

# ME TO WE FINAL REPORT JULY 2015

**Organization Name- Swechhha We for Change Foundation**

**Name/Title of Person Completing Report- Deeksha Bhatia/ Programme Manager**

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'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.

Over the past one year, 50 adolescents from Jagdamba Camp were constantly and constructively engaged on the issues of identity, social efficacy and resourcefulness.

## REFLECTIONS ON RESULTS

### 1. Individual level

The most important result for the young boys and girls who participated in this programme was the visibly increased sense of confidence and responsibility at an individual as well as a collective level. Not only did the adolescents show greater level of confidence at every stage, they also started taking initiatives for themselves on their own.

*16 years old Anjali has always been a shy and introverted individual. She started coming for Me to We sessions with two of her neighbors, Jyoti and Rakhi. Interaction with other adolescents from the same community and exposure to the outside world helped her expand her horizons. She also participated in Jagdamba's annual festival, a street play on freedom "Azaad Pinjrey" and confidently performed in front of more than 1000 people across different venues in Delhi.*

*Interested in teaching from the very beginning, Anjali was placed with Aarohan, an organization dedicated to the cause of education as an intern. Two months of internship with the organization transformed her from being shy to someone who speaks up and takes initiative herself. Aarohan staff also gave extremely positive feedback about her conduct and overall behavior and learning.*

*She also decided to enroll herself in Grade 10 in National Institute of Open Schooling. The real result of Anjali's transformation was seen when she confidently chose to complete all the formalities related to the classes and open schooling all by herself. She is now preparing for her exams in September and awaiting a part time*

*job confirmation from Aarohan.*

These adolescents are evidently at a very critical stage of their lives and at the same time, live in very vulnerable conditions. Considering the same, this has been the most significant result of the programme. Being able to take responsibility for themselves and their peers certainly marks the beginning of a better future for them and the other members of their families, especially the younger siblings.

There are several factors that have been responsible for the success on this front. Listed below are some of them-

1. Constant engagement with them and their families at a very personal and informal level
2. Theme based sessions that used different tools to explore the same left a stronger impact on their minds
3. Exposure to the outside world and the opportunities that can be availed helped them think beyond the given and the conventional
4. Constant team building and group work brought about in them a sense of belonging to the programme and each other

Another significant development whose traces were seen in the participants of 'Me to We' is the ability to accept changes and failures. Majority of the participants responded positively and with due maturity to changes in the organizational staff team. It is definitely a positive sign that these young leaders are learning to respond and not react to difficult and challenging situations.

## 2. **Organizational level**

Swechha and its team have certainly been positively impacted and strengthened in various ways as a result of collaboration with EMpower.

- Me to We supported by Empower helped us gain a more focused approach while working with the adolescents from the community. Clear objectives of the programme strengthened our work on issues of gender and youth while creating a stronger presence in the community
- Structured format for Monitoring and Evaluation aided the team in proper evaluation of success and failures at different stages of the programme
- 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

- One of the biggest positives of Me to We for the organization has to be the expansion of the network. Collaboration with other organizations, NGOS, institutions and individuals over the course of this intervention has proved to be immensely productive and sustainable.

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. 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 employability opportunities.

*A community campaign on employability that was designed and spearheaded by the participants of 'Me to We' addressed the stereotypes around employability in the society. The young leaders from Me to We took rallies with placards to the community. The campaign was taken to the community on three different days to cover all the sections of the society. The messages on the placards aimed at breaking the stereotypes such as "only girls can be beauticians or only boys can become a mechanic / driver". The campaigners also wrote and raised slogans about the same. These rallies were followed by focused group discussions with the community residents.*

*The campaign received a mixed response from the community. The campaigners witnessed admiration as well as reluctance from the older members of the community.*

The immediate families of the adolescents who have been a part of EMpower's 'Me to We' have however, portrayed an extremely favorable attitude towards youth development and engagement of their children in the programme.

*I am happy about the fact how she has become much more responsible. Its good to see the work that she is doing now. Her father initially didn't approve the same but she has managed to build that trust and confidence. Now, he does not mind it as much. I am happy my daughter is doing so well.*

- Neetu, 32 years , mother of Shilpa ( a Me to We beneficiary turned Pagdandi Community Coordinator )

*All I want for my granddaughter is a good life and overall development. She has learnt a lot over the last one year and I want her to continue the same.*

*Earlier, Ajit used to say things without thinking that would hurt me but he is now more sensitive to me and my thoughts. He has also become more responsible about his actions. I feel happy to see both my grandchildren grow like this.*

*- Parvati, 50 years, grandmother of Rajni and Ajit, two of the Me to We participants*

All the young people who were a part of Me to We played an essential role in creating community influence primarily through peer education and being more communicative. Practicums on enhancing communication and leadership skills while shedding the preexisting notions or stereotypes have aided them in being more open minded and free of prejudice in their daily lives.

