

सामूहिक पहल

Samuhik Pahal

A Journal of Our Collective Action

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● Reflections

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Muskaan

For nonprofit organisations which have been a part of COVID-19 relief, the last two months have been a whirlwind. For many colleagues this was an experience unlike any other — professionally as well as emotionally. In this section, the Muskaan team reflects on their experiences of working in communities in Madhya Pradesh.

Bookworm

Online platforms have exploded with free and paid educational resources, but how many children can access these? Goa-based nonprofit Bookworm, which promotes love for books and reading, asks some pertinent questions.

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ArtSparks

Is there a way to enhance learning through art? Learn more about the approach followed by ArtSparks and explore their resources.

● Ground Zero

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Korou Education Foundation and RREA

Kharingyo Shimrah and Mathanmi Hungyo have delivered humanitarian aid to more than 2000 families in Manipur — they share their experience of working in a remote location.

Sajag and Vidya Mytri

Insights from Sajag (Maharashtra) and Vidya Mytri (Karnataka) on participating in relief work for the first time.

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In April, Wipro Ltd, Wipro Enterprises Ltd, and Azim Premji Foundation committed Rs 1125 crore towards tackling the unprecedented humanitarian and health care crisis arising from COVID-19. Over the past two months, with the help of over 500 partner-NGOs and Azim Premji Foundation's Field Institutes, we have delivered humanitarian or healthcare aid to close to 80 lakh people in need, in 434 Districts, spread across 29 States and 1 UT.

[CLICK TO VIEW THE MAP](#)

Life in lockdown

We reassured people, humanity reassured us...

By Savita from Team Muskaan

I have young kids at home; everyone was asking me to stay back home during the COVID-19 lockdown. For the initial few days, I stayed at home and answered calls from *bastis* (low-income communities). Finally, one day I decided to visit the Ishwar Nagar *basti*, close to my house.

When I went to the *basti*, I met people who had come from other places and didn't have their ration cards with them. They said since they are unable to get rations, their only option was to go and beg. But the streets were empty, and police were not allowing them to go anywhere. There were hungry children between 2.5 months and 12 years waiting for food. That experience shook me, and I could not stop myself from engaging in the relief work. I started going out to distribute food.

Children in the *basti* haven't had a cup of tea since the last few days. They hear the announcements asking people to maintain cleanliness, but they don't have the money to buy tooth-powder to brush nor soap to wash their hands

During one such visit to Rajiv Nagar *basti*, an old lady narrated her story, and showed the wound police inflicted on her leg with their *lathi* (stick). She said, "How can I expect people to feed me for so many days, that's why I went to a nearby society to beg." When she went to beg with another blind lady, police hit her on her leg. She said helplessly, "अगर भूखा इंसान भीख नहीं मांगेगा तो खायेगा कैसे, बिना खाये कैसे जिन्दा रहेगा? (Translation: If the hungry people don't beg, what will they eat, how will they survive?)

We heard so many people saying, "We have never begged in our life but are forced to do so now."

Experiences of Shyam Nagar *basti* are so disturbing that it brought tears in our eyes. A lady sat outside a temple in the hot sun for three hours, and finally while leaving, she received five rupees with which she bought a packet of biscuits for her children. Children in the *basti* haven't had a cup of tea since the last few days. They hear the announcements asking people to maintain cleanliness, but they don't have the money to buy tooth-powder to brush nor soap to wash their hands. They have been using ash to wash utensils and their hands.

People from Dafale samuday (a community of people), who make and sell dholaks (a kind of drum, musical instrument), have been struggling to make ends meet since the lockdown. One of them went to sell dholak, and

got beaten up by the police. When he said, "We are poor, if we don't work, what will we eat?", police replied, "वो मुझे नहीं पता सरकार इतना सब बाँट रही है फिर भी तुम लोगो का पेट नहीं भरता?" (Translation: I don't know — the government is distributing so many things, still you are not satisfied?) People have no clue what to do, whether to work or not and where to work. Women from Dafale samuday shared that many of them had sold the only gold asset they had -- their nose-ring.

