

Our Experience at Saath Charitable Trust's CFS Center

Shelter, nutrition, education— that is what we knew about Saath's CFS project when we showed up to the Bakeri City site on our first day of our internship.

As we began volunteering, not only did our perception of the world change, but our definition of CFS evolved.



October 20: Today was the first day we actually started teaching the kids since we spent all of last week observing the class. We started by asking all the older kids to write both the Gujarati and English alphabets. Earlier in the week we had noticed that most students were very comfortable with doing this, but (for some strange reason) today, “G” was grossly distorted, “N” suddenly preceded “M”, and “X”, “Y”, and “Z” ceased to exist. So we rolled up our sleeves, and hunkered down, ready to reteach the whole thing. After two hours of mindumbing repetition, we realised that the kids kept looking to the board behind us, someone had written the aforementioned incorrect alphabet.



November 14: Today was picture day— at least partially. Picture day in the states involved a lengthy affair complete with green screen backdrops and fancy clothes. But today, we went to the colony behind the classroom and visited the homes of some of the kids that come to the classroom. Although some pictures were heartbreaking, most of the kids had fun posing for the camera (apparently the peace sign is the coolest new thing on the block).



November 26: We got to the site today and the teachers greeted us at the gate; there was no power. The older girls had to walk to the back and fro the colony to fill buckets of water for the classroom. The air was unbearably thick (as post-monsoon season entails) and the inside of the classroom was like a brick oven without functional fans, so we kept the kids outside. We played tag, duck duck goose, and dodgeball. It was a great day. We've decided that our goal should be to show them how to have fun while learning.

December 12: We honestly thought today would be a total training week, but the kids really surprised us. We took the DaVinci car model today that we received as a donation earlier this month, even though it was a little more advanced than the puzzles we usually brought for the kids. On the (unusually) bright side Pankaj, Manoj, Vrinkle, and Sonal loved assembling the car. These kids might not have the opportunities that we do but they have so much potential.

January 1: We officially launched the Spark a Smile campaign today and visited the site for the last time in the year. These past few months haven't been necessarily easy, or even easily rewarding, but if just one kid made it, we would say that all of this effort is worth it— it really is.

January 31: We collected 3,209 dollars through Global Giving fundraiser. Not quite to our goal, but more than enough to change their lives. It seems fitting seeing as they have changed ours. CFS is not only a place where Saath provides immediate resources and relief to laborers and their families, but also project that helps student secure a future (one that their parents never had the chance to live): complete without nutrition, health, education, literacy, world exposure, shelter, and most of all a chance to be a kid.



It's easy to be whimsically ambitious about bringing a change. It's easy to plan and it's easy to talk big-- but the reality is that until we saw it with our own eyes, we only had an inkling of the real hardships millions around the world face. We realised that it's not about educating all the kids at once. It's about celebrating their small victories one day at a time, every correctly written "G", every comical picture, and every last smile.

By:
Hridi and Hrika (Names changed)
Volunteers (USA)
25th February, 2019