



Progress Report

Name of the Project: Prevent school drop out of children in and discharged from Children's and Observation homes

Project Period: Ongoing

Reporting Period: 1st July to 30th September 2016

Project Goal: Project Objectives:

- Information gathering
- Remedial Education
- Home Visits
- Relationship Building
- Counseling
- Mainstreaming with/without financial assistance
- Follow up to ensure children continue in school

Activities & Achievements: Children in observation homes are one of the most marginalized populations in Mumbai.

The children who live in these Homes come from different states of India and are educated in a Marathi medium school run by the Home. The language difference makes it difficult for them to learn. Remedial education helps in coaching the children in the Marathi language as well as their school subjects thereby helping them understand what they are learning and maintaining their interest to continue education once discharged from the Home.

Sahaara staff procures addresses of discharged children from the home authorities. The social workers then traverse through labyrinthine gullies of Mumbai slums searching for the children's residences. Through such home visits, networking with local schools, facilitating assistance in books and materials, the child is facilitated entry into formal education paving the way to a bright future.

During the period July to September 2016, 168 children were provided with coaching, stationery and experiential learning in Chembur Children's Home, Bal Kalyan Nagari and David Sassoon Industrial School.

Information regarding 26 discharged children was gathered from the Home authorities. These children have been visited through personal home visits. Through family and individual counseling, these children have been provided with the opportunity of continuing education.

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Coaching Story:

DISCOVERING POTENTIAL

Families fight; it is something almost every person in the world has experienced. However, it is a rare day when your father comes home and murders your mother. Krishna* was around 5 years old when he found himself in this situation in 2012.

Krishna had been living on the streets in the slum area of Khar, Mumbai. The area around him was dirty and crowded, filled with many people and unsafe for children. He used to beg on these same streets every day, as his parents were not able to take care of him and his elder sister.

Krishna's father was an alcoholic and used to physically abuse his wife every night. It was on one such day, under the influence of alcohol, that he murdered his wife. The police heard of the incident and arrested him, sending Krishna to live in New Observation Home (NOH) in 2012.

We met him in 2014 in Chembur Children's Home (CCH) where he had been shifted. Sahaara conducts coaching classes for children in CCH, supporting them through their time at school with remedial education.

When we first met Krishna, he was malnourished and shabbily dressed. We noticed that he frequently got into physical fights with the other children, pinching his classmates and acting in a generally aggressive manner. He was emotionally disturbed and easily irritated by his surroundings. Krishna was also hesitant to participate in any class activities and his concentration levels were poor.

Once we realised this, we made it a point to interact with him regularly, trying to counsel him and learn what his story was. After a while, he began to talk to us. He began to take our advice, attending class in neat clothes and greeting the children and teachers politely when he came to class in the morning. He also began to pay attention to his studies and that is when we began to see his potential.

Krishna scored good grades in his tests in the following year of 2015! Recently, he took responsibility when we asked him to be the class monitor for a week, behaving in a polite and calm manner that influenced his classmates to do likewise.

Today, Krishna enjoys participating in all the skits, action songs, poetry recitals and art and craft activities like flower-making and colouring that we conduct during our classes. He has also opened up emotionally, letting us know when he is sad that no family member comes to visit him in CCH.

We are so amazed to see these changes in Krishna across the last two years. We hope we are on the road to helping many young boys and girls like Krishna discover their own potential as we support and equip them to face life ahead as much as possible!

*Names changed to protect identity

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Tracking Story

LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

It is a famous saying that not all those who wander are lost. But there are times when we are not sure what to do with our lives and begin to wander in hope of some clarity.

Simran* lives in Mumbra East, in the outskirts of Mumbai city. Her father left her and her two older brothers when they were young. Consequently, her mother remarried and her new stepfather brought his three children to live in the house as well. Simran studied until 6th standard in Urdu Municipal School close to where she lived. She then dropped out of school at around the age of 12, as she felt uninterested in pursuing her education. For the next two years, she stayed at home, eventually beginning to wander around the area where she lived with no particular aim, just a longing to get out of the house during the day.

In June 2016, she wandered away from home and found herself in Kurla, one of the railway stations in the city. The police picked her up and admitted her to Umerkhadi Observation Home (UOH) so that she could be cared for and protected.

Sahaara works in UOH alongside the home authorities, tracking down the homes of the children who are brought to this home. Simran's case was referred to us and we began to talk to her.

Soon, we were also able to track down Simran's family based on the description of the place she remembered as her home. We visited her family, assuring them that Simran was safe in UOH and would be cared for until she could be officially released back to them.

We also simultaneously began to counsel Simran's mother and stepfather about the importance of re-admitting her to school so she could pursue her education. We encouraged them to pay more attention to her so that she would be cared for and have a better chance at a fulfilling life with the chance of employment after her education. We also discussed the possibility that she could be admitted to a vocational training course for tailoring or similar activities so that she gains a skill.

We submitted our visit reports to the home authorities and the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and Simran was released from the home on 4th July, fourteen days after she came to live there.

We were glad we could encourage Simran and her family to think about the future and help them understand the importance of getting an education. We visited Simran's home after she was released and her mother let us know that they are seriously considering sending Simran for a vocational course. We hope to see Simran again soon pursuing her education and looking forward to a brighter future!

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