Wherever we go as volunteers, all eyes are on us, expecting some help. It is so difficult to identify the neediest among the needy in those *bastis* — especially since we have limited resources and need to prioritise families in some ways.

We have stories where a small thing like a packet of biscuit, or a watermelon, or supply of oil brings much joy. We hear things like, "बहुत दिनों बाद आज बघारवाला खाना खाएंगे." (Translation: We will be having food cooked in oil after many days.) People are holding the government accountable and have walked down to the Sub Divisional Magistrate's (SDM) office to handover a list of people who are not getting ration.

As part of our efforts to engage children, we have been thinking of using their current experiences as a learning resource and designing something for them. In one such effort, we asked children to write about their experiences of lockdown and the responses we received were heart-warming.

A child wrote, "हम लोग बहुत दिनों से घर में ही हैं, बाहर नहीं जा पाते. कितने दिनों से दाल-चावल ही खा रहे हैं. पहले अम्मी कचरा बीननेजाती थी तो समोसा या कुछ ले आती थी, अब तो कुछ भी नहीं मिलता. दोस्तों से मिलने भी नहीं जा सकते." (Translation: We have been home for so long time, eating only rice and lentils. When our mother used to work as a waste picker, she used to bring us different food to eat once in a while. Now we don't get anything. We can't even go to meet our friends.)

Based on our discussions with people, one area of concern is livelihood. Everyone is worried, especially now with the onset of monsoon. Monsoon months are always difficult for work, and now with the crisis, it is going to be even more challenging to find work. The other concern is the mental health of people. Lack of work opportunities will impact their income and diet which, in turn, will increase their stress and anxiety. For example, in Pardhi samuday, the suicide rates are relatively high, and the crisis can have a significant impact. We will have to particularly focus on these two aspects.

Our team came across stories of how even the needy people are supporting more vulnerable people. In a *basti*

where people from Nepal have taken shelter, local citizens assumed that since these people were in our country, it was their responsibility to help them.

Stories of humanity and hope

by Team Muskaan

Brijesh shares:

लाइन में एक बुजुर्ग, जिनकी उम्र लगभग 75 साल होगी, बैठे हुए थे, उनके हाथ और गर्दन कांप रहे थे, उन्हें जब तीन अंजुली भर के दाल दी तो बोले बस इतना काफी है और चौथी अंजुली दाल लेने से मना कर दिया। उनके चेहरे पर बेचैनी थी किन्तु इतनी अनिश्चितता की स्थिति में भी आँखों में संतोष का भाव दिख रहा था। थोड़ा आश्चर्य हुआ, जहाँ लोग अगली कई पीढ़ियों तक के लिए संसाधन और संपत्ति का संग्रह कर रहे और फिर भी असंतोष से भरे हुए हैं, उनकी लूट की भूख ख़तम नहीं होती, वहाँ उन ज़रूरतमंद ने जिनके पास खाने के लिए कुछ नहीं था, उन्होंने आज की ज़रूरत पूरी होने पर और दाल लेने से मना कर दिया। अक्सर लोगों को कहते हुए सुना है कि गरीबों को कितना भी दे दो इनका पेट नहीं भरता, लेकिन इस अनुभव ने बताया कि वैसा नहीं है जैसा लोग कहते हैं, वे कल की चिंता नहीं करते और आज को जीने पर ही विश्वास करते हैं।

(Translation: There was a 75-year-old man whose hands were trembling as he stood in the line. He took three palms

full of dal (lentils), but when we offered him one more portion, he refused. There was restlessness on his face owing to the prevailing uncertainty, yet there was a sense of fulfillment in his eyes. It was moving to see this because there are so many who have enough for the next few generations but their hunger to loot never ends. We have been hearing that the poor are never satisfied, but this experience proved that they believe in living in the present and are satisfied with what they have.)