#### 4. **Youth development field beyond the community**

##### a. Networking and exchanges:

Over the course of EMpower's Me to We programme, there has been a direct impact on the partnerships and collaborations with other organisations and institutions. These have not only helped us strengthen the existing relationships but also create and nurture new ones.

Our participants of Me to We were placed with organizations such as People Tree, Aarohan, KPM, Swechha Store and Protsahan. Not only did the participants have an enriching and learning experience with them, the organizations felt that the interns contributed constructively to their programmes.

*Parveen, a budding young leader was placed with Kid Powered Media, an organization that works with children through media. Her impressive work led the organization staff to offering her a part time job till she finishes her school and a full time opportunity thereafter.*

*Parveen is excited to begin her first job in August and support herself in her schooling.*

*Sonia and Anjali, two of the girls from Me to We were placed with Aarohan, an organization dedicated to the cause of education as teachers. They interned with the organization for two months and received extremely positive response from both the staff and the children. The organization head is keen to hire them as part time teachers for Aarohan once the logistics for the same are sorted.*

*Sonia and Anjali are certainly two of Me to We's biggest success stories considering their inhibitions and lack of confidence before the programme*

*started. Sonia's inhibitions stemmed from the fact that she slightly stutters while speaking. Her internship at Aarohan helped her gain the confidence that she never had and get exposed to the world of opportunities that she never knew existed for her.*

b. Influence on policies or programs

The creation of a network with other individuals, institutions and organizations has most definitely resulted in a positive impact on the programs of other organizations. Participants of 'Me to We' who were placed with other organizations as interns played an intrinsic role in scaling up their programs by contributing productively and completing their tasks with great dedication and commitment.

- i) Collaborations with other NGOs such as Aarohan and organisations such as Kid Powered Media and People Tree have been specifically rewarding for both the parties.
- ii) Given below are some extracts from the feedback given by the organisations for the interns

*\*Suraj is a talented photographer and an insightful thinker. He has a multitude of ideas that are valuable and essential to story writing and creative processes within a creative team like Kid Powered Media. When Suraj is interested in something, he does it with all his energy and effort.*

*- Jessie Hodges, Supervisor , Kid Powered Media*

\*As a media intern at KPM, Suraj was engaged in behind the Scenes photography, videography and content design for Behind the Scenes magazine. He also learnt and assisted in basic production assistance and video editing.

*\*Parveen is great at taking initiative, thinking two or three steps beyond the present, strategic thinking and multi-tasking, planning and organizing thoughts and tasks, and ensuring her plans turn into action. She is self-sufficient and adaptable and is a diligent worker who follows things through and puts pieces together on her own without having to be told twice (or sometimes even once). She has a gift for interacting with children and explaining things in a child-friendly way.*

*- Jessie Hodges, Supervisor , Kid Powered Media*

\*Parveen's tasks as the intern included support for Production team, coordinating and liaising with Lunchbox 17 for food and drink, logistics for transportation of actors, props and costumes

logistics for filming, hair and make-up of actresses, content design for Behind the Scenes magazine, basic accounting, helping to plan and teach Community Campaign classes.

*\*Monika is a very hard working and diligent girl. She is always ready to take initiative and a quick decision maker. The best quality that she possesses is of being result-oriented and finishing the tasks no matter what.*

*-Bunkim Chadha. Business Head, Swechha Store*

\*Monika worked with Swechha Store for a month and managed the warehouse, Her tasks included the tagging and placing of the finished products in the warehouse along with the overall inventory management.

*\*We have been very happy with the performance of both \*Sonia and Anjali at Aarohan. Initially, they were a little nervous but gradually they adapted well to the environment and gave their best. We would be happy to take this collaboration forward.*

*-Latika Reu, Programme Manager, Aarohan*

Sonia and Anjali were primarily engaged in teacher training during their tenure at Aarohan, a NGO that works on the issue of education with the children from neighboring communities.

- iii) Our organization has been nominated by the Sarvodya Kanya Vidhalya, Malviya Nagar to be a part of their Senior Management Committee. We have been invited keeping in mind the work that is being done in the community with the youth. Most of the adolescent girls from Me To We are the students of the same institution. While we are awaiting the final details for the same, Swechha's responsibility would be to be a part of the Social Audit meetings with the school management as and when it happens.

