

(Ensuring high-retention rate of street-connected children in Government school)

Winning against all odds: Adapting new ways for Street to School

The street to school project was initiated in 2015 to admit and retain street connected children in local government schools. Consisting of a combined package of activities such as home visits, school visits, teachers' training, parents' meetings, providing remedial education and life skills workshops to children, this model has emerged as a huge success, and is observing exponential increase in the number of beneficiaries every year. In 2021, Street to School reached out to 566 direct beneficiaries. Currently, the project is implemented in the East and South East district of Delhi.

Gradually, as the country was overcoming the pandemic, our team members stepped into the field to get back to action and teach children personally. The clouds of troubles were not far away and they



hovered over us in the form of the second wave of COVID-19. The second wave of COVID-19 was lethal and its consequences were catastrophic. Again the lockdown was imposed, making the movement restricted and turning back to the screens of mobile and laptops. Our educators put forth all their efforts in staying in touch with children and

shared videos of general knowledge, maths, quizzes and English with the children.

Since, the majority of our beneficiaries did not have enough money to get their phones recharged; CHETNA helped them by getting their phones recharged so that they can have a hassle free education. Children's issues and problems were also taken into consideration and immediate support and solutions were provided to them. By good fortune unlock began and our team members resumed their work on field without causing much loss.

The difficult times can come anytime and anywhere. It is important to be prepared for such trying times and work efficiently in any circumstances. The pandemic may stay longer than we have imagined but it has taught us many things and upgraded each one of our technological knowledge.

Empowering Stakeholders through new methods

To achieve the goal of a project there are several activities that are composed to achieve those goals. The street to school project focuses on the retention of the children in school. The initial years are vital in a child's life which helps them to shape their future. In this regard, parents play a pivotal role, their encouragement and support in a child's life is as important as education. A parent meeting is a vital activity that is being conducted in the project. Prior to the pandemic, these meetings were conducted with a large number of parents in an open space, where certain topics like child rights, child laws and importance of education were discussed. Parents enthusiastically participated and took interest in educating their children.

As the pandemic stepped into our lives, it created a huge transformation in possibly all the activities conducted at the education club. The parent meeting was conducted with many alterations without affecting the goal of the project. As the lockdown was imposed to curb the outbreak of COVID-19, the field activities got digitalized through using the various applications. Through zoom calls, video calls and conference calls the parents meeting was conducted, the parents were divided into groups of five and the agendas were to discuss about their current problems, financial problems, discuss about online learning and give information about the school worksheets. The problems of parents were also tried to be resolved in these meetings. Gradually, as the process of unlock began, the team members conducted the parents meeting in the field



following all the norms of social distancing. The meetings were conducted in small groups multiple times to ensure maximum safety. The parents were given awareness on the preventive measures of COVID-19, they were encouraged to get vaccinated. They were also made aware about the various facilities provided by the schools during the time of crisis. As it is correctly said where there is will there is a way, our team members adhere to it and ensure that all the activities are completed without hampering its goals.

Giving Voice to the Voiceless: Support Group Meetings



The voices of children are often ignored and unheard by the society and when it comes to street-connected children their voices are often subjugated and oppressed. To ensure that children's issues and concerns are addressed and their voices are heard, we conducted support group meetings at each contact point under the leadership

and guidance of Badhtekada mleaders. During these meetings, some of the major points of discussion were discussion on children's education, awareness on health and hygiene, update about whether they are regularly attending school or not. The support group meeting provides a platform to the children to indulge

in peer learning and develop problem solving and decision making skills. Their problems are heard carefully and then resolutions are put forward. The agendas of the meeting are also discussed after a keen observation of the problems. Adapting news ways is our strength, during the trying times we adapted new ways of conducting the activities at the contact points. The support group meetings were conducted through phones, video calls and zoom application during the span of lockdown. As the unlock began and team members resumed going on the field these meetings were conducted into

small groups following all the guidelines of COVID-19. These meetings are conducted by children every month and they decide upon the agendas as well like prevention from COVID-19, from where they get food, are they able to avail any Government services etc. These meetings are highly effective and strengthen the federation of children.

Regaining the lost connections

The rate of migration in India is gigantic, the push and pull factors work seamlessly. Delhi is the country's biggest hub of migration as people find ample of opportunities for their survival. However, the occurrence of pandemic created turbulence in people's life, leaving them with little or zero resources. Such difficult times pushed people to return to their native places which resulted in a huge dropout rate of children from schools. Closely working with the school children, it became our sole responsibility to verify their physical presence. In East Delhi, the physical

verification of 368 children was conducted by a team member of management group, through home visits, and conducting fun activities. The outcome of the physical verification were that, number of estimated children who went to their native place and children who are in Delhi were identified, problems faced by children and their parents during the pandemic was identified, problems while conducting the online learning and also problems regarding phone recharge was also discussed during the verification.

