

**KADAM RESOURCE CENTRE FOR GIRLS WHERE THEY CAN BE ENABLED TO SECURE HOLISTIC
EDUCATION– FORMAL AS WELL AS VOCATIONAL - WITH SELF-RESPECT AND DIGNITY**

Proposal for 2024 for a Kadam Cohort of 10 girls

A. Introduction

Kadam Education Initiative (KEI) of the Centre for Development (CfD) has been working in the underprivileged areas of Ahmedabad city where due to various circumstances large numbers of children are not able to access and continue education. More vulnerable among them are girls, especially girls who may have lost one or both parents. Mostly these girls are forced to drop out of schools due to poverty as well as family and community pressures. They eventually end up being victims of child marriage, and many a time disguised trafficking. KEI has closely observed this unfortunate process of children being deprived of their childhood and an education in Ahmedabad city and over 26 villages around the city.

KEI has also seen at close quarters and interacted with the significant number of girls, almost 25-30 children a month, arriving at the Ahmedabad Railway station who are initially rescued by NGOs associated with the Childline India Foundation, and eventually sent to ill-equipped shelter homes. KEI personnel have been occasionally providing counseling services to these girls who reveal shocking stories as to how they have been 'sold off' by their own parents and relatives, forced to leave their poor and disturbed homes and finally end up being trafficked or abandoned in places like railway stations. Many girls would be unwanted from birth as a result of the male child preference of the parents; or it could be that one or the other parent would have died and the living parent would then get married again, making these girl children liabilities, and they would be left with old or ailing and poor grandparents or relatives to be taken care of; in many cases their mothers, widowed at a young age would be mentally tortured and many a time killed or forced to commit suicide, leaving the girls unwanted, in a highly vulnerable situation. Some boys might be fortunate in being taken care of by the relatives, but even they are forced to work as child labourers, slaving to sustain the family. Girls in such situations are 'sold off' in the name of marriage or domestic labour in cities or into begging rackets. These young girls end up abandoned and abused, their childhood deprived, their rights violated.

These orphans or single women's daughters are definitely the responsibility of any civilized, humane society; and KEI has been striving to build an educational and developmental safe space for these children. This space has to be equipped with all the basic amenities and an environment that takes care of the physical and emotional needs of the children, and help the children to learn and grow.

Kadam Resource Centre for Girls

We have been progressively strengthening our work under the Kadam Education Initiative (KEI) with the adolescent girls (daughters of mothers who may have been divorced, widowed or deserted) vulnerable to trafficking and abuse. This intervention has been going on since 2012 and by now we have developed the Kadam Resource Centre for Girls (KRCG) which provides various educational, vocational and life-skill building opportunities to the girls who are selected for this programme.

This residential component of the KEI programme, which currently includes stay with Meera in her residence for an extended period, especially for 5-6 girls who may be preparing for board or university examinations or who may need personal attention and extended counseling services to deal with trauma (of abuse and/or violence/constant humiliation). The educational space of the KRCG where in the

educational and life-skills opportunities are located is currently dependent although highly insufficient, is located in CfD office space.

A permanent solution is being contemplated – perhaps of providing a house belonging to Meera's family for the long term on a rental basis. This would bring in a measure of stability, especially in the emerging circumstance in Ahmedabad where NGOs find it difficult to find spaces in good residential locations due to the hostility in society; especially when people/children from disadvantaged sections of the society frequent such spaces.

The facilities, environment and activities in the KRCG are designed to enable the children to grow and develop in a healthy and holistic manner so that they become self-respecting, confident and responsible citizens who would eventually contribute to society. The personnel associated with the Kadam Home would follow educational modules that have been tested out with orphan girls or girls of single mothers. The KRCG and its functioning would be founded on the inviolable rights of the child as enshrined in the UNCRC summarized as follows:

1. The right to life (Adequate Standard of living)
2. The right to protection (from exploitation, abuse and violence)
3. The right to participation (with freedom of expression, thought and association)
4. The right to development (Education - to develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full; to encourage the child's respect for human rights, other cultures, and the environment.)

