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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WORKING EXPERIENCE WITH VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND THEIR SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Paper presents the working experience of the author with vulnerable children in *Stand and Stride* (SnS) Foundation, a voluntary organization working with Vulnerable Children for their better education and other health-hygiene awareness programs in Dwarka City, Delhi. Besides other activities- free book distribution to girls and environmental awareness programme etc. are the major work of foundation.

Key words:

Vulnerable Children, Voluntary Organizations,
Education and Health care.

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INTRODUCTION

Several voluntary organizations are working on different aspects of children in Delhi i.e. *Teach for India*, a nationwide movement to help marginalized children, *Make a Wish Foundation*, works in Malviya Nagar in South Delhi for children who are in the grips of terminal illness, *Doraemon toy* to being a pastry chef for a day, *Smile Foundation* works in Yusuf-sarai, south Delhi for healthcare and education to empowerment and disaster response and help over 600,000 children and their families every year¹ (Dutta and Mrinal, 2023c). As Singh and Kumar (2014) expressed in their paper on voluntary action which is a cost effective way of providing social and welfare services. Voluntarism requires necessary infrastructures and institutional mechanism to facilitate the mobilization of popular support and engagement of volunteers in appropriate task and responsibilities. The decline in civic engagements among young raises fears regarding the feature of voluntary action in the country. It needs steps to educate youths in values of active citizen. Further, voluntary action is also hindered due to lack of recognition of their work. Many volunteers from bigger institutions wants the lime lights while local volunteers do a lot of hard work in addressing the local problem which no one recognizes at the national level(cf. Dutta and Mrinal, 2023c). Our Constitution has provided the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education under Article-21a but it took years to become an Act for Right to Education (RTE), a responsibility of State to realize this promise for the children. It describes the modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children between 6 and 14 in India.

India became one of 135 countries to make education a fundamental right of children. The Act makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14 and specifies minimum norms in elementary schools. It requires all private schools to reserve 25% of seats to children (to be reimbursed by the state as part of the public-private partnership plan). Kids are admitted in to private schools based on economic status or caste-based reservations. It also prohibits all unrecognized schools from practice, and makes provisions for no donation or capitation fees and no interview of the child or parent for admission. The Act also provides that no child shall be held back, expelled, or required to pass a board examination until the completion of elementary education. There is also a provision for special training of school drop-outs to bring them up to par with students of the same age (Mrinal and Dutta, 2023b).

In this paper I am presenting my working experiences with *Stand and Stride* (SnS)², Dwarka, Delhi. It is a voluntary organization where I worked as intern in summer of June, 2023, for the education and health awareness activities for the marginalised children (Dutta, 2023). The following description in different section reveals my experiences working with vulnerable children. As a volunteer working with children in a non-governmental organization (NGO) has been an exceptionally satisfying experience for me. I have had the privilege of assisting underprivileged children who have limited opportunities for education, yet demonstrate a strong desire to learn and develop. Observing their inquisitiveness, eagerness, and advancement has been a heartening encounter. Initially, I evaluated the language proficiency of the kids, identifying their areas of proficiency

and shortcomings. Based on this assessment, I employed diverse techniques like games, songs, role-playing, and storytelling to create interactive and engrossing learning sessions. Most of the kids communicated in their mother tongue and had minimal interaction with English outside the classroom. To address this issue, I segregated the classes into smaller groups and made myself accessible to them to clear their doubts and provide explanations. Gradually, I observed a noticeable enhancement in their self-assurance, lexicon, and understanding abilities. On my initial days at the non-governmental organization, I recall feeling somewhat apprehensive about leaving a positive impression. However, it became evident that the children were equally eager to establish a connection to me, as I was collaborating with them. Although, the children's endearing and animated personalities emerged once they became comfortable. While acquainting myself with the children, I discovered that they possessed distinct educational backgrounds, abilities and obstacles. The prospect of accommodating their diverse requirements appeared overwhelming, but I remained resolute in my commitment to creating a hospitable, immersive, and supportive learning atmosphere.

