

Kadam – Center for Development
Virtual Site Visit Report – Atman Parikh – 2020/21

Although I have not had the chance to visit the Kadam team recently, we have been in close communication through the pandemic. The project team has shown agility and flexibility to evolve their support to the girls and their families throughout these 1.5 years to ensure they had what was needed to stay safe, healthy and continue the education they were receiving.

Pre-pandemic, in 2019, Kadam continued its work across the three categories of

1. Ongoing individual counselling and group sessions to help the girls understand their own context and deal with the challenges in their lives
2. Workshops on specific areas of knowledge, skills, and practice
3. Tutoring for all the girls in general English and Arithmetic and special assistance for those attending school and NIOS

The residential space that ASHA partially funds was set up to be used by 5-6 girls at any point of time. It has basic furnishing, kitchen utensils, essential gadgets, and food stocks. On an average 4-5 girls use the 2 residential spaces as and when required – when they were preparing for exams, or if there are difficult circumstances at home.

Supporting girls and their families during the pandemic

2020 was a challenging for the girls and their families with priorities shifting quickly towards ensuring basic food supplies, safety and good health. Kadam evolved their offerings and initiatives throughout the pandemic to ensure the girls and the families received what they needed during the pandemic – funds from Asha were reallocated accordingly. Counseling and workshops on specific topics continued through the pandemic for the girls.

2020 challenges and how the Kadam team supported the students ([Kadam-Asha call](#) in 2020):

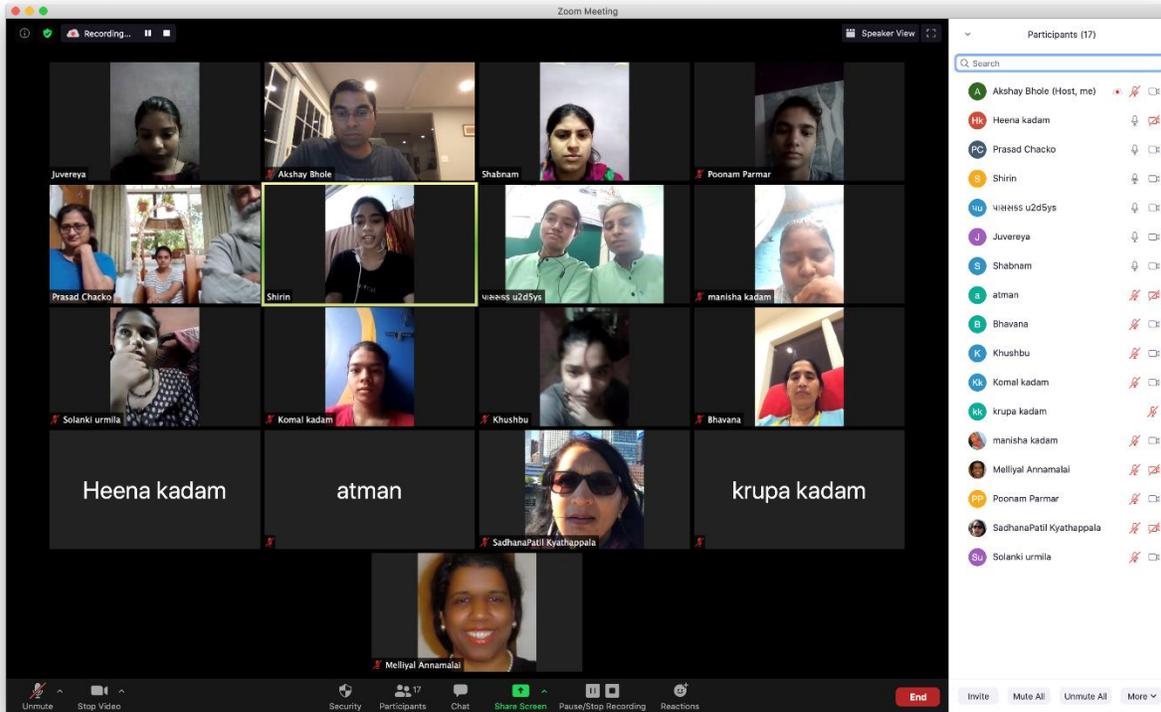
- Families who worked in the food industry, like farming or vegetable vendors, were able to get by but others had severe challenges with running a normal household
- People weren't getting the labor opportunities that would come their way in a regular economy
- A lot of people were dependent on support from NGOs
- Education and tutoring were non-existing or very limited during the first lockdown month (April)
- Except for some, there was no pressure from the family to complete education. But the pressure to get 'settled' and married was increasing. Two girls were succumbing to that pressure
 - 30 tablets were purchased for the girls and distributed before the July 10, 2020. Asha Supported the purchase of 7 tablets of the 30. A part of the annual mobile data (through tablets) subscriptions were also met by Asha