The nurturing and educational activities in the KRCG would ensure that children grow into ideal citizens with a sense of belonging, social conscience and sense of responsibility, human values such as mutual respect and compassion, and respect for other cultures and the nation inculcated through informed celebration of national days and religious festivals

B. Details of Ongoing Activities that would continue in 2024 and beyond:

Kadam Resource Centre for Girls (KRCG)

For the year 2023, KRCG was supported mainly by the AID Chapters Boston and Washington DC Metro along with the Boston Chapter of Asha for Education and the German partner of KEI-CfD, Frauenpower. There were some individual donations too.

During 2024 we intended to start another unit of KRCG with 30 more children, in addition to the ongoing batch. As part of that we had approached Asha Stanford and Silicon Valley chapters. Based on the advice received we have decided to start a smaller cohort of 10 students for the year 2024, proposed to begin on the 1st of August, 2024. This would be a long term commitment of at least 5 years for Kadam Education Initiative (of the Centre for Development). This proposal requests for support for the year 2024-25, which hopefully can be continued for a longer time based on performance and effectiveness.

The following are the main ongoing activities offered through KRCG:

a) Compilation of Learning Resources

Upgrading of the learning resources is an activity that all the educators associated with KEI constantly do. The girls are also offered regular training and assistance to effectively use online educational resources for knowledge and skill building.

b) Remedial coaching

Those girls who need to continue formal education in schools and complete matriculation would be helped to do so. Others for whom it may not be feasible to resume formal education but are still capable of completing matriculation, National Open School (NIOS) is an excellent option. As of now many girls have already registered and cleared 10th standard exams under the NIOS.

Based on the academic requirements of the students remedial coaching is being provided by the two teachers for English language & humanities, Math and computers, on a daily basis. These teachers continuously assess all the students to determine what kind of assistance they require. The KRCG volunteers continue to take feedback from the teachers of these students during the PTA meetings. This helps to understand how the child is coping at school; if they have any learning difficulties. Any relevant information is reported in the team and the tutors provide any specific assistance required. If any child requires psychological assistance the counsellors ensure the same based on the feedback from the teachers.

c) Counseling

This is a very crucial service that is offered in KRCG. The life situations from where the girls come in have a tremendous impact on their lives. It has a deleterious impact on their self-esteem, and destroys their confidence to learn, to make their own choices. Counseling helps girls to deal with the trauma of their past and present life, overcome their fears, understand their mothers and the familial and social pressures on them, and thereby understand how their life situation is determined by a patriarchal society. At an early stage in their stint at KRCG all girls go through emotional crisis situations which they learn to handle on their own, with counseling support. This has a positive impact on their subsequent learning and performance in KRCG.

Some of the issues that counselling would help resolve would be

- Trauma undergone due to physical and mental abuse and exploitation
- The need to confide their deepest feelings and dilemmas. Sometimes this would be taken care of through a 'Want to ask box' where they could put in anonymous questions and suggestions.
- Career choice
- Overcoming lack of confidence in communication
- Help in becoming autonomous in their decision making and become self-reliant.

d) Developing Self Confidence

- Reproductive Health Workshops many times a year – understanding one's body, accepting hormonal changes and their impact on one's psyche. Helping girls to be comfortable with menstruation and eliminating from their minds all taboos that society

imposes on them; being able to talk about menstruation and reproductive health freely. KRCG girls engage with other girls regarding this issue and teaching them too.

