A Report on “Bridging the Divide”
Backup Support Coaching Centre
Implemented By Hijli INSPIRATION
Supported By Asha for Education
2020-21
Background of the Programme

*SATHI for Education Support* project for back up support, aimed at retention of children in the formal school system, has been operational since the last four years at two locations under Kamarhati Municipality and Panihati Municipality. INSPIRATION being the implementing agency of the project intends to achieve the best within its limited scope.

This programme has been able to make children more or less regular in schools by inculcating the school going habit among them as well as through academic preparedness. For this, the Organization has undertaken an intensive backup support programme in line with the school curriculum. Back up support helps the children to cope with classroom teaching.

Objective of the Programme

Main objective of the Bridging the Divide (Backup Support Coaching Centre) project is to eradicate the dropout students and improve the quality education among slum children. INSPIRATION being the implementing organization of the project intends to achieve the best within its limited scope. It is indeed true that mainstreaming in formal school at present is relatively straight forward especially after the enactment of RTE Act throughout the country. However, the major challenge is retention of the children within the educational milieu who are facing different socio-economic constraints.

Total six Centres are operational catering to around 75 children in difference classes—V to XI of six Centres, four centres are located at Kamarhati Municipality area and two are located at Panihati Municipality area.

The aim of the programme is two-fold –

i) Strengthening curricular learning levels of children

ii) Strengthening basic learning skills, which comprises reading, writing in vernacular, English, and computation level.

The Interactions with schools have indicated that a majority of the children are regular in schools and in general are performing well. They are equally regular in the Centres, which are indicative of their retention within the education system.
Team of the Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Duration of work with us</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uttam Dey</td>
<td>Programme Coordinator</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poulami Patra</td>
<td>Project Coordinator</td>
<td>Diploma in Psychological Counselling</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bablu Manna</td>
<td>Project Associate Member</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Khatoon</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samma Parveen</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Diploma in Psychological Counselling</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita Hari (Banerjee)</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Madhyamik</td>
<td>13 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamali Das</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Md. Nadim Ansari</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binod Ram</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>Graduation Pursuing</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Md. Aziz</td>
<td>Special Teacher in Mathematics &amp; English</td>
<td>M. Tech persuing</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
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Centre Locations of the Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre 1,2,5 &amp; 6 From January 2020</th>
<th>Millat e Islamia Social Welfare Society, Kamarpara, Kamarhati, Kolkata - 700058</th>
<th>Aasia Khatoon (Urdu) Samma Parveen (Bengali) Md. Nadim Ansari (Urdu) Binod Ram (Bengali)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centre – 3 &amp; Centre – 4</td>
<td>Israil Colony, Agarpara Jute Mil, 3No. Gate, Kamarhati, Kolkata - 700058</td>
<td>Rita Hari (Bengali) Tamali Das (Bengali)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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The Evolved Context

The joint efforts of Hijli INSPIRATION and Asha for Education have shaped 150 young lives at Kamarhati; retained them in mainstream education, thus protecting them from the eventual child marriage or child labour which has engulfed the lives of many like them, within their community. After a long and successful spell since 2011, Bridging the Divide went through some major modifications in the year 2020. Both Asha for Education and Hijli INSPIRATION recognize that there is a need to draw the programme to a successful end; though the need for the programme is yet to get over, especially in a community where it has been widely accepted and the impact has been highly visible.

The communication from Asha for Education, Atlanta chapter, clearly mentioned that Bridging the Divide programme at Kamarhati would be supported till March 2024. With this in mind, the programme now looked at optimizing the resources within the time frame. The programme will focus on the core needs which are aligned to the objective. Some decisions were not easy, rather a tight rope walk between the need of the programme at Kamarhati and the limitations of the Organizations involved.
In response to the new situation, teacher volunteers from Kamarhati involved with Hijli INSPIRATION and the team at Head Office, including the Secretary decided the following:

- New admissions for any class, at Sathi for Education Support centres must be completely stopped so that the existing batch of students can be continued to be supported till they appear in the Class X board examination.
- Students from class VII and upward will be considered to be regular students. They will be eligible for edu-material support and shall be the purported closing batch of 2023-2024.
- Support centres and teacher volunteers will be gradually curtailed to enable an unhindered closure. However, all intermediate closures or withdrawal either with respect to support centres or teacher volunteers shall be rational backed.

