Keeping aspirations alive

The Akanksha Foundation is a non-profit organization providing children from low-income communities with a high-quality education, enabling them to maximize their potential and transform their lives. For over 28 years, Akanksha has educated children from low-income communities across Mumbai and Pune through The Akanksha School Project. One of the largest urban networks of public-private partnership schools in India, it runs 21 English medium schools in Mumbai and Pune, impacting over 9,000 children with the help of approximately 450 educators and have an alumni base of more than 3,000.

Team Akanksha came together to battle the impact of the virus and to support our children and their families through this tragic pandemic. The lockdown has rendered the families of our children jobless and without any income as a majority of them are daily wage workers. In order to support the vulnerable families of our children, we launched our COVID response initiative, Project Karuna with an aim to provide essential food supplies to the Akanksha families. We are striving to support the destitute families in Mumbai and Pune, not only by providing essentials, but also by ensuring the safety and well-being of our children and parents.

A task force team comprising of 10-15 members in both the cities is working in full swing to ensure the families of our students and alumni are well supported during this time of crisis. Our dedicated social workers are in touch with all Akanksha parents in the communities on a daily basis to support them in any way required. The team not only communicated the government guidelines, helpline numbers, lockdown updates, but also shared safety tips and precaution measures to be undertaken in the communities. The team has helped raised awareness on prevention of COVID-19 across communities by making powerful videos and spreading the message through the medium of What App. We have created an ecosystem for the support and mental well-being of the families. For ensuring smooth operation and logistics, the team structured the communities and identified the most vulnerable families to cater to first, and then to the other families.

So far, we have reached out to over 4,400 families across Pune and Mumbai.

Impact of Akanksha’s Project Karuna*

- Number of families reached: 4,424 across Mumbai & Pune
- Number of kits distributed: 6,686
- Number of communities supported: 50+
- Number of Akanksha alumni supported: 359

*numbers are as of May 2020

A task force out to distribute essentials during lockdown.

Durga didi from Laxmi Nagar School overcame every obstacle to ensure vulnerable families received their daily supplies timely. She opened her home to store the grocery kits and didn’t even complain once.
Lending a hand in hard times

Ziya bhaiyya is a known name in Abhyudaya Nagar School in Mumbai. With his assistance, we have conducted many health camps in the community. His son, Raza passed out from our school two years ago. In spite of that, even today; Ziya bhaiyya continues to strive to help our communities and is actively involved in multiple school projects.

Right at the beginning of the lockdown when everyone was panic-stricken, Ziya bhaiyya realized that the situation was grim and people were suffering as they faced a shortage of essential supplies. He took upon himself to make an exhaustive list of all the needy Akanksha families in the community under our social worker, Satish bhaiyya’s guidance. During this process, he also realized that not just Akanksha families but many other families were also struggling to meet ends. He reached out to multiple stakeholders who could help with procuring and distributing essential items to our communities.

The task force which was leading the grocery distribution in the community identified a vendor who could provide them with the items they needed. However, because of the shortage of workforce, there was an unprecedented delay in procurement. Ziya bhaiyya readied a team of 10 community members to help with the packing of the kits and the distribution. This expedited the process and our families received their essential supplies in time.

Ziya bhaiyya is also constantly in touch with homes which have reported positive cases or are under quarantine. He ensures that they have all the basic amenities they need and checks on them regularly.

Post-COVID-19 Strategy

Our plan for the forthcoming academic year is considering a staggered and partial reopening, while employing the Blended Learning approach in our school model. This is a blend of classroom-based pedagogical method of instruction with digital instruction for an interactive and transformative learning experience. It will also include blending online apps and tools with face-to-face in-person learning. It will be carried out with a focus on training parents as well as students on digital literacy for effective and safe use of technology. Through Blended Learning, we will seize the opportunity of bridging the technological inequalities and digitally empower our students and their families. We will integrate low-cost technology solutions relevant for children from low-income communities along with offline pedagogical practices.

- Saurabh Taneja
Chief Executive Officer
The Akanksha Foundation