Virtual Visit to Sakhi, June 20, 2022.

Visit by Ishika Dhingra, Diya Doshi, Tanvi Yalamanchilli

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In our site visit, we talked to Aarti, the founder and director of Sakhi for Girls Education, a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and educating girls living in the Mulund west suburban slum areas of Mumbai, India. For the last fourteen years, Aarti has been working with slum girls. Slum based girls are the most marginalized girls in urban and suburban areas of Mumbai as they often do not have the support of their family and community to receive quality basic education as they are forced to get married rather than gain an education. Co-ed schools choose to primarily prioritize boys’ education while families prefer girls to stay at home rather than spend time learning. As an attempt to combat these situations, Sakhi for Girls Education teaches girls language and mathematics as well as other life skill-building opportunities. Today, more than 500 girls benefit from the education and projects including Girls Learning Center, Audio Storytelling Project, My Reading Bag, Girls Health and Nutrition Program, Girls Audio School, Girls Digital School, Mothers Audio School, Audio Recording Studio, Girls Reading School and Girls School@Home!

When the COVID-19 pandemic first began, the students stopped meeting in person and their education halted as they did not have an environment to study in. However Aarti created a new initiative called Girls School@Home at Sakhi to help educate girls during quarantine as their staff number decreased. Instead of staff, a predictive number of 25 Young Girl Leaders are trained to educate 50 girls through focusing on building basic literacy and numeracy skills of girls through daily interactive activities. Additionally, Aarti discussed how she distributed rations and hygiene items to people within the slums. At the time, Aarti gave the 25 Young Girl Leaders training and allowed them to record themselves. The recordings were given to the children within their homes throughout the pandemic so they could have access to some source of education. Once the lockdown ended, these Young Girl Leaders became teachers with daily trainings. The initiative also aims to teach their Young Girl Leaders basic computer literacy and basic life skill building training so that they can more confidently pursue higher education options and open a greater variety of career opportunities for the future. They also provide these girls sanitary pads and nutritional food kits, educational stationery, and textbook kits as compensation for their contribution.

Through the site visit, we had the opportunity to speak with the Young Girl Leaders, many of whom were between the ages of 14-18. While not having completed their full education, they were teaching those younger than them and were helping these children reach their corresponding grade level. They all had aspirations to further their education in the future and pursue a career in a variety of fields such as medicine, teaching and law enforcement.
Additionally, we spoke with younger girls who were between the ages of 6-11 and all of them were ecstatic towards having the opportunity to receive an education and had similar aspirations as the Young Girl Leaders.

In their budget, Sakhi for Education requests our help to support their Girls School@Home project in order to provide for monthly sanitary pad distribution, monthly nutritional food kit distribution, education kits, and other expenses necessary for the planning, implementation, monitoring, and coordination of the project. Additionally, they also hope to gain funding for reading and writing improvement activities, teaching and learning material, their audio storytelling project, and daily capacity building classes. Within our site visit, Aarti mentioned how before COVID she had staff, coordinators and teachers to facilitate her and the project. However, ever since the pandemic only Aarti and two other staff members are training the Young Girl Leaders to become teachers who teach younger children in the program. Furthermore, Aarti aims to create a couple other centers in order to teach a total of 500 girls within their program.