The gender specific disaggregated children profile has been provided below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>46</td>
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Introduction

The past year was undoubtedly an unusual one; something that none of us had witnessed or ever anticipated to witness. The pandemic caused multilateral damage; the effects of which will take years to be recovered.

What the pandemic welcomed apart from fear and disease were some trend setting innovations and rightly proved, “Necessity is the mother of invention”. While all sectors were crumbling under the effects of the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, some were graciously saved by dint of technology. The educational institutes, offices, courts, all began to be based out of home and in no time the fine line between the public and the private self, began to blur away.

Pandemic induced remote learning

Some lakhs of students, holed up in their homes across India, for the first time ever, were being exposed to online classes. While virtual classes were a saving grace for the many who had an access to it and could afford it, this also created a 'digital divide'. As true as ever, while one end of the spectrum had access, the other end witnessed a stark contrast to access and this gap is wide enough to be crossed over. However, nothing should come in the way of educating children hence Sathi centres chose to function remotely, the major activities though staggered were managed to be continued, a lot of them were modified to suit the times and be as much effective. The accomplishments though small are not insignificant, some of them have been worthwhile.

Bridging the Divide has very efficiently narrowed the learning divide in its area of work over the years. To keep up with the years of good work, the teacher volunteers switched to ‘over the phone’ classes. Here the hurdle was absence of a smart phone at home, hence online or virtual classes was not possible to be conducted. While most of them could be connected, some of them could not be contacted at all. A handful of students had migrated to their home state with their parents as soon as the lockdown was declared, hence they largely lay beyond this ambit.
Students who could be connected to were being monitored over the phone and were being assigned lessons on spelling, questions from a particular lesson taught, sums etc. Students who had access to a smart phone at home were sent tasks over the messaging apps and they sent their tasks on WhatsApp for correction. Students without access to android phones were being imparted lessons over one on one calls or "conference call" in small batch of 2/3 students and the ones without access to phones were being contacted through their neighbours or any kin. To make the classes effective and productive the Teacher Volunteers prepared feasible and relevant schedule to conduct classes through conference calls at the convenient time of students.

The crisis also made the students responsible and empathetic towards their peers; upon learning that their teachers were not able to connect with some of their peers, who were also their neighbours, they became the channel of exchange. They would immediately inform their peers of the lessons or homework they received from their “WhatsApp” groups. These groups were created with the limited students who had access to android phones and this proved to be effective in communication and exchange. The teachers would assign task on the group and the students would share their assignments in the group for the teacher to get them corrected.

- Activity detail
  - Students are being monitored over the phone and are being assigned lessons.
  - Volunteers are assigning tasks, which includes spelling, questions from a particular lesson taught, sums, etc. to students over the phone or through WhatsApp and the students are exchanging their tasks in the similar manner.
  - Students are being encouraged to indulge in creative engagements, which will later be used in their scrap books, which they update periodically with their creative and academic content.
  - One of the volunteers have created “WhatsApp” group with the students who have access to android phones. The teacher assigns work to the students in the group and they share their assignments in the group for the teacher to get them corrected.
  - Students without access to android phones are being imparted lessons over one on one calls or “conference call” in small batch of 2/3 students.
  - Students without access to phones are being contacted through their neighbours or any kin.
  - One of the volunteers have prepared a more feasible and relevant schedule to conduct classes through conference calls at the convenient time of students.
  - Students are being engaged with learning games, handwriting assignments, creative writing etc. Some students are learning craft on "YouTube" and carrying out similar activities at home with materials available around.
  - Volunteers are engaging parents to support students at home with lessons and take revision.
  - The parents, mostly daily wage earners and especially the mothers who work as domestic help has been out of work, since the lockdown. Some of these mothers have been asked to collect their salary for the month while some are dealing with no work no pay. Some families especially in Israel Colony have complained of food shortage at home, however, with the public distribution system now functional this situation will be taken care of. Besides this, one of the volunteers is in touch with the local councillor and ration dealers to facilitate the arrangements of staple food items and groceries for these families.
  - The Volunteers in the meanwhile are also preparing for the gender sensitivity workshop. They are preparing posters and slogans, which will later be used during the workshop.
Remote learning evaluation through “Mock Test”

With schools shut and online classes taking precedence, tests and examinations too were tailor made by the school. At Bridging the Divide, physical classes or the offline classes had to be replaced with classes being conducted over phone. While the schools were doing their part to evaluate students; it was also necessary to find out how effective the over the phone classes were for the students of Sathi for Education Support and how efficiently had they prepared for the tests that were being conducted by the schools.
Mock test is an effective way to gauge students' preparedness and concept on the subject or lessons taught. **Mock tests were conducted with all students from classes VII to X of Sathi for Education support centres in 2020.** Question papers were prepared in advance by teacher volunteers; students appeared for a two-hour offline test.