At the beginning of each session, I provided a short introduction and conducted an enjoyable icebreaker activity to make the children feel more comfortable and relaxed. Afterward, I proceeded with the lesson for the day and utilized different teaching techniques like games, visual aids, and role-playing. I urged the children to ask questions and share their opinions, and experiences, making the classes as interactive and participatory as possible. Furthermore, I assigned independent or paired tasks and provided them with constructive feedback to enhance their skills. I used to read history as well as story books aloud to them so they could take notes and explain them to me, in case they had any questions. My focus was mainly on improving them to help them understand those chapters. One of the teaching experiences that stood out to me was the introduction of drama to my students. Although initially I was hesitant and shy, the children eventually warmed up to the activity and participated with great enthusiasm. Through role plays, skits, and performances, the children were able to develop their self-expression and overcome their shyness. Additionally, this activity allowed them to show talents and build confidence.

Taking part in games with the kids was one of my favourite responsibilities in *Sand and Stride* (SnS). Besides being great way to have fun and create a bond among us, it also helped the children develop social and emotional abilities. I played different types of games with the children. For example, some games helped them to learn how to cooperate with each other, while others taught them to take turns and be patient. Other games were more creative and imaginative, helping the children to express their emotions and thoughts. Some of the games even focused on problem-solving and critical thinking. Through these activities, the children were able to develop their interpersonal skills, gain confidence, and become better communicators. Playing games with the children was a great way to help them grow and learn. Tag was among the games we played frequently and was well-liked. The kids enjoyed running around and attempting to catch one another. Not only did the children have fun playing this game, but it also enhanced their physical fitness. While we were playing, I motivated the kids to collaborate and plan tactics on how to capture the opposing players. Their ability to handle problems and work with others improved as a result of this.

One of the other games we played was the age-old game of hide-and-seek. This game was a popular activity among the children, as they relished the challenge of locating a suitable hiding place and then attempting to evade detection. The children's cognitive abilities were enhanced by the game, as they were required to come up with imaginative hiding places. Additionally, the children's attention span was improved by the game. In addition to these, we also played a variety of other games, including hopscotch and duck duck goose, as well as the popular red light green light game. These games enabled the children to form meaningful relationships, hone their social skills and acquire new knowledge. One of the most effective games I taught the children was "Simon says." This game was designed to encourage children to obey and listen to instructions. In this game, I would give

instructions and the children were only required to follow them if they were preceded by the sentence "Simon says." This game enabled children to develop their listening skills and it also encouraged them to be attentive to details. The games at the NGO were not only enjoyable to play but also provided an opportunity for me to form a personal connection with the children. During the games, the children often told stories about their lives, which provided me with an incentive to be involved in their lives. The games provided a respite from more traditional and structured activities but also enabled the development of incredibly valuable life skills. We also conducted outdoor sports and games, which were particularly popular among the older children who relished the challenge of competing.

We organized games such as football, basketball, and relay races, which not only contributed to physical fitness but also fostered the development of teamwork and sportsmanship. One of the most popular things to do with the kids was arts and crafts. I provided the children with a variety of materials, such as paper and glue, scissors, and paint, to help them express their creativity. Some children made collages of various colors, while others painted pictures or made clay sculptures. Not only did this activity provide a fun activity, but it also helped to strengthen the children's fine motor skills, as well as their self-confidence. Storytelling was another activity that was conducted with the children. The children were gathered in a group and each member of the group took turns telling a story. While some of the stories were read from books, others were created by the children. This activity enabled the children to develop their language abilities and creativity, as well as their capacity to listen and take turns. Community service was a particularly rewarding activity for the children. We organized visits to local charitable organizations where the children were able to volunteer their time. For instance, we took the children to the local soup kitchen, where they were able to assist in the preparation and serving of meals to the local homeless population. These activities instilled in the children a sense of compassion and empathy, as well as instilled in them the importance of contributing to their local community. In conclusion, my work at the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in the second week enabled me to participate in a wide range of activities with children, which were intended to be enjoyable and educational, as well as fostering social and emotional growth. I will forever cherish the memories of my time with the children and am thankful for the chance to have had a positive influence on their lives. During my tenure in third week at the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), I had the privilege of instructing children in a wide range of educational activities that I was confident will positively influence their lives. These activities ranged from basic literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking skills to more advanced topics such as problem-solving and critical thinking, all of which enabled me to provide these children with a solid basis for their future educational attainment and personal development. One of the primary objectives of my work was to instil fundamental literacy skills. As many of the children in my project had never attended school or had limited access to educational services, I began with fundamental reading and writing skills. I employed interactive and stimulating methods to keep the children occupied. Through word games, reading stories, and practicing letter and word writing, I was able to witness the children's initial enthusiasm for reading and writing. I am confident that these fundamental literacy skills will be beneficial to them throughout their lives.

