

CONNECT @ SUKARYA

*Snapshot of its work in the communities of
Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan*

MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER

It gives me great pleasure to share with our patrons and friends the first of our revived quarterly newsletter. Through this unpredictable and challenging phase of COVID-19, our communities and staff have demonstrated the highest level of resilience as they battled personal and professional setbacks. Our teams constantly reinvented in order to stay relevant and we are grateful for the support of existing and new partners who have joined us on our journey.

As projects came to a sluggish empassé and fear and an impending infodemic took over, communities got caught in a vicious trap, unable to differentiate between credible information and misinformation. Sukarya stepped up its advocacy and contact with households to assure/appraise them on how existing programmes would be run and services provided in this 'new normal.' Making the switch to online platforms was swift, ensuring no break in the connect Sukarya shares with communities. Additional services related to psychosocial counselling, providing food and dry rations, medicines, hygiene kits and making referrals for jobs, medical services and handholding for vaccine registration, booking of cremation grounds, availing pensions and government benefits were ways of supporting those experiencing challenges on the ground.

Our teams have been working 24X7 to provide services and set up new streams for revenue generation, funding and partnerships. It has been heartbreaking to see people suffer. Sukarya is deeply saddened with the loss of one of its most compassionate patrons, Ankur Bhatia who succumbed to a cardiac arrest at the young age of 49 years. We are even more committed now to make sure human lives are not lost due to lack of timely medical attention. In the coming months new initiatives will be rolled out in this direction, especially related to digital health. We need all the support from CSR and other institutional partners as also volunteers who can bring unique skill sets to strengthen grassroots initiatives. Let us join hands and work towards a better tomorrow.

Meera Satpathy, Founder and Chairperson, Sukarya



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SURVIVING IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC

The pandemic has not spared anyone and women who have been hit hardest, especially those who are part of the urban slum ecosystem where most families are migrants and working in the unorganised sector. Sukarya's programmes have always kept women at the centre of their interventions.

The Urban Slum Health Action Programme (USHA) launched in 2014 in Gurugram and Delhi is one of Sukarya's flagship programmes that addresses malnutrition and anemia. It has grown manifold with monthly health clinics, specialised medical camps and doctors' visits to detect and treat anemia and malnutrition, ensure access to antenatal care and postnatal care services, register pregnant women for institutional deliveries and create awareness on exclusive breastfeeding, colostrum feeding and complementary feeding. Working closely with government frontline health workers, efforts are made to strengthen existing services and ensure last mile delivery. A lot of focus is on guiding communities to partake nutritious food and follow simple cooking techniques. The link between sanitation/ hygiene and health is constantly made. Frequent monitoring allows feedback to be incorporated. High satisfaction levels and improved health indicators are being recorded.

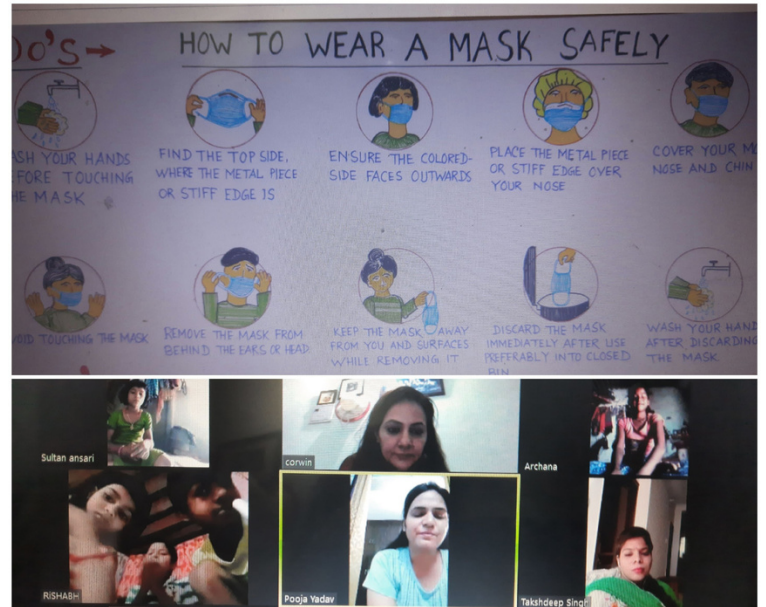
During the last 18 months many activities have turned virtual and gradually households visits are being resumed. Many of USHA's Community Health Workers are performing as Corona Warriors, going door-to-door for counselling and mapping health needs to ensure no break in services.



