

FINAL REPORT ME TO WE JULY 2016

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REFLECTIONS ON RESULTS

'Me to We' supported by Empower was launched in July 2014 in Jagdamba Camp, a slum community in South Delhi. The programme aimed at understanding and addressing problems of adolescents at an individual as well as at a collective level. Me to We also proposed a strong element of employability as a medium of empowerment – alongside interventions of education and life skills. The intervention followed a focused approach towards skill development and employment preparedness.

The second cycle of Me to We facilitated by Swechha and supported by EMpower continued to work with young adolescents in the age group of 13-18 years.

1. Individual level-

The collaboration between Swechha and Empower has been extremely productive over the last two years. It has helped us reach out to the adolescents from Jagdamba Camp with a more structured approach. Young people who have been a part of this programme has clearly displayed an increased sense of responsibility and confidence about their identities. Alongside, they have also shown escalating leadership skills. While there is still a long way to go, it is evident that the journey of leadership for a number of adolescents has begun. It has also been interesting to note that the adolescents who have been a part of Me to We 2015 have increasingly shown more willingness to take ownership for their actions.

Some of the factors that have played a key role in this are –

- Better preparedness to deal with the challenges in the programme because of the learnings from the last cycle.
- Constant engagement with them and their families at a very personal and informal level
- Theme based sessions that used different tools to explore the same left a stronger impact on their minds

- Exposure to the outside world and the opportunities that can be availed helped them think beyond the given and the conventional

Another significant development that has been noticed by the supervisors in the participants of Me to We 2015 is better planning and ideation for their future. The older set of adolescents had begun to showcase the understanding of the need to have a plan for the things that they wish to achieve.

This year has witnessed exceptionally evident changes in terms of communication, team spirit and leadership amongst the four community animators of Swechha who were employed as a part of the first cycle of Me to We.

Shilpa, Ahmed, Manoj and Shailendra each with his/her own strengths and weaknesses have carved a niche for self over the course of last 12 months. Along with the professional development, they have also started to focus on their personal goals. Shailendra, Manoj and Shilpa who are passionate about photography, theatre and art respectively have been connected to the field experts and have been taking baby steps towards realizing their dream under their guidance. Shailendra, for instance has been assisting an established wedding photography team in their shoots and Manoj has been a part of weekly theatre sessions for over 3 months now.

Alongside, the older adolescents have also proved to be an integral part in the overall management of Swechha's mega events outside the community. They have showcased team spirit and the ability to adapt at times of events such as Pagdandi annual festival or the annual plantation drives. The participants were also a part of NDTV Yamuna Shramdaan that was carried out in January 2016 and was attended by over 800 people.

This year's annual summer school has clearly been one of the best since the inception of Pagdandi in 2009. **It has indeed been a proud event for us since the summer camp this year was planned, managed and executed by some of the older adolescents in its entirety under the supervision of the staff.**

Photo Links –

https://www.facebook.com/SwechhaIndia/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153680525672896

https://www.facebook.com/SwechhaIndia/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153723263042896

https://www.facebook.com/SwechhaIndia/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153351987982896

https://www.facebook.com/SwechhaIndia/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153364490752896

2. Organizational level-

At an organizational level, Swechha has been positively impacted and strengthened in various ways as a result of collaboration with EMpower. Over the course of last one year, we got various platforms to showcase our work while expanding the network and strengthening the overall ecosystem. Some of the highlights of this collaboration have been listed below-

- The annual showcase of Learning Community at Mumbai was an incredible experience for us to be a part of. Not only did it give us a peek into the brilliant work that is being done by other organizations but also helped us explore more ideas for implementation of community campaigns. Additionally, the Monitoring and Evaluation tool booklet that was provided during the event had been a great resource for strengthening our M & E processes.
- It has been a pleasure as well as a source of encouragement for Swechha to have been able to share the Me to We curriculum with different organizations. The meeting with Medha at EMpower office to run their team through the curriculum was a learning event for us as it helped us reflect on where we might need to modify the curriculum or further strengthen its positive aspects.
- **The learning journey on fundraising organized EMpower in May 2016 has especially been the highlight of the year. The three days long workshop was indeed an excellent experience owing to its practical and hands-on approach. The workshop provided very action oriented solutions for effective fundraising, one of the biggest challenges of the sector. Additionally, it was a great opportunity for networking and exploring collaborations with other organizations.**
- The financial sustainability of Swechha certainly improved as a result of Empower's grant. Not only did it allow us to expand our adolescent programme largely, Me to We also helped us become more confident about running interventions for the youth.

Overall, the grant from EMpower has helped us strengthen our work with the youth in the community and further prepared us to take the work to next level in a more impactful and effective manner.

3. Local Community level

Jagdamba Camp is one of the oldest and largest slum communities of South Delhi. Unconventional professions, social entrepreneurship, community based enterprises, jobs related to popular culture, service sector, hospitality industry, telecommunications, retail etc. are almost unheard of amongst young people in the community. Me to We aimed at capitalizing on the opportunity of empowering these young people through non formal alternative education, skill building and employability enhancement. While this is a long term process, there has certainly

been a positive influence on the community and its members in terms of their attitude towards their children, their identities and various employability opportunities. Also, stronger informal relations with the community members have led to more acceptance for the organisation and its initiatives.

