

Astitva Jindal
Humsafar (We are Together)
International House London
India

Vision

The aim of the project is to break free from the stigma associated with mental health problems through starting a conversation amongst economically and socially deprived children at government schools in New Delhi, India. While this 8-week program will be a first step for these communities towards mental wellbeing, our aim is to highlight its importance to the school administration and create an opportunity for students to talk openly about their problems. We will measure the short-term impact of the project while ensuring a long-term solution.

The name '*Humsafar*' is an Urdu word, which literally means companion. Through this project, I want people to realize that they are not alone in this journey of mental peace and stability. The only way to fight is to stand together holding each other with love, encouragement and support.

Background

In India, 56 million people suffer from depression and another 38 million Indians suffer from anxiety disorders (Alka Gupta, 2021). The majority of young people aged 15 to 24 years believe that mental health issues should not be shared with others. Moreover, to add fuel to the fire, the COVID-19 pandemic has immensely impacted the mental wellbeing of individuals at a micro level. There was a steep rise in domestic violence and sexual harassment of women recorded after the national lockdown. The most vulnerable and sensitive to these issues are the children who live in such disruptive households. Apart from experiencing pressure and anxiety from exams, online classes and no social interactions, exposure to such an unhealthy environment can cause mental and emotional instability. Further, only 55% of children with low parental education received any learning support at home, compared to almost 90% of children with high parental education (Wilima Wadhwa, 2021).

It is well established that the most vulnerable group of children are the ones belonging to marginalized and economically backward households. The majority of children are students (aged 15 – 18) at local government schools, which rarely have any on-site mental health experts. In fact, unlike regular physical fitness examinations, conversations surrounding mental wellbeing do not exist. Teachers and school administration often neglect the emotional state of students in order to understand the real reason behind behavioral misconduct, low academic grades, and any other indicator of poor mental state. Through this project, our aim is to introduce the importance of mental wellbeing and steps towards a healthy mental state.

Description of the project

This 8-week program will consist of our core team interacting with students and conducting workshops at their school. The workshop material is developed by a New Delhi based mental health expert, Mrs. Sonal Ahuja, and a team of mental health experts. She is an experienced therapist working with children for more than 15 years now. She has worked in close proximity with Delhi Legal Services Authority to spread awareness against child abuse. Mrs. Ahuja has gracefully agreed to collaborate with me for this project. As part of our core team, we also have Mrs. Anamika Jindal, a Master Neurolinguistic Practitioner, working with children and women from financially and socially deprived households in New Delhi.

We will be targeting children at the lowest spectrum of the society and reach them out at Government

schools in Delhi. The project is divided into 4 phases:

Phase I: Target Groups: The project will start in March, building a team of mental health experts in India. The team will focus on finding the right school to suit the aim of the project. Factors to be considered include the financial and social status of the families, academic performance, and location of the schools. Our target group will include students aged 14 - 18 since they are most vulnerable and at risk of substance abuse, bad habit formation, stress, and anxiety.

Phase II: Problem Identification: Once the team has identified the school, they will start conversations with the principal, teachers, and parents. It is very important to understand the problem in depth to have significant impact.

Phase III: Program Building: Our specialists will start building an 8-week program to initiate the talk of mental health in the target schools. They will consider all the inputs from different primary sources and put it together to build weekly tasks. These tasks will give them means to understand the problem at an individual level.

Phase IV: Implementation: In June - July the final implementation of the project will start. We will hire volunteers and train them to interact with students and conduct workshops. The experts will provide performance indicators for the volunteers to record and measure the success of the project.

Goals and Indicators of success

Though the problem cannot be resolved in 8-weeks, this project will be the first step towards starting a conversation about mental health and topics around it. Indicators of success will focus on a niche area, that our experts will find. In order to measure the short-term impact, we will be working with drawing analysts. Drawing analyses is a good way to understand the mental state of any individual, especially children. Our team of analysts will ask all the students to complete a drawing in the first week and then the second week. Both the drawings of each child will be reviewed by an expert and recorded. A comprehensive report will be shared with the school at the end of the project. Our team will red flag any particular student that might need further help due to a serious condition. The school administration will be encouraged to share the report with the parents to take further steps and connect them with Mrs. Anamika Jindal, who has agreed to connect the students with right people.

Peace and Sustainability

Peace is often preserved as a political action, associated with terrorism and/or wars. However, the World Health Organization has indeed included the preservation of peace within the targets of Mental Health Promotion (G Christodoulou, 2021). The origin of all the violent acts is the human mind. The lack of access to basic social services (e.g., health care and education) can lead to a feeling of exclusion and unfair treatment amongst the underprivileged groups. These inequalities lead to grievances which in turn boil into conflicts and violence.

The past 2 years have been tough for the whole population, given the lockdown restrictions, rising deaths of loved ones, economic turmoil leading to job losses and lack of social services. The poor and the marginalized which includes cart-pullers, local vendors and daily wage workers are the most affected. These economic and societal pressures have led to increased domestic conflicts and uncertainty.

A positive and stable mental state has proven to be more productive and thereby increase economic growth. Instilling a sense of positive mindset and rational thought process will be enjoyed by the generations to come. This project will be the first step for unattended communities of New Delhi to regain their power of stability and happiness.

Name: Astitva Jindal
Project Name: Humsafar (We are Together)
School: International House London

Note: all funds in US dollars.

Projects for Peace grant: \$ 10,000.00
 Additional Funding, if any:
Total funding available: \$ 10,000.00

TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:
 \$ -

TOTAL EXPENDITURES:
 \$ 10,000.00

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
1000						1200	2300	5000	500
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 2,300.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 500.00

Total Student Expenses: \$ 1,000.00

Total Project Expenses: \$ 9,000.00



13/01/2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I would like to express my willingness to serve as a collaborator on your grant application project entitled 'Humsafar (We are together)' lead by Mr. Astitva Jindal.

The project will be completed in the months of June – August 2022 and I will contribute throughout the project time period. I will work with the project leader and provide my input on development of the mental health program, further collaborations with schools and mental health experts and other necessary work, subject to availability of time and resources.

I have read and understood the project proposal and the scope of the project. Therefore, I approve the collaboration for Project – Humsafar.

I look forward to this collaboration and bringing a difference.

Sincerely,

Sonal Ahuja

Director

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