- Workshops on gender, leadership development, effective communication – 4 -5 events during the year.
- Understanding and recognizing sexual abuse and harassment, and equipping girls to prevent and counter such occurrences. Workshop on legal provisions for the protection of women and justice in cases of violence against women.
- Personality Development
- The above points give the girls a sense of security and eliminates the sense of shame that always restricted them and their ability to make choices.

e) Exposure visits and interaction with illustrious women role models

- Girls are taken to government offices, industries, shopping malls, restaurants and hotels, women's police stations, banks and many other establishment, especially those where there are women officers and professionals. The girls interact with these women professionals and understand that there are many openings for which they could equip themselves. In addition the KRCG girls sometimes attend workshops organized by CfD at times; as some of them did last year, attending the advocacy and campaign workshop of CfD that was organized for community volunteers and leaders.
- The other way of interacting and being inspired by strong women role models is when they are invited for various events such as International Women's Day and the Day of the Girl Child.

f) Life skills Training

- Self-esteem and sense of equality as a girl
- self-confidence
- managing interpersonal relationships
- effective communication
- preventing and countering abuse
- understanding the provisions for protection and legal action)

g) Vocational Skills Training

- Those girls who need to continue formal education in schools and complete matriculation would be helped to do so. Others for whom it may not be feasible to resume formal education but are still capable of completing matriculation, National Open School (NIOS) is an excellent option. As of now many girls have already registered and cleared 10th standard exams under the NIOS.

- All the girls would be provided systematic educational inputs based on a 100-days learning module specifically developed through our 20 years of work experience with children who have dropped out of the formal educational system. This would provide them with skills and competencies that enable them to work and earn a living.
 - i. Learning to use the computer (Ongoing)
 - ii. Basic English comprehension and communication (Ongoing)
 - iii. Managing an office (Office assistance training) – (Ongoing)
 - iv. Health worker Training
 - v. Home caretaker (professional domestic work with ability to operate modern domestic gadgets machines) - (Ongoing)
 - vi. Understanding of geriatric care: (taking care of senior citizens)
 - vii. Professional baby care
 - viii. Training to become a beautician

Training programmes (i) to (iii) are always ongoing. The other vocational training programmes from (iv) to (vii) are organized only when a viable number of participants are interested in attending. Those were anyway suspended during the lockdown, and have not yet been resumed yet.

Training to become a beautician (viii) and mehendi (henna) designs is available for any girl who wish to learn.

h) Monitoring of health and nutrition of the girls

Malnourishment and anaemia, and proneness to diseases is quite common among the girls. At KEI we provide nutritious food to the girls on most of the days they come to KRCG. At the residential space food is always available. This has definitely improved the general health of the girls. For girls coming from families with food deficit due to high level of impoverishment, food kits are provided to last during the months when food is scarce. Food deficit may be due to lack of employment for the mother, or due to their ill-health.

Whenever the girls fall ill or suffer from acute gynaecological problems, they are provided proper medical advice and care from qualified doctors.

C. Monitoring and evaluation

1. Progress Reports

Regular progress report of the girls that includes progress at school and also linked to the remedial coaching they receive in the Centre. This year they will also have records of the skills

developed such as computer literacy, the self-confidence developed that would be measured in terms of the ability to take up certain responsibilities and decisions on their own

2. Monitoring reports and meetings

Monthly meetings would be the forum for the project staff to report on the progress of the planned activities under the project. They would report both on quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the project. Reporting also would be done in a format designed for the purpose. The monthly reporting would be more activity oriented, while quarterly and half-yearly reporting would be more reflective and impact related.

Regular monthly feedback sessions with the girl students would be conducted to know how they feel and if they have specific requirements and difficulties to be resolved.

3. Evaluation

A participatory evaluation would be inbuilt in the project to ascertain the achievements vis-à-vis the project objectives and the challenges faced. This would then be incorporated into the plan for the following year so that the quality of project inputs are enhanced for higher levels of effectiveness.

D. Future plans

A new apartment has been equipped to be the educational-cum-residential space for Kadam Resource Centre for Girls for the coming years. This is expected to bring in a certain measure of stability, since all these years KRCG was being run from rented spaces, which had to be changed continuously due to the non-cooperation of landlords and the residential societies wherein we had hired spaces. The new apartment is owned by persons close to CfD and hence we do not expect KRCG to be dislodged anymore. However, we have been mobilizing resources to equip the Centre with basic facilities. The girls have already started using the space since over a month. The new unit of KRCG would require further facilities which may have to be mobilized.

E. Budget (Excel sheet attached separately)