Shivani shares:

In Gandhi Nagar *basti*, when we gave some supplies of oil, wheat, and pulses to a group of families we have been acquainted with for a while, they shared their concerns about another group of people--, who were from a different religion, society and were economically worse off. They requested us to ensure they receive food too. In all of this, as we reassure people and they reassure us with their humanity, one wonders where the state is. How could the government not have a plan in place as we entered this crisis? Wasn't this coming for a month or so? How is the government reassuring people? By announcements and schemes?

You can reach out to team Muskaan on muskaan.office@gmail.com



Team Muskaan during COVID-19 relief work

Barriers to e-learning

What prevents children from vulnerable communities to access online resources?

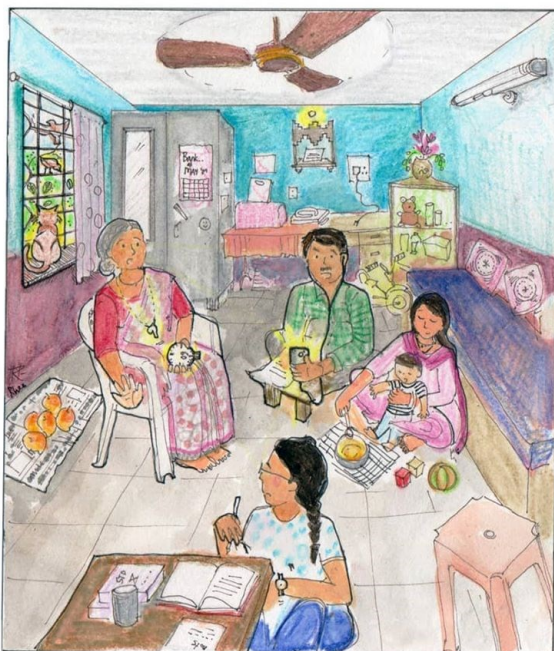
From March 23, the online space exploded with the whole world suddenly turning to the arts and reading. Many websites opened up, publishers began to offer free reading resources, and authors and creators began to put out content for our free use. But, for many of us who work with communities new to literacy, the interest, skills and abilities around reading itself are limited, leave alone reading on virtual platforms. One can't just assume people own a smart device that has high-speed data packs, and is accessible. We decided to do a survey amongst our small network of children and communities who access the Bookworm library through our school program or our outreach program. We soon realised that having data on mobile phones was useless.

More than 50% of the numbers called were either 'out of range', 'switched off' or 'the number does not exist'. When we did get through, we spoke to a family member and, eventually, to the child directly. More than 60% of our call list indicated that families did not own smartphones. We learnt that many families could not recharge their phones as they had no income in April; for most, data packs did not support streaming all video content or speakers and sound capabilities were weak. Overall, each family member had only limited access to the phone. We then wondered, if this was the state of the nation, how can we give these children who are struggling with literacy, a virtual education?? What can compel us to think about the children for whom the digital divide is a reality? Together, let's think of a solution!

We learnt that many families could not recharge their phones as they had no income in April; for most, data packs did not support streaming all video content or speakers and sound capabilities were weak

Share your thoughts and ideas on how nonprofits can work together to make resources accessible to all children on mail@bookwormgoa.in.

Illustrations explaining the barriers to e-learning by Bookworm.



TIME UP! Need to pass the device on.
Need to ration devices



Recharged ?
No Smart phone



What do I do first ? What does this mean ?
Listen or type ? Errgghhhh !
Smart phone navigation

Enhancing learning through art

ArtSparks Foundation works to support the development of learning and life skills using the medium of visual art and design.

ArtSparks's work is rooted in the belief that art is essential to the growth and development of all children, and that all children deserve access to meaningful art education—one that unlocks their minds engages their hearts and ignites creative confidence.

Why Focus on 21st Century Learning Skills?

The Partnership for 21st Century Learning states that skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, creativity and innovation are critical for future success, more so than isolated bodies of content knowledge. In an age where change is the only constant, understanding and applying 21st-century learning skills will allow our children to be adaptive and innovative in responding to new demands and changing circumstances.

Why Focus on Life Skills?