The aim of the physical

verification was not only to verify the physical presence of children rather it was to identify the problems faced by the parents during the tenure of pandemic.

During this whole process the children were able to share their problems freely with the team members. The result of the physical verification was to connect with more children and stay in contact with the children who went out of station. It was a fruitful process through which the team was able to identify the number of children in contact.

Strengthening connections and building networks

Home visits are major component of the project. The home visits ensure that the connection between educators, children and parents remain intact. During the COVID, as all the activities transformed, similarly the nature of conducting home visits also changed. All hail to the technology for making things accessible and quite easy to connect. The home visits were conducted through conference calls, video calls and zoom calls wherein the team members discussed about the current financial condition of the parents, provided them psychological and mental support during these unprecedented times. The home visits are a way which helps us to make a strong connection with the parents and



children and it proved fruitful during the pandemic times. Through these home visits the needs assessment of the families were done regarding the scarcity of food, education materials

for children and clothes and accordingly their needs were fulfilled.

School visits are another vital component of the project which focuses on strengthening the relations with the stakeholders. Prior to the pandemic, the team members visited schools and used to gather updates about the performance of children. As the pandemic took a toll over our lives, the school visits were conducted over calls with the teachers and principle. The team members gathered information regarding the worksheets, ration distribution, stationery distribution and exam details. The team members communicated this information to the children and time to time children received various kinds of support from the school.



Sharing Knowledge: Quiz Competitions

It is rightly said “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.” Knowledge never gets obsolete, with the fast pacing environment and it is highly import to upgrade knowledge from time to time to keep on a level with each other. Considering this CHETNA organized a quiz competition for all the team members to upgrade their knowledge about various

schemes, laws and rights of children, as they are closely working with them on a daily basis. With great zeal and enthusiasm various team members from across the locations participated in the quiz competition.

The competition was conducted in two parts. The first part was on a project level where only team members of street to school

participated and the second part was on a larger level with the whole CHETNA team. The team members tried their best to give a strong competition to others and also answered some questions. It was a great medium of increasing the knowledge of the team members along with giving them opportunity to participate and showcase their talent.

Empowering beneficiaries through life skills

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life. Prior to the occurrence of pandemic, the life skills sessions were conducted in schools with children and they were given awareness on various child rights, child laws and health and hygiene. The school premises were used to conduct the life skills workshop after the permission of the school principal and the children were given basic knowledge about child helpline number 1098 and how to stop child labor and promote education amongst children.

The pandemic changed the ways in which the activities were conducted, life skills sessions were conducted through zoom video calls. Children, school teachers and principle took part enthusiastically. The agendas of the life skill sessions modified to spreading



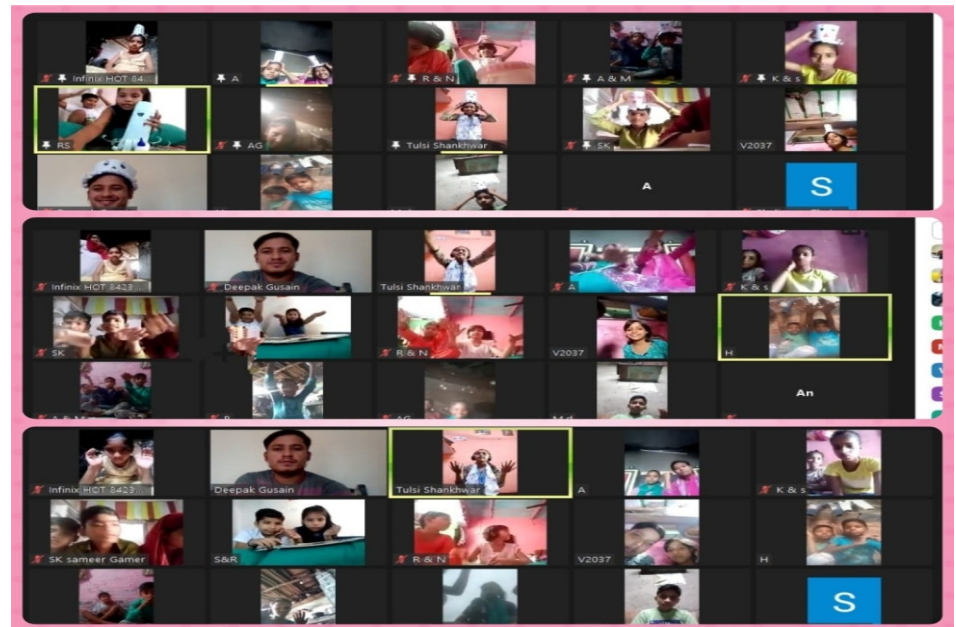
awareness about the preventive measures of COVID-19, they were informed about the child rights. The life skills such as leadership, team work and

effective communication were also instilled in them to help them combat the real life challenges.