Most significant educational activities I provided these children were fundamental numeracy skills. Counting, addition, and subtraction, as well as other fundamental math skills, were all incorporated into the curriculum. Again, I employed interactive methods to maintain the children's enthusiasm and interest in learning. Using math games, manipulatives, and real-world math activities such as measurement and counting money, the children developed a much stronger understanding of mathematics, which will serve them well in school and throughout their lives. In addition to Basic Literacy and Numeracy, I also emphasized the development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills in these children. Through puzzles, brainteasers, and other stimulating activities designed to stimulate the mind and stimulate creative thinking, we discussed real-world issues

and brainstormed solutions. Developing these skills will enable these children to better address the difficulties they will face in life and to become more self-reliant and independent. Consequently, I promoted teamwork and facilitated group-based activities to foster a sense of collaboration and collective accountability. I also taught the children to communicate effectively and manage disagreements, and appreciate the different points of view of their peers.

By instilling these skills, the children were able to work together and become better team members, which in turn led to improved academic performance and extracurricular success. I also provided these children with comprehensive health and hygiene education, including instruction on hand washing, oral hygiene, and nutrition. Additionally, I provided them with information on the risks associated with smoking and drug use, and how to abstain from these detrimental behaviours. Through the provision of health and hygiene instruction, I hope to instill in these children healthy habits that will be beneficial to them throughout their lives. I also taught the children critical thinking. In order to be successful in the modern world, one must have the ability to think critically, evaluate the situation, and make appropriate decisions. I created problem-solving exercises and taught the children to approach problems logically and analytically. Through these activities, the children acquired a valuable set of skills that will help them excel in academic and professional life. Finally, I put a lot of emphasis on personal growth skills. Self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence are key components of personal development. I enabled the children to recognize their strengths and shortcomings and supported them in working on their shortcomings and capitalizing on their strengths. Additionally, I taught resilience and the significance of resilience in facing challenges. These skills enabled the children to overcome obstacles and become more self-assured. Through play, role-playing, and other interactive activities, I enabled the children to express themselves more effectively and to share their ideas and thoughts. I also highlighted the importance of actively listening and the importance of communicating through body language. These abilities have been invaluable to the children, allowing them to form stronger connections with their friends and family and to better manage social interactions. Overall, I am confident that the educational activities that I taught at the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) will have a long-lasting effect on the children's lives. By concentrating on Basic Literacy and Numeracy Skills, Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving, and Health and Hygiene, I am hopeful that I have provided these children with a solid basis for their future educational development and personal development. I am proud to have been an integral part of their educational journey and I am confident that they will progress to the next level in their lives. To sum up, in my third week as an intern, I implemented a wide range of programs and initiatives to help children acquire essential skills. These skills are essential for personal development and growth and are expected to be beneficial in the academic and professional life of the children. These skills, such as effective communication and critical thinking, teamwork and cooperation, and personal growth, are essential for success and I am certain that they will be passed on to the children throughout their lives.

In the last week, I had the privilege of working with children from a variety of backgrounds, each with its own unique set of needs and difficulties. Through my gift-giving activities, I aimed to promote the well-being of the children and improve their experience of the program. Perhaps the most important aspect of my work was that I endeavored to be a consistent source of compassion and empathy for the children I served. From hearing their stories of hardship, providing them with solace during challenging periods, or simply engaging with them through play and personal interaction, I endeavored to build relationships with each child individually. In my opinion, this not only enabled the children to feel included and supported but also enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of their individual needs and views, which informed the work I conducted on their behalf. One of the presents I presented to the children was a set of notebooks and stationery. As many of them did not have access to basic educational resources.