On an average most of the students have managed to score between 60% to 70% in most of the subjects. A handful have scored more than 80%, which is rewarding for the teachers. The Teacher Volunteers are of the opinion that immaterial of what they have scored, they took the effort to prepare for the exam and there lies the success. The parents too, hold similar opinion, some of them have shared that the mock test have been good, since they found their children busy studying and preparing for the test. The effects weren't limited to the short term goal; preparing for the mock test helped them prepare better for the school examination also. Some sample question papers and mark sheets of students have been mentioned below:
Capacity Building and Exchange Programme for volunteers

Sathi for Education, the back up support project has been a flagship programme at INSPIRATION. It has the right approach to address absenteeism and drop out in students. It is a model programme run at two locations in North 24 Parganas; touching the lives of the urban and rural students alike. The focus of the programme has been to instil basic learning skills like reading, writing in students; which has been largely noticed to be missing in students.

A back up support centre is run in the rural North 24 Paragasas, in a hamlet called Adibasipara of Chatra village in Baduria block under a project called Green Panchayat for Sustainable Development. The back up support centre at Adibasipara is an extension of the Sathi for Education support run by INSPIRATION at Kamarhati, known to be one of the densest slums. The teachers at the back up support centres at both locations adeptly conduct classes in a non-formal manner. The challenges are quite similar in terms of operation and execution in both locations.

With similar settings and background the teams have been working in striving to achieve the goal through a balanced approach. Sathi for Education at Kamarhati, which is supported by Asha for Education, is a predecessor to the project at Adibasipara, hence it is by default that the team has had a varied experience and observation; a repository of learning.

A two-day exchange programme was decided to pave the path for learning and exchange of good practices. The Kamarhati team comprising senior volunteers like Aasia Khatoon, Rita Hari, Tamali Das and Nadeem Ahmad Ansari interacted with children at back up support centre at Adibasipara and introduced new techniques of number and alphabet identification, word making, simple method of subtraction and multiplication etc. The extensive interaction with the students helped the Kamarhati team of volunteers identify the process gap in learning and teaching. Later the team also interacted with parents of children who are irregular to the centre and asked them to send the students more frequently and explained how this would benefit their children.

The last day of the exchange programme saw the two teams sharing their experience on centre management and operation, where the challenges though similar had a different setting and context. Irregularity, low attendance, other tuitions were found to be the common problems in both locations. The teams then discussed the solutions and what strategy must be applied at each location. Eventually they sat down to list out the requisites in centre management and operation, where the team identified components like home visit and parents meeting as part of the process of management. The team also identified maintaining gender parity and child rights were as important as imparting effective teaching. The take away of the two days was the process management and centre management modalities charted by the team of Kamarhati and Chatra.
Creative and social engagements of children

Students have been encouraged to indulge in creative engagements, which were later used in their scrapbooks, which they update periodically with their creative and academic content. They were being engaged with learning games, handwriting assignments, creative writing etc. Some students have become experts in recycling; they created something new with anything that they could lay their hands upon. They have always been full of eagerness and ingenuity; it was reassuring that most of them chose to utilize their time in some creative and engaging activity which was also a great learning opportunity.
Mothers / Parents Involvement with children

Parents are the most important stakeholders; their engagement with the students is noteworthy. Their willingness to know about their child and extending their support through supervision at home makes it a little easier for some children and volunteers too. The pandemic and the lockdown forced a lot of parents to stay at home, which had multilevel repercussions; while without denial there has been a steep increase in domestic violence, on the other side a lot of families utilized the time to bond. The parents who were home have regularly devoted time to engage with their children and monitor their studies. This was crucial and it helped the Teacher Volunteers in remote monitoring. Though not all parents are literate, but their presence made some difference on the child.

