

# Lock Down 2 and Beyond – MCF Journey



As lock down after lock down followed, the MCF had to expand its initial reaction of supporting families that required food rations. We saw the need to reach out to our communities, to give our children and their families much needed information, mental health solace, a sense of stability and direction. It was a steep learning curve for our team and the children as well.

First, we reached out to our staff, connecting with them on the phone – giving them a sense of purpose and belonging. They formed an important platform to explore and respond to some of anxiety and personal questions this new pandemic was raising. Each team member made a video of what they were feeling and how the lock down had changed their life. We shared these videos on WhatsApp and the team supported each other, building the feeling of community and creating a collective therapeutic space.

Next, we started calling the team and giving them small tasks to accomplish – like reaching out to children, collecting telephone numbers and speaking with children to ask how they were doing, to help them understand what the lockdown meant and ask how they were responding to it. Then our SOIR IM, Himmotthan , IRIS, Lisle and NSF teams joined daily meetings / talks on telephonic conference calls. The team then created tasks for not only themselves but also for the children: to create things out of waste material, to fix the dustbins they made, to speak with their grandparents and ask them about the environment and farming practices when they were young. Some children made masks for themselves and for their friends. In this way the team started socializing the children into understanding that during the COVID 19 pandemic, wearing masks, washing hands and physical distancing was of paramount importance.



By the 25<sup>th</sup> of April the team in Vikas Nagar (SOIR –IM Team and IRIS) team then started to meet on Zoom. In Bandal Ghati the internet connection is weak, so the Himmotthan ESI (Education and Sports Initiative) team, even today, continues to meet on telephone conference calls. Our Bandal Ghati team also had its first training through a conference call on Child participation and Child Rights. The MCF SOIR IM team met with the different partners through online meets organized by SOIR IM.

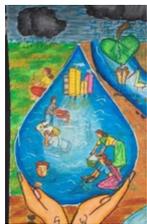
Our CHILDLINE team was given training on mental health and met with different experts on Zoom. The team continues to reach out to those children in need of care and protection and those families who needed food rations. The team started reaching out to the police and home guards on the street and distributed sanitisers to them since they were exposed the most and therefore required the most protection. It was also a way for outreach and build relations with the police. The team also went to some slum communities



and told them about the need for physical distancing and hand washing.



The NSF (Nucleus Software Foundation) team then reached out to their students. The process was slow but by the end of May we were able to reach 215 children through the telephone and are interacting with them on what they have learnt through the NSF classes. The children's parents were grateful for this interaction as they said the children had stopped studying but began again, when our facilitators called and started working with them. Not only did our facilitators speak about school-work with the children, they also discussed COVID 19 needs such as physical distancing and the importance of hand washing. Our team is also attending Zoom classes being hosted by Maths and English consultants Manoj Prasad and Shantanu Tandon every week.



As a way to engage and empower the children's personal expressions and their mental well-being, we conducted a drawing competition for children in our villages and some urban slum areas. A total of 598 children made drawings about the pandemic, the environment, their safety and their lives during this time. A panel of judges went through each drawing according to its merits and we then awarded prizes in most villages. In some areas where the drawings were exceptional, more awards were given. Each child will be given a certificate for participating. This competition was challenging for the facilitators and the children as they dealt with new ways of communicating and sending in their drawings.

This competition was held with children in 53 different places with children who are connected with us in all our programs - MCF SOIR IM Vikas Nagar, MCF IRIS Vikas Nagar, MCF NSF Vikas Nagar, Himmotthan Bandal Ghati, MCF CHILDLINE, - In Dehradun and MCF Lisle Ghat Chamoli.



Through this period we have reach out to 94 families with dry rations that had fallen through the gaps of government and NGO assistance although we first tried to link them with these different agencies. With the help of CHILDLINE India Foundation, we distributed 300 small and 25 large sanitizers to the police members who were on the streets and exposed to infection. With the help of NSF and ICA (Indians for Collective

Action, we were able to supply 740 girls and 30 women with sanitary napkins. Each team member was also given masks, sanitizers and in some cases gloves to keep them safe when they needed to interact with the children and community.



We are deeply grateful to all our partners— SOIR-IM, Indian for Collective Action, CHILDLINE India Foundation, IRIS KPO Resourcing (I) Pvt. Ltd, Nucleus Software Foundation, Lisle Foundation, Himmotthan - an Initiative of Tata Trusts and several individual donors - who have stood by us, the children and the community we serve; in this hour of need.

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