I was aware that providing the children with notebooks and stationery would facilitate them in completing their homework and engaging in learning activities. Although a small gesture, this gift had a considerable effect on the children's capacity to access educational materials. Books were another gift I provided to the children. Reading is a fundamental skill that aids in the development of creativity and critical thinking. From my conversations with the children, it was evident that they had an enthusiasm for reading. However, some of them did not have access to high-quality books, so I decided to share my collection with them. Several books were donated to the program, and the children were given the opportunity to borrow and read them at their own pace. This gift enabled the children to continue to read and learn which was an integral part of their development. I also provided the children with a variety of toys and games. While the primary focus is on education, children also require the opportunity to engage in play and entertainment. As many of the children were restricted in their access to games and toys, I decided to provide them with a selection of games that could be played together. These games enabled the children to engage with one another in a positive manner, strengthen their interpersonal relationships, and enhance their social abilities. This gift contributed to fostering a sense of camaraderie amongst the children and provided a respite from more strenuous activities. One of the most important life skills that were instilled in the children was proper personal hygiene. I distributed hygiene kits to the children. Good hygiene habits are essential for maintaining good health. However, some children did not have access to essential hygiene products. To address this issue, I created hygiene kits with these essential items, which were distributed to children. The importance of washing hands, brushing teeth, and bathing was highlighted as a means of preventing the spread of bacteria and promoting good health. Additionally, the children were taught to maintain good skin and hair hygiene through cost-effective products and the development of healthy habits, such as early bedtime and adequate water intake. This aid contributed to promoting healthy living and preventing the transmission of disease.

In the final phase, the children were taught the importance of working together and communicating effectively. The children were from diverse backgrounds and had individual personalities that could be difficult to manage. Nevertheless, the children were encouraged to collaborate, learn from one another, and assist those who were having difficulty. Team-building activities were introduced to the children, and they were encouraged to take part in group-based activities, including planting gardens, environmental clean-up, and event planning. This enabled the children to develop communication skills, ask for assistance, and work together as a team. Furthermore, the children were taught how to regulate their emotions. A significant number of the children had been through traumatic experiences, neglect, or abuse, which caused them to experience anger, resentment, or sadness. Through counselling sessions, emotional support was provided to the children and they were taught how to express their emotions in a healthy manner. The children were also encouraged to participate in activities such as dance, singing, and sports, which enabled them to release their emotions in a positive manner. To conclude, as an intern at the *Sand n Stride* (SnS), I am proud of the numerous contributions I made from implementation of educational and fundraising initiatives to the support services. I have had the opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of vulnerable children. Above all, it has been a privilege to collaborate with such a committed and caring team, as well as to witness first-hand the positive impact collective action can have on the life of disadvantaged children (Dutta, 2023).

The role of non-governmental organisations in society is essential in supporting low-income communities or marginalized sections through promoting their overall well-being and development. By addressing societal needs and problems and working toward sustainable and inclusive development, NGOs can help build stronger, more resilient communities and contribute to a more just and fair society (Dutta and Mrinal, 2023c). Finally, working for an NGO can be a great way to build your career. Many NGOs are well established organizations and working for the development of children. They can help us to develop our skills and enrich our experience. Whether it is providing clean

water to communities in need, promoting education and literacy, or working to protect the environment, and also can offer their employees the chance to have an effective impact on targets. Meeting new people, collaborating with them, working together are the key requisites of an NGO as they deal with several people, cases all over the world. More one meets people, more one can broaden their horizons. Different NGOs deal with different issues from sex-trafficking to women empowerment, to child development and protection of human rights, etc. All of these are very relevant contemporary issues that need more attention than anything else as it requires humanity which can be saved only by an ounce of humanity and kindness. Voluntary work at community, state, national and international levels and meeting new, influential, and philanthropic people are part and parcel of challenging job (Dutta and Mrinal, 2023c).

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Notes.

¹Teach for India, Make a Wish Foundation and Smile Foundation, all are voluntary originations working in Delhi for healthcare and education to empowerment and disaster response (<https://1bb.in/delhi/ngos-volunteer-delhi/> accessed on 01.04.2023).

²The *Stand n Stride Foundation* (SnS), a voluntary Organization dedicated to transforming the lives of children and their families living in Dwarka city of Delhi. The SnS has tirelessly worked to establish a strong academic foundation for these children, eliminating barriers that lead to school dropouts with a power of education to a bright future since 2016,. There are unique and unparalleled projects aims to provide exceptional schooling and high-quality education to gifted girls- "*Super 30 Girls*". The SnS is driven with a passion for social change and believe that every child is unique and work together to reshape their lives and their families for a better future for all. (<https://www.standnstride.org/> accessed on 26.08.2023).

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