Teacher Volunteers have been all praise for some parents who made it mandatory to keep in touch with them and regularly checked with them and updated them on the performance of their children at home. These are significant little victories, which leave a lasting impression.
INSPIRATION in support of the beneficiaries of Asha for Education at Kamarhati

At a time, when the world was reeling under the effects of the lockdown, due to the infamous COVID 19; and the blow of Amphan, life, in whatever way that maybe, continued to go on. The country has faced the worst crisis ever and has hit an extreme rough patch. The threats remain to loom large over the country; jobless and hopeless migrant labours and their families walked down infinite distance to reach 'home' and the less fortunate ones laid their lives on the homebound journey, frontline workers falling prey to the disease, the daily wage earners and their families barely making it through, companies laying off workers. Adding to these were the embedded threats like terror attacks, abuse on women, polarization in the name of religion and many more, which continue to make their presence felt.

Kamarhati faced its share of trials; many families who were dependant on daily wage engagements or local jute mills, had faced the perils as one or more of their family members were immediately out of work. Though all field activities had been stalled, since the second last week of March, in compliance with the directive of the government. However, the community interaction was continued like it was, before this situation arose. The need of practicing handwashing, maintaining a "social distance" was largely emphasized upon. All contact with the community was established over the telephone. While doing this, it gradually became important to know the availability of essentials like food grains, soap and water, which were a necessity in the present situation, in each household. Parents of the students at Kamarhati are mostly daily wage earners and especially the mothers who work as domestic help had been out of work, since the lockdown. Some of these mothers had been asked to collect their salary for the month while some were forced to deal with no work no pay.

INSPIRATION made sure that all the families were safe. While interacting with the student and their families it was found that majority of the families were receiving cereals from some source, that is, either from the government or private donations or NGOs. But there was a dearth of liquid cash and they were unable to procure anything to supplement the cereal intake. Lack of adequate nutrition intake was observed which, the need and the expectation was assessed; INSPIRATION stepped in at this point and decided to support each family with a food basket comprising

- Soya Bean Chunks (1 Kg)
- Sattu (Ground Gram) (1Kg)
- Suji (semolina or ground wheat) (1kg)
- Mustard Oil (500 gms)
- Sugar (1 Kg)

Along with this protein supplementation 2 Soap Cakes and 1 pack of 10 Sanitary Napkins to all adolescent girls for maintaining corona linked hygiene and personal hygiene have been included too. The contributions from staff and members and well-wishers have been able to make it happen.

About 90 families in Kamarhati have been supported with nutrition basket from INSPIRATION on the 18th & 19th May and 14th & 15th June; besides it being a support it was also an activity that was carried out with a sense of solidarity. It has been more than ten years that we have been operating from Kamarhati with the community support and it has been an enriching learning. The nutrition basket was an extension of the daily nutrition supplements, which is expected to provide
the required nutrients to the entire family. The recipients have mentioned that they were overwhelmed with this kind of support. Asgari Bano, mother of Nabeedul Hassan, have particularly remarked that, this was a well thought of support, as rice, pulses etc. were available from the Public Distribution System and in local shops, but most of the families were unable to arrange beyond the staple rice and pulses. She was of the opinion that the nutrition basket would be able to take care of the nutrition requirements. Similar opinions were shared by Nusrat Parveen, mother of Shahnaz Parveen and Tajmira Khatoon, mother of Shahid Akbar too. Shama Parveen, mother of Farhan Ali, shared that they had received rice, pulses from the local jute mill, but never received this sort of nutrition support from anywhere. Manjura Khatoon, mother of Simran Parveen, shared that lack of ration card was making it difficult for them, and this nutrition basket with dry and nutritious food was ideal in this condition.

Menstrual hygiene, which is nonetheless, a less discussed concern, has especially been jeopardized in this lockdown phase. Where providing for the family is the only concern, it is only obvious that bearing all other expenses would be impossible for many families. Asgari Khatoon and Fuljan Bibi, mothers of Alfia Imam and Sagorika Khatoon, were all praises for the distribution of sanitary napkins to female adolescent students.
Preparation of Information, Education and Communication Material on Covid to create awareness and feedback study (Over Phone)

A small study on effeteness of IEC on Corona (Designed by INSPIRATION) on our Focused students of Kamarhati.

Sample size – 95

INSPIRATION has designed and developed some IEC on awareness raising about COVID 19

We are trying to generate awareness in our students through our designed IEC by talking over phone and sending leaflets on WhatsApp. Our volunteers have been committed to the task.

Other team members have all played a role in lending a patient ear and coming up with solutions to help the students become more aware about all safety protocols to be followed.