Life skills form the core of our social and emotional wellbeing, and the extent to which we can apply them can determine how we adjust and respond to life's myriad experiences. When fostered over a period of time, these skills become internalised and manifest as habits.

Why Focus on Visual Art & Design?

Arts education provides an inclusionary solution to develop valuable skills and attitudes in a wide range of learners who might otherwise be marginalised. According to research, arts education can foster broad dispositions and habits of mind such as the ability to think creatively, envision, pose questions, test ideas, deal with ambiguity, and much more.

ArtSparks carefully designs a range of arts-based interventions that are age- and developmentally-appropriate for children as young as 4 and as old as 17. Hands-on, experiential, and inquiry-based methods are used to engage children to develop the following skills:

Problem Solving: Students reflect on an artistic problem and create thoughtful solutions, recognising that a single problem can have multiple solutions. Students also plan, ideate/brainstorm, and prototype solutions.

Flexible Thinking: Students consider alternate points of view; they consider multiple solutions; students stay open to others' ideas; students change course if need be to find alternative solutions; they use materials in unique ways



Found material self-portrait made by an ArtSparks student

Collaboration: Students work well with others in a team; students listen to others' ideas; they suspend judgement; come to a shared agreement; they share materials

Communication: Students articulate their intent; they listen respectfully; ask questions for clarification; they take turns to talk

Creative Risk Taking: Students try new strategies, techniques, and/or ideas; they display a willingness to make "mistakes" and learn from them; students are comfortable with ambiguity

Perseverance: Students keep going until the work is finished; they periodically stop to reflect on what they've done, and then continue working; students do not give up when they encounter challenges

Close Observation: Students look carefully and pay attention to details

Investigation: Students question to uncover different possibilities; they explore and allow discoveries to lead the way

About ArtSparks Covid-19 resources:

During COVID-19 pandemic, ArtSparks continued to support children by sharing simple but robust weekly art-based activities that they can participate in. These activities could be helpful for other organisations and individuals too. For more information, visit <http://www.art-sparks.org/resources.html> or email connect@art-sparks.org.

To access other resources shared by Wipro's partners for the network, visit: <https://sites.google.com/view/covid19collectiveaction/home>

Delivering aid in difficult terrains

Kharingyo and Mathanmi share their experience of delivering COVID-19 aid to over 2000 families in border regions.



Kharingyo Shimrah from Korou Education Foundation runs a library programme in public schools in Ukhul. After the lockdown on March 23, he immediately started working on sourcing and delivering aid.

"Many parents are migrants and work as daily wage earners in Ukhul town. The lockdown has been very tough on them. We are delivering aid to poorest of the poor parents in consultation with community leaders here," says Shimrah.

For Shimrah, delivering aid in Ukhul was very challenging for several reasons. First, they had to get special permissions from the district administration as Section 144 was imposed in the town and, secondly, they had minimum volunteer support.

"We received permission to distribute aid, but preventing overcrowding was a challenge. With the cooperation of the district administration, we distributed relief material in batches to 30-40 people. Since we couldn't take our volunteers along, we had to mobilise volunteers in every village and ask them to keep things ready before we arrived," he adds.

In less than four weeks, Shimrah and his team have delivered rice, potatoes, dal, and soaps to 600 families in Ukhul, and this includes families of cancer patients and Persons with Disabilities.

The lockdown has severely affected the prospects of the daily wage earners to find any work in the region, and reduced harvest has stressed the situation further

**-Mathanmi Hungyo,
Recognise Rise and Empower Association (RREA)**

Mathanmi Hungyo from Recognise Rise and Empower Association (RREA) from Kamjong had to face an even bigger challenge. "Kamjong is just 40 km from Myanmar, an international border region. The villages where we are delivering aid are far, and the terrain is tough. So far, we have reached out to nine villages, but our target is to reach 1500 families in 31 villages," said Hungyo.

Given the tough terrain, Hungyo has been transporting aid in Shaktiman trucks which were widely used as medium-capacity trucks by the Indian Armed Forces before they were decommissioned. "The lockdown has severely affected the prospects of the daily wage earners to find any work in the region, and reduced harvest has stressed the situation further," he adds.