*During the tenure of the second cycle of Me to We, two community campaigns have been designed and taken up by the adolescents. The two areas of exploration this year have been **Gender and My City, My Rights**. While the campaign on Gender was taken to the community in April 2016, the second campaign has been taken up in phases. In the first phase, the participants underwent training on My City, My Rights facilitated by experts from Safecity. As a part of the training, the adolescents mapped their community and brainstormed upon the changes they can bring about in the physical spaces in the community. The second phase of the campaign was due to be launched in the community in July but had to be shifted to mid-August due to waterlogging in the community as a part of the monsoons.*

These campaigns form a very potent form of questioning and addressing the issues of the community. While some of the parents appreciate the vigor and courage of their children to do the same, reluctance for one section is always prevalent.

Pagdandi festival 2015 organized in January 2016 included a showcase for the journey of the participants of Me to We and their achievements. The showcase photo booth was set up and managed by volunteers and the participants in shifts on both the days and was visited by volunteers, supporters of the organization and community members. The contentment of the parents of the adolescents was visible when they saw their children explaining and actively participating in the overall management of the event.

Regular showcase of the learnings of the children through reading days, meetings with parents and informal community visits has proved to be an extremely effective tool of not only fostering but also sustaining the trust and support of the parents for the programme. The educational nature of the industrial visits has made the parents more open to send their children for the exposure trips.

The two fellowships that were given out to Sumit and Suraj to set up their enterprises have proved to be extremely effective tools to building a relationship of trust and credibility amongst the members of the community. The parents of the fellows have been especially positive in their response and ideation for the way forward.

All I can say is that I am extremely happy that Sumit has been able to start something of his own because of your support. I cannot read or write myself but we want the best for our children and will support them in every way we can.

- *Sumit and Montu's Father, the Me to We fellows who started a stationary shop in the community*

It is also interesting to note that before the fellowship was given out to Sumit (which followed a proper application procedure), his father was always very hostile towards him and would often insult, sometimes engage in physical violence with him for not earning. Sumit got himself admitted in open school and started working towards the fellowship. It is heartening to see the change in his father's behavior and approach towards Sumit.

4. Positive changes beyond the local communities

It has been heartening to know that this year's Me to We hasn't merely been restricted to the community but has opened up various avenues for the adolescents to explore and realize their potential. One of the reasons for the same has been the expanded network of Swechha through collaborations with different individuals and organizations. These collaborative efforts have helped Me to We become stronger this year both in its approach and credibility.

Additionally, very impactful partnerships have been fostered with different youth organizations during June 2015-July 2016. Most of these collaborations have been based on the theme of gender, empowerment and youth development. An overview of these new partnerships has been appended below-

***Lucknow based organisation KHEL** came on board and facilitated a session on Child Sexual abuse for a group of 25 girls and boys. **Wash United** closely worked with 24 boys and girls over 2 sessions on issues of puberty, sexual and reproductive health and menstrual hygiene management. The tools that were used during the sessions were extremely interactive and innovative in nature with a constant focus on learning and stimulation of thoughts in the participants. During the Pagdandi Summer School 2016, we collaborated with **Safecity** who facilitated two intensive sessions on My City, My Rights for the adolescents. This session helped the children gain an understanding about their basic rights and power as citizens of the city. The collaboration with **Your Story Bag** run by a storyteller helped the children explore the storyellers within themselves and further encouraged them to imagine.*

*Not only did various organizations come on board to facilitate, Swechha was also invited by youth organizations to share the best practices. Swechha facilitated a workshop on environment for the adolescents of **Maitri**, an organization that works with children and women from underprivileged communities.*

It is also to be noticed that most of the older Me to We participants have ensured the provision of Adhar Card and a bank account for themselves and their family members.

Some of the adolescents have also started their own facebook pages based on their interests. Given below are the links to Suraj's photography and Shilpa's art pages-
<https://www.facebook.com/The-creative-creator-514338318727543/?pnref=story>
<https://www.facebook.com/Fun-Young-Art-Craft-908627215950202/?fref=ts>

Parveen who had been placed as an intern with Kid Powered media last year has now secured a full time job with the organization and earns 15,000 per month. She designs and facilitates interactive academic sessions for children from various underprivileged communities of South Delhi. She has also enrolled herself in Open College for higher studies.

**While this has been a great year for her professionally, her personal life has taken a complete turn. For the past two years, she was being mentally and emotionally tortured by her family members. In May 2016, she finally decided to move out of her office and take control of her life. She was supported by staff from Swechha and Kid Powered in the same. She herself reached out to the police for legal aid and submitted a letter explaining the urgency to move out of her house and the probability of her being at risk during the same. The team at Swechha connected her to Jagori, one of the most powerful organizations that works with women and with their help, she found her way out of the community easily. She is now living in a PG (rented accommodation) and is pursuing her job. Her courage and zeal have inspired not just her peers but also the other members of Swechha and KPM.*

She is excited to be a part of EMpower's With and For Girls Panel as the Chaperone being held in August 2016.

****The information mentioned above about Parveen's personal journey is only meant to bring forth the challenges that innumerable adolescents go through. It is requested that the information be kept confidential and not be shared on any of the public platforms such as social media.***

Conclusion

Like the first cycle, this year has also been a year of experiences, challenges, learnings and achievements. The primarily younger age group of the new participants made it challenging for us to cover all the aspects of Me to We such as placements and internships, it has been heartening to witness the transformation of older adolescents into young responsible leaders.

The combined experiences of both the cycles have prepared the team to take the next phase of Me to We to newer heights. The pictures of the Me to We sessions can be accessed at

https://www.facebook.com/SwechhaIndia/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10153256159137896