We found that -

1. 88% students said that they aware about uses of Mask in this period.
2. 61% students aware that Corona is a viral disease
3. 84% know the symptoms of corona disease
4. 74% are aware of how it is spreading
5. 80% are said that they aware about social distance and hand wash practice
6. During the lockdown many people given service properly and continually
   - Police, Doctor, Nurse & Grocer – 44% mentioned their name
   - Police – 41% mentioned only their name
7. To save oneself from Corona -
   - Mask use, hand wash, social distance – 85% students mentioned
   - Mask use, hand wash – 15% students mentioned
8. 71% students said that they are doing other activities (Painting, making craft items, helping to household activities, cooking, indoor game etc.) besides studying at home during lockdown.
9. 29% said that they are doing only study.
10. 75% students said that they maintain all masers to protect them from Corona and they also aware their family members and neighbour friends
Success of students in Madhyamik- 2020

The otherwise glum 2020 had some terrific news in store, which called for celebration and made us jubilant. Thirteen students of Sathi for Education Support passed West Bengal Board of Secondary Examination in April 2020. Most of them have had long association with Sathi centres.

- **ISHA DAS**- Isha has been part of the Bridging the Divide programme since 2013; she walked in merely as a toddler with her sibling. Over the years she has consistently performed well and shown her interest towards co-curricular activities and excelled at leadership. She passed out from Bhabomoyee Aghormoni High School with **221**

- **JYOTI DAS**- She and her siblings Nilom, Phool and Sona are all part of the Bridging the Divide programme. Their names taken at a breath, Jyoti and Nilom complement each other. Their parents worked hard enough to fend for themselves; which left the girls with a lot of responsibilities to shoulder. They would take turns to attend Sathi Centre and complete all household chores. Jyoti studied in Bhabomoyee Aghormoni High School and managed to score a **201**

- **NILOM DAS**- Nilom and her sister Jyoti, were inducted in the programme in 2011. Both girls quiet and obedient struggled to keep up with the pace at school; it was no fault of the school either. The unsurmountable burden of taking care of the house, the younger siblings and themselves was too much for the frail shoulders. She was always supported by Bhabomoyee Aghormoni High School and Nilom passed with **216**

- **AFSANA KHATOON**- In 2014, a petite Afsana with pigtails, wide eyes and gaping mouth exhibited a lot of promise to her teachers at Sathi for Education support centre. She was a student of Agarpara Balika Vidyalaya. She is known to be extremely focussed and a meritorious girl. She has always been appreciated for her enthusiasm and courage; her eagerness to strive for a better future, paved the way for a deserving **255** in Madhyamik

- **SABANA KHATOON**- The little Sabana who was introduced to the programme in 2011 was a shy little girl. Over the years her interaction with her peers and teachers at Sathi for Education have helped this student of Agarpara Balika Vidyalaya to shed her inhibitions. Sabana overcame a lot of personal hurdles to score **195**.
SIMRAN PARVIN- Simran is a sprightly young girl with aspirations of a secure future. She is a student of Open School under The West Bengal Council of Rabindra Open Schooling, Simran has scored 527 in Madhyamik. Her association with Sathi for Education Support Centre was established in 2013.

FARHAN ALI- Farhan looks far from being 16 years, his innocence is infectious and has retained it since his enrolment in the programme in 2014. He has risen above the poverty and financial constraints. His score, 196, speaks volumes of his success in being able to pursue education and continue with his part time job. He has always been appreciated and supported by his teachers at Bhabomoyee Aghormoni High School.

ALISHA KHATOON- A student of Ariadaha Sarbamangala Balika Vidyalaya, Alisha has been doing well since she was a child and has been one of the earliest students at Sathi for Education support centre. Her association with the programme dates back to 2012; besides being a consistent performer she has been extremely well mannered and appropriate.

Md. SHAHBAN- A gem of a boy, from Union Collegiate High School, would be an appropriate way to speak of him. The success of the programme has been some finds as rare as him. His, is a long association with the programme since 2008. Hurdles and obstacles never found their way through him and there was no dearth of any. His score, 621, is a sweet outcome of his focus, perseverance and aptitude.

KASAB PARVEEN- It is a wonder how the shy and introverted Kasab of 2012 turnaround to be this feisty and confident Kasab that she is today. She is a student of Kamarhati High School and has done exceptionally well for herself at the Madhyamik. Kasab has scored 310.

SIMRAN PARVEEN- She is a sprightly young girl with aspirations of a secure future. A student of Kamarhati High School, Simran has scored 280 in Madhyamik. Her association with Sathi for Education Support Centre was established in 2012.