### **Challenges and Adjustments**

No great journey is ever complete without roadblocks and challenges. The first phase of Me to We had its own set of challenges. Some of the prominent challenges have been listed below.

1. Sustained and regular attendance has been one of the biggest challenges. The sharp drop in numbers in the 2nd module is a reflection of factors like academic pressure (13 attending tuitions and courses), social pressures (families curtailing participation of 6 girls) and financial pressures (7 working in the neighborhood).
2. The other challenge has been that of following the proposed timeline. Conscious changes were made to intersperse the theme-based sessions and practicum with skill building workshops, an exposure trip and job/internship opportunities to sustain interest and cater to the growing emotional, social and financial needs of the participants. Other factors like school events and examinations also required consideration in scheduling weekly sessions and practicum. The themes of

- problem-solving, conflict and leadership of the 2nd module were hence, not conducted as per schedule and were conducted in the 3rd quarter.
3. Perceptions and expectations of the family and community, towards and of the participations also affect their interest and ability to attend and participate whole-heartedly.
  4. Slow acceptance of parents of non-conventional employment opportunities such as media and theatre based internships which are not necessarily seen as income generating activities.

**The measures that have been taken and will be strengthened in the next phase are listed below -**

1. Consistent hand-holding through individual mentoring will continue especially with those participants who are timid, shy, less confident, etc.
2. Consistent family counseling especially for those participants who face more resistance from their families.
3. Short-term workshops for those unable to attend classes regularly due to job or study responsibilities.
4. Stronger and immediate industry linkages for those participants who need jobs will help fulfill their financial needs while developing their employability skills.
5. Developing confidence and courage in the participants to dream and aspire differently also needs to be done consciously to be able to change perceptions about conventional and non-conventional professions.

**Highlights of Me to We 2014-**

The first Cycle of Me to We has certainly left us with numerous highlights to cherish and celebrate. Listed below are few of those –

1. Sonia and Monika, two 18 year old sisters were placed with different organisations for internships. The work and interaction with others helped them understand the need of the higher education. Setting an example for their peers, both of them have enrolled themselves in Deshbandhu College of Delhi University for Hindi (H). With the beginning of the session, they are learning to travel themselves and handle the situations themselves. Both are determined to fend for themselves and are exploring opportunities for part time jobs.
2. Jyoti, one of the shyest participants of Me to We registered herself for Young Women Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme conducted by Swechha and supported by British Council. She diligently attended the week long training programme and is now set to start earning as a part of the employability programme by Swechha Store. Here is a smiling her from one of the skill building training sessions-

<https://www.facebook.com/SwechhaIndia/photos/pcb.10153006968932896/10153006762387896/?type=1&theater>

3. Suraj, who started as an intern at People Tree has started his journey towards entrepreneurship. Along with being paid for orders at People Tree and Swechha Store, he has also facilitated some of the jewellery making workshops for the younger children and the older women. Here is the link to take you to one of his first sessions- <https://vimeo.com/129742036>
4. Aakash, an actor and entertainer at heart bagged the lead role in a film on environment being directed by Kid Powered Media, a media based organization that works with the children from underprivileged backgrounds. The film is expected to be premiered in October 2015. Here is a click from behind the camera-  
<https://www.facebook.com/kidpoweredmedia/photos/a.318434581540093.8712.170452676338285/984380398278838/?type=1&theater>
5. About 25 kids from Me to We were a part of Azaad Pinjrey, Pagdandi's annual street theatre production. The show was performed across 5 locations in Delhi and was witnessed by over 1000 people.  
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152823488507896.1073741917.45017707895&type=3>
6. Suraj, a boy of few words but abundant ideas interned with Kid Powered Media and helped in the shooting of the film while brushing up his photography skills. On August 01, 2015, he and his photos were published in HT Mint, one of the English dailies as a photo essay. Here is a link to the story-  
<http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/TYSLkmLITLcnLVan24ITjM/Photo-Essay-Water-water-everywhere.html>

#### **Photo and Video Links –**

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152823488507896.1073741917.45017707895&type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152641474242896.1073741911.45017707895&type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152617321232896.1073741910.45017707895&type=3>  
<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152614802892896.1073741909.45017707895&type=3>

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.10152311796087896.1073741902.45017707895&type=3>



<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Pagdandi-Alternative-Learning-Space-for-Children/301980766497092>

**Conclusion-**

The first cycle of Me to We supported by EMpower has been an enriching journey towards empowerment and employability for the participants as well as the organization. The challenges and the barriers to the success of this programme were overcome by constant engagement with not just the participants but also their families.

The experiences of the first cycle have left us adequately prepared for the next cycle and the team is excited to start the Phase II to EMpower's Me to We.