt. Children lost all their study resources and the families were dismal. Considering the vulnerability of the situation,



emergency relief support was given to the children and their families in the form

of dry ration packs which contained a packet of rice, a packet of flour, oil and spices, health and hygiene kits, stationery kits, plastic tubs, mugs and tarpaulin in the slums of West Delhi. The distribution drive was conducted under the surveillance of local authorities, following all the necessary precautions of COVID-19. In our efforts to provide emergency support to the victims of the fire, we helped more than 50 families who lost everything to stabilize their condition.

Virtual Evaluation of the project

Sports for United Resilience (SURE) started in the year 2019 intending to increase the potential to improve the lives of 400 most vulnerable street-connected children (SCC) in West Delhi through sports and alternative education to deal with daily life challenges. The major tenure of the project was spent under the pandemic; however, we followed an adaptive management strategy and altered our activities without hampering the goal of the project. As every good thing comes to an end, similarly the pilot project of sports with the support of Toybox charity is at its last stage.

Evaluation is a **process** that critically examines a project. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a program, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions. The evaluation process of the SURE project started in May, since the outbreak of coronavirus was explicit; the evaluation process was carried out virtually. The SURE team members, project coordinators, M&E coordinator, and Emily MEAL coordinator from Toybox Charity all joined in the virtual evaluation of the project, wherein some activities were conducted virtually like participation ladder, poll questions, staff review documents, and long discussions on the challenges and achievements of the project.

Strengthening the unheard voices

Every year on April 12th, **International Day for Street Children** is celebrated to provide a voice for **children** that live on the **street** so their rights cannot be ignored. CHETNA works relentlessly for the upliftment of the street-connected children and fosters to empower their voice by providing them a platform to reach the masses. As the pandemic struck the world, the atrocities and miseries of children living on the streets excruciate. The battle of survival became significant for them but these brave hearts did not lose hope instead they courageously and fearlessly fought the battle of survival. To appreciate their struggles and empower their voices, on the

occasion of International Day for Street children that are celebrated on April 12 every year, CHETNA organized a street talk for the children to share their stories of struggle and how did they overcome the hurdles during the pandemic. Children fearlessly shared their stories which were streamed live on various social media. The streaming was seen by the masses and it was appreciated and encouraged by everyone. Children felt empowered by sharing their stories and expressed their gratitude. Beneficiaries of the SURE project shared their stories on how they have utilized their skills learned through sports in overcoming difficult situations.

Celebrating International Day
For Street Children



STREET TALK-IV

Providing a platform to street children to narrate their stories of struggles, emotions, perseverance, and life turning opportunities.



12 April 2021
 **YouTube**
11:30am-1:00pm

www.chetnango.org

Transforming lives through sports

Hailing from a small town in Bihar, Sunita (name changed) and her family came to Delhi a few years back in search of employment and since then they have been residing in the slums of South Delhi. There are 7 members in her family. Her father is a rickshaw puller and her mother works as a domestic worker. She is the eldest amongst her siblings and looks after the household chores. The family has spent their lives under strenuous circumstances. She was always inclined to study, but the burden of responsibilities did not allow her to pursue her dreams. Her intervention with CHETNA's educator was a life turning event for her, as she became a courageous independent woman from an introverted and reticent person.

During the span of lockdown, the miseries of the family increased manifold as their work was put on hold and they were in a destitute condition. They were in a hand-to-mouth situation. The family struggled to meet their basic needs. Gradually as the terror of COVID started depleting and life was coming back on



track, her parents resumed their work. She was not able to continue her online studies as there was no recharge on her phone. But she was determined to continue her learning through studies and sports. She earned a handful of money by working in a shop and got her phone recharged through that money. The learning that she derived from playing the local games like building leadership qualities, effective communication, and managing stress made her resolve her problems and also made her help her family financially.

As her parents resumed their work, she used to stay at her home and look after the household chores because of which she did not get time to come to the sports club. Our educator convinced her parents and made them realize the importance of sports and education. She then used to manage her time and came to the sports club. Presently, she is performing well in her studies and also incorporated life skills into her life.

Building strong relationships: Police Visits



The street-connected children have more interaction with police authorities. A police week is observed in February to mark the importance of the commendable work done by our police for protecting us. On this special week, beneficiaries under the SURE project were taken to the

nearest police station and they interacted with the local authorities. The fear of children towards police was reduced and it helped them to create a friendly bond with them. Beneficiaries also gifted some handmade cards to the police officers to appreciate and encourage the

relentless work that they do to protect us. The police authorities were also sensitized towards the children and their concerns.

We have taken consent from children and parents to upload their photos.