



SAATH CHARITABLE TRUST

# CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES

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## A NOTE

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**SAATH**  
*Creating Inclusive Societies*

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# CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES

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## BACKGROUND

### CONSTRUCTION WORKERS CHILDREN

India is changing and modernizing quickly, urbanization being the most visible aspect. New infrastructures are being built on a mass scale; malls and high-rise buildings are springing up overnight. Expanding and fast growing construction sector and, in general, lack of greater employment opportunity elsewhere has drawn large number of workers in this sector. Approximately 35 million men and women work in this sector and they are entirely unorganised.

Millions of unskilled porters, bricklayers and other low-caste labourers have left their native villages to escape extreme rural poverty and find a job in big cities. These migrant workers are spread across the country and travel from one area of work to another along with their families. They live in temporary settlements, sometimes provided by the construction company, for the duration of the construction project and then move to another site. These itinerants usually belong to the poorest section of the population and most of them are illiterate. Being migrants, they don't get registered and hence are denied basic government provided facilities.

Their children including infants – estimated to be around 54 million – are even more vulnerable. The children living on construction sites often suffer from malnutrition, accidents, abuse, and innumerable health problems. There are no systems to take care of these children at work site despite the “Building and other construction workers (regulation of employment and conditions of service) Act, 1996”, that stipulates that if more than fifty female workers are employed, day care space should be provided for their children.

Children within the construction community have an especially low school enrolment rate. Construction workers live as a migrating community, continuously moving from one construction site to another. They themselves are often unsure of their next location and usually stay at one place for less than six months. Moreover, during the monsoon seasons and periods of unemployment, they move back to their native villages. This constant movement prevent them from enrolling their children in schools. Many of the parents are illiterate and therefore do not value the importance of their child's education.

The situation is further worsened by the apathy of the education system and the government towards the plight of these children. There is a lack of proper implementation of laws, such as Right to Education (RTE), as well as inadequate facilities for migrant children in most government schools. The challenges created by the lifestyle of these children and the ineffectiveness of the education system result in a huge gap in the education of children in India.

### SAATH'S EXPERIENCE

Saath has been running **CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES** (CFS) classes for the children of construction workers since 2008 to provide them informal education with health and nutrition support by running classes at the construction sites. The aim of this project is to create an interest in education with the children, their parents, construction site owners, and in enrolling their children in a formal school setup giving them better opportunities for their future.

So far Saath has implemented the CFS project in 34 construction sites in Ahmedabad, Surat and Hyderabad put together – managed to reach over 5,000 children. Through CFS more than 25 medical check-up camps have been successfully carried out and more than 160 children have been restored to health. CFS has also conducted 131 outings for these children taking them to various public and educational places.

## CHILD FRIENDLY SPACES (CFS)

Through CFS, we aim to bridge the gap that currently exists in connecting construction workers' children with the education system. The CFS classes are specially designed to increase awareness of these workers regarding the importance of education, while simultaneously highlighting the government's need to reform the education system to accommodate these children. We intend to create a mutual consciousness so that in the long run the government helps to increase enrolment of these children.

We also conduct meetings with the parents, employers, and construction site owners, counsel them and hold discussions to create an interest in education.

The long term goals in brief of the project are:

- To create interest towards education in the communities
- To provide access to quality education
- To create awareness of health issues of children at construction sites
- To sensitize the construction worker community, their employers and government education system towards the issue of child labour

## CORE ACTIVITIES

**LEARNING ACTIVITIES:** Classes are run regularly for the entire day – 10 am to 5 pm, when their parents are working, 6 days a week. Educational activities in each class depend on the environment of construction site, age of the children, and schooling level of the children. A participatory method of education is followed. The idea is to encourage learning through fun; children do not feel burdened at an early age with the conventional, stressful methods of teaching and learning. The various activities that the children do in the class could be broadly categorized under the following categories:

- Play
- Social Interaction
- Physical Development
- Language Development
- Emotional development
- Cognitive Development





AGE GROUP (1 TO 14)	AGE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES	COMMON ACTIVITIES
1 to 3	Toys/Games	Awareness activities regarding Health, Supplementary Nutrition and Immunization
3 to 6	Charts /Songs/Story Books/Toys	
6 to 9	Language, Environment, Basic Math, Exposure Visits	
9 to 14	Reading, Writing, Math, Visits	

**EXPOSURE VISITS:** The children are taken on visits to various places such as parks, zoo, historical monuments and museums to carry out learning activities through exposure. Most of the children have never been given a chance to go out of the construction site. Therefore, these visits serve as a huge eye opener, helping them broadening their horizons.