- The connectivity package also was initiated for each tablet for the entire year (till July 2021); it has been renewed hence for another year (till July 2022).
- Girls were given a hands-on orientation about the features of the tablet and demonstrations were made on how to use it for online sessions and learning
- Tutors organized their sessions to account for 30 mins of attention span by the girls and combined it with classroom like sessions with 10-15 girls and individual engagements.
- There were PPT slides or white-boards or even notes on chart papers used in the sessions
- During the classroom sessions by the tutor-volunteers, the tutors would give a brief session based on the lesson-plan for that day, and then explain the homework they have to do that day, based on that short lesson. The same day they would do the homework, take photos of the work done in their notebooks and send it to the tutors. They would evaluate the work of each girl and give a feedback during an individual sessions with them
- Along with Zoom sessions, the tutors and the girls found tutoring individually over WhatsApp also important; and the children would submit their homework over WhatsApp. Each tutor would have one-on-one online sessions with at least 10 children a day. This went on from August-October 2020
- From October there were some restrictions on movement were lifted, although schools never reopened for at least the following 10 months. Volunteers called girls in groups of 2-3 at the CfD office so that there was no crowding and distance could be maintained
- Students learnt how to use technology to continue learning. Interaction time on the tablets/zoom wasn't allowed to be more than 15 mins with some follow-up work; intent was to ensure girls have a relaxed environment
- Some students had distractions and household responsibilities that they need to attend to which made it difficult for them to continue learning while being stuck at home
- Education/classes were tough during lockdown: focus on working from home, inability to go out due to proximity with old parents, no access to work materials for some (didn't even have an email) - was difficult to continue studies
- Exams were cancelled in most cases; some lower classes were taken to the next class without one
- Girls had access to some books, but not an extensive library. They had a math tutor, but science tutoring lagged a bit since most books are in English and not all girls can grasp the content. They switched to trying more videos
- Learning was all online, which was difficult, and there was concern on how the board exams will go. Reading materials were sent by the school/college and teachers were encouraging them to keep up with the curriculum

Counseling continued over phone, and it turned out to be crucial, as many suicides were happening in the underprivileged residential areas of Ahmedabad, people drowned in debt and finding no option to fend for themselves and their families due to a total unemployment. Constant counseling and reassurance really helped uplift their sagging spirits and confidence. This was also important to help the girls and their mothers to counter the familial and community pressure to discontinue education and force the girls into early marriage. Meera was constantly talking to the girls and their mothers during

these months of lockdown, helping them to cope with the adverse situation, organizing relief when the families were at the end of the road – distributing food kits and hygiene kits.

Video Recording of the Kadam-Asha call can be found [here](#)

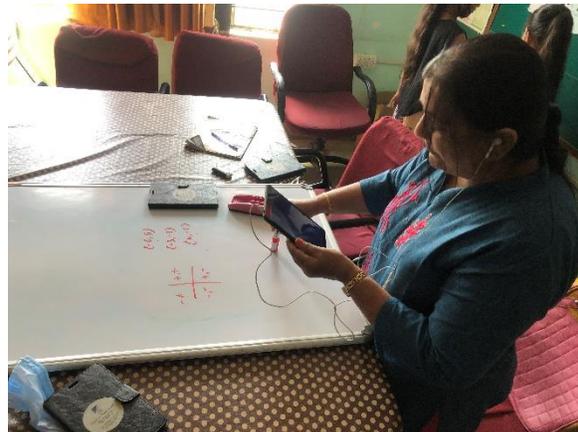
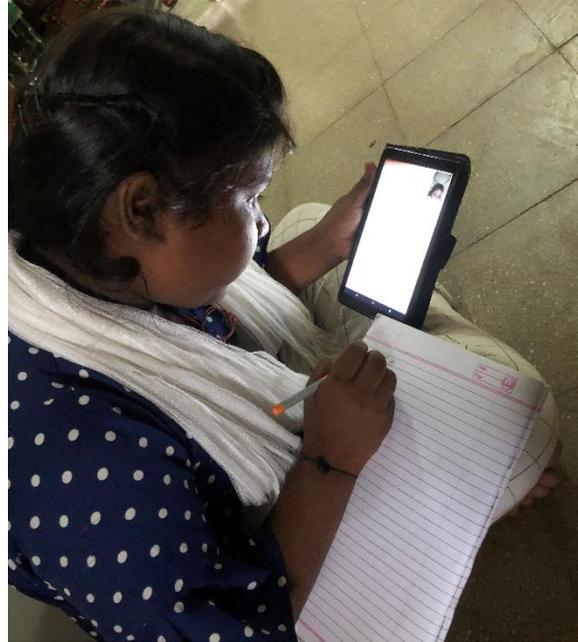


Felicitation of Kadam Girls – July 2021

Kadam recently organized a felicitation for 7 senior girls to congratulate on their accomplishments (MA, M.Com, FY/SY BA) and to acknowledge their journeys. This event was hosted especially for the mothers of these 7 girls to appreciate their efforts and fortitude. Kadam was kind enough to invite me to the event and it was a humbling experience to learn how the girls and their mothers have struggled through the years to make this achievement possible.

One of the main objectives of this event was to motivate and encourage the mothers of other girls of Kadam and to make them comprehend that they are not alone in their struggles. During the event, the mothers of the 7 senior girls shared their stories and experiences. There were many similarities in their narrations as they are standing against the same odds and facing similarities difficulties. At the same time, their journeys were different from each other and unique in their own ways. The mothers of the junior girls felt contained with the narrations as they are currently facing situations what the other mothers have already faced.

Virtual Learnings Sessions in 2020



Life Skill Workshop in 2020