UPDATE ON SUKARYA'S ACTIVITIES

Making the transition to digital and online platforms

Across projects, on-ground teams took the online route to stay connected and encourage participatory interactions. Education on Wheels (EOW) classes switched to online execution with trainings for students/parents. Adolescent Girls Empowerment and Leadership Programme (AGELP) adapted to online training with enthusiasm. Awareness sessions on preventive behaviours in line with Government directives were held on maternal child health and nutrition, education and gender. COVID-19 vaccination awareness sessions through video and other digital formats saw busting of myths and misconceptions and urgency to get fully vaccinated.



Partnering government agencies in vaccine awareness programmes

To overcome vaccine hesitancy in slum colonies, Sukarya staff underwent training to enable them communicate right messaging to migrant communities, floating population and daily wage earners. Volunteers helped residents use Cowin app and register for vaccines. Many senior residents were accompanied to health centres to ensure vaccination process was smooth and hasslefree.



Between 15 April to 15 June

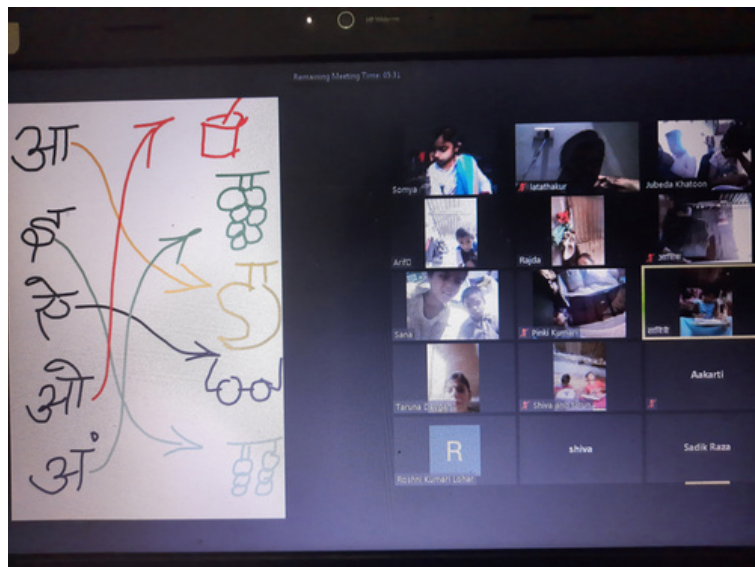
104 sessions on COVID-19 prevention

51 sessions on vaccine hesitancy

27 sessions on stigma and discrimination, anxiety and emotional wellbeing

Adding new sites for Education on Wheels project

Despite the pandemic, 91 students appeared in the Open Basic Examination through National Institute of Open Learning (NIOS) in February–March 2021. Expanding the work in informal education, four new project locations were added for EOW in Delhi. Efforts are ongoing to bring in new children and ensure older ones do not drop out of the next academic session in 2022.



Intensifying food and hygiene kit distribution drives

All through 1st and 2nd waves of the pandemic, Sukarya responded to community needs with distribution of dry food packets and hygiene kits (masks, gloves and sanitisers). The need of the community grew exponentially as people lost jobs, faced rise in medical expenses and return of family members which meant more mouths to feed. Sukarya stepped up its drive with donors to amplify distribution of dry ration kits. New partners like Give India stepped forward to donate generously. So far over 1000 food and hygiene kits have been distributed.



Commemorating special days

Even as the pandemic raged through the country, special days were commemorated to keep the spirit of involvement alive. World Health Day in collaboration with Government frontline workers on 7th April saw good virtual attendance with MCHN beneficiaries sharing accounts. AGELP and EOW project observed World Environment Day on 5th June with green champions advocating reduction of plastic, segregation of waste, use of dustbins and conservation of water.



