



SAATH
Creating Inclusive Societies

Child Friendly Spaces (CFS)

Building Secure and Nurturing Spaces for Children Living in Construction Sites



ABOUT SAATH

Saath Charitable Trust is a Gujarat-based non-profit organisation established in 1989 by Mr Rajendra Joshi. The organisation works to empower vulnerable urban and rural communities by developing inclusive and sustainable solutions in the areas of livelihood, education, health, governance and child rights. With over three decades of grassroots engagement, Saath has enabled thousands of individuals—particularly women, youth and marginalised groups—to build secure and dignified futures through capacity-building, entrepreneurship support and integrated development models. Recognised for its participatory and community-driven approach, Saath collaborates closely with local institutions and government agencies to create long-term, scalable impact.

Among its key education initiatives is the Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) programme, implemented at construction sites across Ahmedabad. The programme addresses the unique vulnerabilities faced by migrant children, whose lives are often marked by constant mobility, unsafe living conditions and disrupted access to schooling. Child Friendly Spaces establish dedicated learning and care environments within construction sites, providing stability, safety and continuity during critical early childhood years. By delivering education and child development services directly within the communities where families live and work, the programme ensures that highly transient and marginalised children are not excluded from essential early learning opportunities.

Child Friendly Spaces (CFS)

Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) are safe and structured environments established at construction sites to support the holistic development of children growing up in highly vulnerable conditions. Many of these children face poverty, malnutrition, unsafe surroundings and disrupted access to education. CFS provides a nurturing space where children can learn, play and receive emotional support, along with daily nutritious meals and hygiene awareness. By creating stability and routine within transient communities, the programme strengthens children's physical, emotional and cognitive foundations.

Till date, CFS has benefited **12,269 children** across the Ahmedabad and Jaipur centres, with **505 children enrolled into formal schools**. As of February 2026, **313 children** are currently attending the centres, continuing their journey towards mainstream education with confidence and resilience.





Core Components of CFS

A. Safe, Structured Environment

CFS are secure, child-friendly physical spaces that promote emotional safety and offer structure through guided daily routines. They function as protective bubbles amidst unsafe and unpredictable surroundings.

B. Child-Centered Activities

Every activity in a CFS is designed with the child's developmental stage in mind. Activities include:

- Group games and physical movement to support motor skills
- Art, music, storytelling, and drama to foster creativity
- Informal learning and life skill-building
- Emotional expression through drawing, role play, and discussions

C. Psychosocial & Emotional Support

Trained facilitators observe children closely, offer supportive listening, and create trust-based relationships. Signs of trauma or distress are identified early, and referrals to professional support services are made when necessary.

D. Parent and Community Engagement

CFS works closely with caregivers and community members to build a safety net around the child. Engagement includes:

- Awareness sessions on child protection, rights, and mental well-being
- Parenting workshops on discipline, communication, nutrition, and hygiene
- Feedback loops to adapt activities based on community needs

E. Linkages to Essential Services

CFS acts as a bridge to vital services, including:

- Health checkups and referrals
- Nutrition and food support
- Early education and school enrollment
- Child protection systems and counseling

Case Stories

Aarav Journey from Construction Site to School

Construction Site: Rajyash Construction Site

Child's Name: Aarav Rameshbhai (Name Changed)

Age: 6 years

Gender: Male

Father's Name and Occupation: Rameshbhai Nayak
(Name changed) – Construction worker

Mother's Name and Occupation: Kiranben Nayak
(Name changed) Construction worker

Village Address: Sindhal – Choksi Faliya, Taluka – Vagra

Siblings: Two sisters

Health Status: Normal



Aarav's (Name Changed) family originally belongs to Sindhal – Choksi Faliya in Vagra taluka, Bharuch district, Gujarat. They were once dependent on farming for their livelihood. However, due to severe financial difficulties and the responsibility of arranging his sister's marriage,

Aarav's father, Rameshbhai Nayak (name changed), was forced to sell the family's agricultural land. In addition, he had taken a loan which gradually became a heavy financial burden. With no land left to cultivate and mounting debts, continuing farming was no longer possible.

In search of employment and stability, Rameshbhai migrated to Ahmedabad after learning about work opportunities through a friend employed at the Rajesh Construction site. The initial days were difficult. Securing work was uncertain, and arranging accommodation posed another challenge. Eventually, he was hired as a labourer, and the family was provided a small room in the labour colony near the site. Aarav's mother, Kiranben (name changed), also joined as a labourer to support the family income.

Like many migrant children living at construction sites, Aarav spent his early years in an unsafe and unstimulating environment. Both parents worked long hours, leaving limited options for his care during the day. During an outreach visit, a teacher from the crèche centre met the family in the labour colony. She explained the importance of early childhood education and informed them about the crèche facility operating from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm behind the construction site. Understanding that this would provide a safe space for their son while they worked, Aarav's parents agreed to enrol him. At that time, he was four years old.

In the beginning, Aarav struggled to adjust. He cried frequently and was hesitant to stay away from his parents. However, with regular care, patience and encouragement from the teachers, he slowly became comfortable. He began participating in activities, interacting with other children and showing interest in learning.

Seeing his gradual progress, he was transferred to Balwadi, where his basic learning and social skills were further strengthened. He started recognising letters, learning numbers and following simple instructions independently. When Aarav turned five, he was enrolled in the Bridge Course programme for one year to build a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy. During this period, his learning improved significantly. He became more confident, started forming simple words, improved his counting skills and actively participated in classroom activities.

After completing the Bridge Course, Aarav was enrolled in formal schooling and joined the primary school in his native village. He is continuing his studies regularly. The strong foundation built through the programme has helped him adjust smoothly to the school environment and participate with confidence in his learning journey.



Snapshots of Childhood at CFS





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