KAINAT PARVEEN- Kainat had been inducted into the programme in the year 2016; the unconducive situation around her made Sathi for Education Support so important to her. A student of Kamarhati High School, she has made the maximum of this association; Kainat has scored 240.
SHABBIR HUSSAIN- An extremely talented boy, he has found his voice through Mime. His teachers and parents are glad that the otherwise unobtrusive young chap has found a calling. A student of Salimiah High School, Shabbir had begun his journey with Sathi for Education Support in the year 2008. He has passed Madhyamik with 210 marks.

NAHID KHATOON- Diligence and effort goes in hand with Nahid. She doesn’t like to give up too soon, which has worked in her favour to secure 260 in Madhyamik. A student of Salimiah High School, Nahid reached Sathi for Education Support in 2017.

ISHA MANSURI- A student of Belgharia Deshapriya Vidyaniketan Girls High School, Isha has been a regular student with Bridging the Divide programme since 2013. Isha is known to be a hard-worker, she has scored 210.

CELEBRATION

World Earth Day

This year we have celebrated World Earth Day on 22nd April virtually. Students painted pictures and messages relevant to the issue and Volunteers had extended conversations pertaining to the environment and necessity to protect our planet Earth.
Virtual and Physical felicitation of Madhyamik pass outs of 2020 on 5th September 2020, the occasion of Teachers Day

Teachers Day was celebrated predominantly virtually this year. We took the opportunity to facilitate students who had fared successfully in their Madhyamik Examinations on the day. Participants who were physically present had maintained all Covid 19 protocols.

That day participants who had participated physically were -

- Asst. Admn Officer, INSPIRATION
- All Volunteers
- All Madhyamik pass out students

Virtual participants were -

- President, INSPIRATION
- Vice President, INSPIRATION
- Secretary, INSPIRATION
- All staff of INSPIRATION

The excitement and thrill of seeing so many happy faces broke the monotony and somewhat toned down the otherwise distressed souls inside all of us. Participants were enthusiastic in the rendition of their speeches and it was exciting to hear about their future plans.
Gender Sensitization Workshops

Education as a development goal cannot be achieved in isolation; the allied factors like Health, Nutrition, Safe Water, Gender Equity and so on have proportionate shares and largely contribute to the cause. The programme identifies the need and has long since made the inclusion essential. Gender Sensitization Workshops was conducted with the Teacher Volunteers and students. However, there have been some change since 2020; and now enabling the teachers is important to align with the evolved context.

While uncertainty was looming large and staying at home was the only way to have contained the spread of the deadly virus, virtual platform was the go to solution. All sessions on Gender Sensitization for the year 2020-2021, had been conducted on virtual medium. The uncertain times and changing situation called for human support and empathy; which were a cure to the stress and the anxiety running through all individuals across all age. The workshops helped them come to terms with the turmoil and an opportunity to learn from each other’s journey.

The volunteers were encouraged to share their views on the social issues that they were witnessing around them. Issues in their community or immediate surrounding like lack of livelihood, hunger, abuse, child labour, and early marriage were reported to be on the rise, by them. However not all issues could be addressed because some required administrative and policy level intervention, the ones which could be dealt with were focussed upon. The adolescent and the youth slipping away from Education, either in search of livelihood or due to early marriage, is a precursor to a whole gamut of decaying vices. This is too well known to them and they worked in unison to build awareness on these issues. Charts, posters, regular monitoring calls, interaction with the parents all went into keeping a check and joining hands in the effort to retain students.
Challenges faced

- Reaching out to students during lockdown - gap in communication due to heavy dependence on the internet
- A lot of students joining work force to support family and share financial responsibilities, especially during the lockdown - implying irregularity in academics
- Lack of food due to lack of income, during lockdown- impacting quality of daily life
- No adherence to Covid protocol by the community-indicating higher vulnerability to the disease
- Cases of early marriage - directly implying socio-economic breakdown and adverse effect on education of especially the girl child

A ray of hope

“When the going gets tough, the Tough get going”- could be said about 15 year old Abul Faruk. One of the 14 siblings and now the only one to support a family of 5. His is a story of hope and determination. Life hasn’t been the same for this bright and determined boy since February 2020; it was then that his brother, who had been one of the breadwinners, met with an accident which changed the course of their lives forever.