INVEST IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BRINGING ABOUT GREATER GENDER PARITY

Since its inception Sukarya has prioritised efforts to upgrade quality of life of adolescent girls in urban slums. A strong cadre has been built under the Gender Equality programme for adolescent girls in the slum communities of Delhi and Gurugram.

Through the pandemic, adolescent girls benefitted from interactions with supervisors and adolescent leaders. They joined hands with government frontline workers to receive online training on COVID so they could dispel myths and misconceptions, reduce stigma and discrimination, strengthen vaccine uptake and change behaviours around protection. Counselling to adolescent girls on Adolescent Reproductive Sexual Health ARSH and issues of gender equality is continuing to make them behaviour change agents.



BENEFICIARY ACCOUNTS

Steadying Mona in her darkest hour with timely support

I was pregnant with my first child, my husband lost his job due to lockdown. We were migrants from Bihar with no family in the city. It was Sukarya and its team that kept my hope alive. From food, medicines, ensuring I completed my ANC, connecting me to local health workers for safe delivery and providing food right at my door step, has been overwhelming. Had it not been for them, I would have delivered an impoverished infant with growth retardation since I was severely anemic. Timely psychosocial counselling and support helped me brave through this phase of immense despair.



Psychosocial support to Rupesh helps the family pick up pieces of their life

My father, Santosh Bansal, resident of Dalit Ekta camp in Delhi, was a dedicated family man. When he passed away due to COVID-19 we just froze into a state of immobility. Our world came to an end and my mother, two younger siblings and I just did not know what to do. I am part of Sukarya's EOW programme. They heard about our situation and visited us and apprised themselves of our condition. In no time thanks to one of their donors, Give India we were getting daily dry food ration packets. Sukarya's counsellors spent considerable time counselling me and my mother. I am now back to attending classes and my mother has found part time work. We still feel lost without our father but with the support of so many around us we are finding a way to move forward.



Julie finds something to hold on to even when everything around her collapses

I was full of dreams when I got married and left my village in Bihar to join my husband in Delhi. Living in Rangpuri Pahari slum, each day has been a struggle. When COVID struck, my husband stopped getting work – he was an electrician on daily wages. I was working as part time domestic help and during the lockdown asked to stay at home (without salary). Struggling to make ends meet, one night a fire broke out in the slum destroying our hut and belongings. It was Sukarya's outreach team that assessed damage and arranged food, utensils, medicines and items of essential need. They also enrolled our two children in the EOW project and found a temporary job for my husband.



LOOKING AHEAD

Partnership with Home Science College

Enthusiastic student interns will be working with Sukarya as part of a pilot project with Department of Development Communication and Extension of Lady Irwin College in New Delhi. They will engage with different project teams to provide support in communication, research and implementation. Post the pilot, an MOU will be signed between the two institutions in 2022.

New digital health technologies in the pipeline

Sukarya is working towards adding new digital health technologies for the benefit of the communities in the urban slums. Several technology companies are working on pilot projects, details of which will be shared soon.

Markets for Sukarya's products

A wide range of food items prepared by women self help groups that are functioning under the guidance of Sukarya have a reasonably good sale. Sukarya is now trying to devise more B2C options that can showcase these products to a wider marketplace and enhance the income of women.

Skill trainings through self help groups is helping augment family income with household enterprises in pickle making, tailoring, organic food and mask making.

SUKARYA IN THE MEDIA AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Meera Satpathy was interviewed on All India Radio's prime time just before the Prime Minister's popular Mann ki Baat programme. The 10-minute interview was broadcast globally and was a great opportunity to share some of the work that Sukarya is doing especially its initiatives during the pandemic and how it reached marginalised communities with services (<https://sukarya.org/2021/06/27/serving-slum-communities-in-the-times-of-covid/>)



Sukarya's communications team is also showcasing its activities with inspiring impact stories across social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs and website). Access these on