**TEACHER TRAININGS:** The teacher trainings are organised at regular intervals. They serve as a refresher for the teachers as they learn new ways to teach the courses to the children. Feedbacks from the teachers are taken after the trainings. The future class activities are monitored to ensure that the learnings are implemented. The teacher's trainings are focused on the following issues:

- Milestones and Developmental Stages of a Child
- Understanding a Child (Basics of Child Psychology)
- Roles and Responsibilities of a teacher
- How to develop an effective curriculum and planning
- Different teaching methodologies
- Classroom Environment
- Parent Involvement
- Health, Hygiene and Nutrition

**NUTRITION SUPPORT:** Many children at the sites suffer from malnutrition which leads to further health and development problems. An integral part of CFS is to improve the nutritional food intake of children and make them and their parents aware of the importance of a balanced and nutritional diet. Providing nutritious food including fruits and vegetables is a major concern at the CFS centres. The children are given a nutritious snack each day, fried and local items are avoided, fruits and milk are heavily encouraged.

A weekly plan is made by the teachers for providing nutrition to children. Each day consists of different nutritional plan, for example, Day 1: fruits, Day 2: *Khichdi*, Day 3: boiled vegetables and so on.

**PARENT TEACHER MEETINGS:** The meetings are regularly organised by the teachers to share with the parents the progress of their child in the class, as well as the health status of the child. Teachers keep a detailed record of each child to give to the parents. Feedback from the parents is used to help improve the curriculum. The teachers also schedule meetings with the employers of the parents in order to create further awareness about the issue and to gain more support.

**HEALTH CHECKUPS:** Many children coming to the CFS centres are malnourished. Moreover, the children at the construction sites are living in an unsafe and unhealthy environment, with constant exposure to unclean water, cement particles, sand, paint fumes, and other dangerous chemicals which leads to various health problems. Health check-ups are therefore essential, and are conducted at regular intervals to improve the health of the children.

**LINKING CHILDREN TO FORMAL EDUCATION:** Parents and children are regularly counselled to emphasize the importance of education. Children are directed to a nearby education facility and enrolled in special classes to prepare them for later enrolment in the regular, formal education system.

**TEACHERS MONITORING AND EVALUATION:** Monthly monitoring meetings are held with teachers to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of a particular curriculum. By evaluating the previous months activities, the schedule for the upcoming month is prepared. The following aspects are evaluated:

- Number of children in the class
- Attempt to link children in formal education
- Number of children enrolled in mainstream schools
- Change in children's behaviour and habits (like health, hygiene, interest towards education)

## **PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Monthly monitoring meetings are done with the teachers at the head office along with the programme head.

### **REPORTS:**

- A monthly narrative reports are generated by each centre about its activities, facilitations, and linkages
- Quarterly narrative and financial reports are generated and shared

### **PLANS:**

- Annual Plans are prepared to set a roadmap

### **MEETINGS:**

- Weekly Group meetings and monthly review meetings are organized

### **Visits:**

- Visits will be organised on a regular basis at the centres by us as well as externals



## SUCCESS STORIES

### SHEETAL EMERGING OUT AS A LEADER

Sheetal Minama, an energetic kid of 9 years, is wiser compared to her age group. However, she was totally different when she started coming to CFS centre in January, 2016. She would not mix with others and did not like to read or write. She would not engage with anyone and would observe activities from a distance. She refused to go for picnics or exposure visit as she did not like to go out. It was difficult to say whether it was because of her introversion, fear, or initial apprehension. But as time passed, she turned out to be a confident child in her class.



Now, she makes other children read the chart. She has overcome her fear and shyness and talks freely with everyone including the teachers. She has opened up and shares her household concerns too. She is equally friendly with visitors. She writes well and makes other children write properly. She helps other children if they find any difficulties in their class work. Her leadership skill is apparent now. She teaches others as if she were a teacher. She makes other children read, write and sing. She takes part in all exposure visits and outings.

She loves studying. If a teacher is on leave for a day, she would ask her the reason why she did not come. She talks about her dreams, *"I want to become a teacher when I grow up. I would teach children the way you teach."*

### GAINING CONFIDENCE IN WRITING

Rahul, who is six and a half years old, attends Simplex Colony's Non-Formal Education (NFE) Class. He is the youngest child to his parents and his two siblings Ajay and Sunita, who are also in the class. The family belongs to Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh. They migrated to Ahmedabad for better livelihood.

He along with his siblings joined the centre in August, 2016. The family paid no attention to sending their children to school. He used to come dirty to class and would never take part in any activities.

Overtime, we saw an improvement in his hygiene. He is also learning how to write – an interesting transition: he would not write if instructed to do so. However, he enjoyed drawing.

With special attention to finer movements of holding pencil, he gradually learnt letter specific movements. By end of October, i.e. in three months, he grasped many concepts.





His parents are glad that Rahul and other siblings are regular at class. They are tension free as their children get meal on time. Both of them are earning well and manage to save as children get free meal and education. Rahul wants be a responsible citizen when he grows up.