Abul, as described by Teacher Volunteer Rita Hari, “He is a prankster, but good in studies and one of the few who can be entrusted with responsibility.” It is this sense of responsibility that has forced him to be warrior and lead his family from the front. He had just been promoted to class 8 when the unfortunate incident occurred and he was a known position-holder in his class. The accident left his brother immobile and confined to bed, his father had been long-suffering from a lot of ailments.

Abul’s mother ran a small snacks shop in Isarel Colony, workload at home included taking care of an ailing husband; repeated rampage on her shop owing to raid in the hooch dens in the vicinity forced her to shut business.

Much against the will of his parents, Abul Faruk has dedicated his active hours to earn a living for his family. His record and scores are the major heartaches for his parents; they see their boy sweating and toiling not on books but on labour. Work takes Abul to outskirts of Kolkata and sometimes he spends nights on trucks. This tears him and his parents
apart; but for that unfailing smile. Volunteers Rita Hari and Tamali Das have been to his home quite a few time, to ask for a better life for this boy, not that his parents are unwilling, but there isn't an alternative at the moment. The hand to mouth condition has left them with no choice but to force him to go to work. Once a position holder in class, this year Abul has secured 50% to be promoted to class 9; and this is worth all the appreciation. He always makes it a point to come to Sathi Centre and take an update or learn it fast from his teachers, when he is not working, but that is so rare. If his and his teachers' little effort can fetch a 50% some more hours would do wonder.

**Issues worth pondering**

However, there are several issues, which need further and deeper intervention. Some of these are:

- Need for a more holistic approach addressing the issue of inclusion Nutrition supplement. Hence there is a need for promoting healthy and nutritious food habits and hygienic behaviour in this COVID pandemic situation
- Insufficient health and sanitation infrastructure restrict healthy behavior. Hence efforts to facilitate availability of proper and hygienic infrastructure is a must.
- Digital medium is the major issue. Most families are still without androids or smart phones. Supporting such families is proving to be a challenge especially since online classes are the only order of the day for the time being.
- Child Labour is the biggest challenge in Kamarhati and Panihati Municipality area. Most of the children are working in different sectors to support the family’s income. Most parents are very poor and lack the ability to support their children’s education. Dedicated approach has to be taken up to handle this issue. Sub-standard socio-economic status restricts children from attending schools. The lockdown imposed under the pandemic has added to the already existing financial woes.

**Future Planning**

- **Focus on adolescent mental health** - Adolescents being at the transitional stage between child and adulthood are faced with diverse mental and physical conditions, which cause detracted behaviour. Proper nurturing through dedicated sessions, activities and counselling will be able to address such issues. Adolescent counselling will be merged with gender sensitivity workshops
- **Continuing gender sensitization** - Gender sensitisation is a process, which needs to be undertaken on a longer timeframe. While the last two years has set the stage and the participants have started acknowledging the aspect of gender equity, it needs to be sharpened and harped further for meaningful transition and to ensure behavioural changes to a moderate extent at least within their limited societal domain. This is expected to spark some changes amongst some with a multiplier effect within the society.
- **Blending Child Rights and Gender Parity as part of operation** - Child rights education would entail teaching and learning about the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the ‘child rights approach’ to help empower both children and adults to take action and put children’s rights into practice in their day-to-day lives – at home, at school, in the community.
## Proposed Budget (2021 - 2022)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Months/ Times</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Amount (INR) Yearly</th>
<th>Amount (INR) Monthly</th>
<th>Amount (INR) Monthly Per Centre</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 Teacher Volunteers For 5 Centre @ Rs.2300.00 per month for each Volunteer</td>
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<td>11,500.00</td>
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<td>Additional Teacher for All Centres @ Rs 8000.00 per month (English and Math)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Education material for 60 children support from community</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Rent for 2 center @ Rs.800.00 per month per center</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Travel &amp; Communication cost for Volunteers and INSPIRATION Team @ Rs.1000.00 per month</td>
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<td>Other incidental expenses (Health Awareness Programme, Health check-up Camp) 2 times a year</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6,000.00</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Special Nutrition support for children occasionally 2 times a year</td>
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</table>

**Total (A)** | **3,45,200.00** | **28,766.67** | **5,177.78**

**Organization Over Head (10% of A)**

- Supervision Cost, Accounting charges, Training Cost: **34,520.00**
- **2,876.67**
- **479.44**

**GRAND TOTAL** | **3,79,720.00** | **31,643.33** | **5,273.89**