RREA volunteers delivering aid in villages bordering Myanmar

Recognise Rise and Empower Association (RREA) has been working on the cause of education and early literacy in the region. Since 2017, they have supported students in remedial education and bridge classes and have recently launched the Teach for North-East Fellowship Programme. Over the last three years, the organisation has also worked with the district administration, public hospitals, and community health centres.


"We did a brief survey on the availability of PPE kits in our region and found that healthcare workers didn't have access to them. So, in coordination with Azim Premji Foundation, we sourced PPE kits and N-95 masks. The transportation of the kits was a challenge at first. After coordinating with the Regional Secretary in Delhi, the Indian Air Force's cargo plane airlifted the supplies from Delhi for us," says Hungyo.

Kharingyo Shimrah and Mathanmi Hungyo start their day early to be able to cover as many families as possible. They continue to use their resources, experience, and networks to improve the availability of supplies to some of the most disadvantaged people in the North East.

You can reach out to Kharingyo on kharingyo.shimrah14@apu.edu.in and Mathanmi on hmathanmi@gmail.com.

Rising to the occasion

How education nonprofits Sajag and Vidya Mytri supported the COVID-19 crisis despite not having prior relief work experience.

 Kalyan and Koppal

C OVID-19 lockdown in cities is having a spillover effect on the livelihood of migrants who work as a part of the informal sector. With no source of income for over a month, daily wage earners have begun returning to their homes in rural India. According to a World Bank Report, the lockdown is likely to affect the livelihoods of more than 4 crore internal migrants.

Despite little or no experience of relief work, many organisations are supporting families in distress using their networks.

Sajag, an education nonprofit based in Mumbai's suburban Kalyan region, works on remedial education for children from grades 1 to 7, in partnership with public schools. The organisation works towards addressing the information and exposure gap faced by students. Most of the parents of the students who they reach out to are daily wage workers, and this is what encouraged them to get into relief work.

Sajitha SK from Sajag says, "We found that some families in the communities where we worked had their ration card, but it was in their village. Others had not linked their Ration Card with Aadhaar and, hence, could not receive government aid. Although the Ration Card – Aadhaar link rule was relaxed later, it did make things difficult at first for people who needed the aid."

After a long search, we found a shop which agreed to deliver us dry ration at a cost we could afford

-Sajitha SK, Sajag

Sajag started reaching out to their communities as soon as the lockdown was announced and began raising funds. Once the funds were ready, their next challenge was to find a shop that could supply them with dry ration in bulk.

"After a long search, we found a shop which agreed to deliver dry ration at a cost we could afford. . Thankfully, we easily found volunteers who helped packaging the ration one day, and delivering it the next day. We did this for several weeks," says Sajitha.

Over the past six weeks, Sajag with the help of 10-12 volunteers, has delivered dry ration to over 850 families in Kalyan Dombivili Municipal Corporation region that includes families of daily wage earners and migrants.

"The second time we went to deliver rations, we came to know that some migrant families had left the community



Sajag volunteers initiating survey and distribution work in Kalyan near Mumbai

and started walking back to their villages. Later, we decided to prioritise aid for such families," she adds.

About 600 km from Kalyan, in Karnataka's drought-prone Koppal region, Vidya Mytri Trust responded to the plight of returning migrants by mobilising teachers from government schools.

Prakash Patil from Vidya Mytri says, "We are an education-focused organisation and have no experience of this work. But our staff, volunteers, and teachers who we engage with on a routine basis supported us. The initial days were difficult, but we have managed because of our network."

Vidya Mytri's expertise is in the field of early childhood and primary education. They run a residential learning centre for slum children and work extensively in the North Karnataka region, training young men and women from the villages to work in the village government schools as supplementary teachers.

In Koppal, Vidya Mytri volunteers found that the government distribution of aid was disproportionate. "Some families were selling the ration that they received from the BPL (Below Poverty Line) card so that they could purchase essentials like salt, oil, sugar, spices, etc. How could they have survived on just 10 kgs of rice and 1 kg toor dal?" asks Patil.