Exciting times amidst chaos

Summer is a time of fun and frolic. With the closure of school since past one year, the children are confined to the four walls, being glued to mobile screens. The summer holidays have always been exciting and throw up new ways of learning. Under, the street to school project, a weeklong virtual summer camp was organized for the children. The children participated with a great zeal and enthusiasm in the virtual summer camp. Everyday different activities were planned, to enhance the creativity of children and given them major learning.

The summer camp witnessed the participation of more than 50 children every day, and as the days progressed the participation rate increased. The activities which were taken up in summer camp was maths activity, yoga sessions, art and craft sessions, science sessions, storytelling,



fun activities etc. The summer camp was conducted through zoom video call and children were beforehand informed about the essential materials required for the activities. The organization of summer camp helped

the children to learn new things in an innovative manner and increase their skills and knowledge. The summer camp proved to be highly influential for the beneficiaries and it also helped us to maintain a good rapport with them.

Informed citizen is a better citizen

Training is an essential part of the project. Trainings are conducted from time to time to ensure the quality of work and spread awareness. Apart from conducting parents meeting, parents training also form a core part of the activities under street to school project. Parents training are conducted to empower parents and sensitize them towards child rights and child laws. During the initial years of growing, a child is nurtured and taken care by their parents. Being responsible citizens, it is our responsibility to literate parents and spread awareness about the actions that they can take if any injustice happens with the children.

During the parents training, the parents were given training on various topics like child rights, child helpline numbers and child laws. They were



informed to be aware about the rights of their children and encourage them to study rather than indulge in child labor. Even during the pandemic, we ensured to conduct parents training

virtually. The main agenda of these trainings are to make parents well informed citizens and seek help of the various Government services which are exclusively formed for the children.

Identity is basis of Life



Aadhar Card is a unique identification number that serves as an identity purpose for the citizens of India. Aadhar is mandatory for getting admission in school, getting hospitalized in hospitals or availing any Government facility, without Aadhar card many services are not available for people. The children with whom we closely work at times lack Aadhar card because of which they face identity crisis and are unable to avail many services. Over the time, the value of Aadhar card has increased manifold, it has become essential to have Aadhar card.

Considering the importance of Aadhar cards, CHETNA under street to school project put forth the initiative of making and updating the Aadhar cards of the children. The team members faced many problems while getting the Aadhar cards updated, the centre requires important documents which children at times lack because of which their cards were rejected and took longer than usual to get their cards updated. The major issue faced by the team members regarding the Aadhar Cards was that children lack access to smart phones because of which it was difficult to get OTPs and they at times change their numbers. The process of getting Aadhar cards updated is



cumbersome and time taking, our team members worked hard to get the Aadhar cards made and successfully they were able to get 328 beneficiaries their Aadhar cards. After completing the process, the happiness on children's faces and the satisfaction of availing Government services and continuing studies without any obstacle is incomparable.

Regular Monitoring: A key to success



Monitoring and Evaluation is used to assess the performance of projects, institutions and programs set up by governments, international organizations and NGOs. Its goal is to improve current and future management of outputs, outcomes and impact. The efficiency and effectiveness of a project is measured through continuous monitoring and evaluation. The management team members ensure to organize monthly

meetings with the team members working on the forefront. During these meetings, the action plans and previous month's progress are discussed and resolutions of problems are also identified.

During the span of pandemic these team meetings were held online, and as unlock began the teams were conducted in person. The team meetings are platform which helps to know more about the work

accomplished in a month and it also provides an opportunity of peer learning. The team members learn from each other and try to implement those learning on field which enhances the effectiveness of the project and leads to better outcomes. The team meetings are the strength through which it becomes easy to achieve the project goals and also helps to nurture the team members.

Bridging the Gap: Online Stakeholder Meetings

The second wave of COVID-19 hit the country when it was least expected and the country was not prepared for its consequences. The second wave was so lethal that it took many lives leaving many children orphaned, parents without children. The grief and pain of losing a near one is indescribable and it cannot be shared with anyone. In this view, the Central and State Government took some initiatives of providing some

relief support to the families through giving them monetary benefits and educational support to the children.

Working for children, and with children, it is the responsibility of CHETNA to give the benefits of the schemes to the children and act as a bridge between the Government and children. CHETNA at a larger level organized various stakeholder consultation meetings in which briefly the benefits of the schemes

were discussed and how children can avail these services. The team members of street to school participated and gained ample of knowledge regarding various schemes and laws for the children. They also put forth their queries which were immediately resolved by the speakers. The team members are the medium through which the affected children can avail the benefits.