Over the past month, Vidya Mytri has distributed dry ration kits to over 500 families in 42 villages. Most of the people belong to the deprived SC/ST background, devadasis, and aged people. Their dry ration kit included rice, toor dal, wheat flour, spices, oil, tea powder, sugar, and soap that could last for 15-30 days.



For both Sajag and Vidya Mytri, implementation of their routine education programme has come to a standstill. What effect will the lockdown have on the education of children from low-income communities?

Sajitha SK from Sajag says, "It is going to be a new challenge. We are discovering so many issues. Last week we started sharing assignments over WhatsApp videos, but all families do not have access to smartphones."

In Karnataka, the government has called for revisions in the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) exam. What impact will the lockdown have on the results of students from rural areas?

Prakash Patil of Vidya Mytri says, "Village students don't have access to TV – once the exam is over, I think this will affect the rural education exam results."

You can reach out to Sajitha SK on sajagtrust@gmail.com and Prakash on vidyamytritrust@gmail.com.



A house in a village in Koppal where Vidya Mytri distributed dry ration



COVID-19 Relief

Spirited Moments

CEE India's implementation and distribution team initiated timely delivery of dry rations with the help of women Self Help Groups (SHGs) to 3000 people including migrant workers, daily wagers, brick kiln workers, commercial sex workers and domestic help across Pune.

About CEE India

Centre for Environment Education (CEE) was established in 1984 as a Centre of Excellence of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. As a national institution, CEE's mandate is to promote environmental awareness nationwide.

Collective response

Nonprofits have played a vital role in mitigating the adverse effects of COVID-19 crisis in India.

Be it delivering humanitarian aid or supporting the healthcare system – nonprofits have responded swiftly to people in distress. After the COVID-19 outbreak in March, Wipro Ltd, Wipro Enterprises Ltd, and Azim Premji Foundation had committed Rs 1125 crore towards tackling this unprecedented crisis. Over the past two months, we have received support from around 500 partners in over 25 states and delivered humanitarian aid to over 74 lakh people in need.

We have been able to provide cooked meals and dry rations to more than 71 lakh people, including migrant labourers, and those from vulnerable communities with support from nonprofit partners. Since the partial relaxation of lockdown, the migrants have been attempting to return to their homes. It has, therefore, become imperative to support these stranded migrants across the country. The Government of Karnataka, for instance, is providing trains for migrants from Bihar, Bengal, UP, J&K and other states. Our nonprofit partners have promptly organised over 15,000 food packets, water, and dates as the migrants will travel to unite with their families.

From our kitchen facilities in Bangalore, Kolkata and Pune, we have delivered nearly 27 lakh cooked meals till date, and we will continue to do this till the lockdown ends. In addition, we are also providing immediate protective relief in terms of soaps, sanitisers and sanitary pads.

On the healthcare front, we have supported the country with setting up hospitals for tribal communities, isolation wards and ICU units for the vulnerable, in addition to providing PPE kits, masks, ventilators, and other specialized equipment to various state governments and metros. We are on track to deliver all the 2.5 lakh kits and masks we have committed to. This first line of protection is crucial in ensuring that the COVID-19 infection doesn't spread further. We want to emphasise that our healthcare commitment is for the long term, and we are working towards strengthening the country's screening, testing and critical care infrastructure.

Lastly, but most importantly, we want to thank all our partners for their perseverance and for showing exceptional courage in tackling this crisis.



74.30 lakh

Total number of people who have been supported with humanitarian aid



71.75 lakh

Number of people who have received our dry rations support



27.66 lakh

Number of cooked meals facilitated by Wipro kitchens in Bangalore, Pune and Kolkata



1.9 lakh

Total number of PPE kits facilitated



35.66 lakh

Total number of soaps distributed



**29 States, 1 UT,
434 Districts**

Total number of states/districts reached through our humanitarian and health care efforts

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Data compiled on May 26, 2020



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For more information, visit:
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