Safe Spaces Project

Year 1

MUDITA FOUNDATION IN COLLABORATION
WITH LAKSH FOUNDATION

Note from Laksh Foundation

Personally I was most apprehensive when approached by Neha two years ago. While this is a very pertinent topic, it is however delicate. I was concerned about the reactions from a totally male dominated community and was sincerely worried about a negative reaction.

Mudita's sensitivity in introducing several issues from domestic violence to child abuse has made this project so successful enabling them to expand the work to additional villages in their second year.

I am so grateful because not only have they created an awareness but are also training our young teacher trainees to take this forward and work towards a safer village for all.

Ila Lumba
Founder

Contents

Executive Summary

A journey of awareness, reflection, capacity-building and expression for a group of 33 adolescents and 5 young community teachers as they acknowledge the abuse and violence they see in their own village!

The impact of the year can be seen in the adolescent group as they evolve into safety champions. From being sure of safety or risk in the baseline, they now understand the complexity of these issues and their dependence on various factors. They identify the need to study these factors and behaviour in their village more.

At the end of the year, they listed that they had learnt about the following -

In terms of what they wanted to know or do in year 2, they listed the following -

How to keep myself safe

- Internet abuse
- Types of abuse
- Human trafficking
- Child Marriage
- Child sexual abuse
- Abuse on women / children
- Domestic violence

Need to know

- How to empower women
- More puppet shows in other villages
- Make people aware through puppets
- More on online abuse
- Laws
- Other issues of women
- Make my friends aware
- New games

The vision of a safe community is now a shared dream of the young safety champions, their parents and members of the community along with the two organisations that have partnered on this journey.
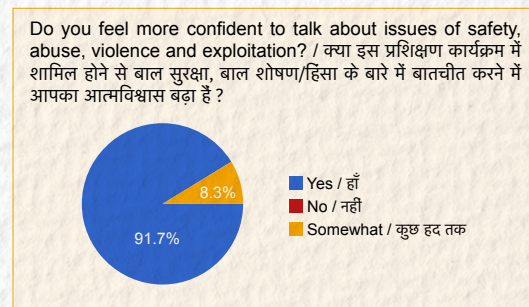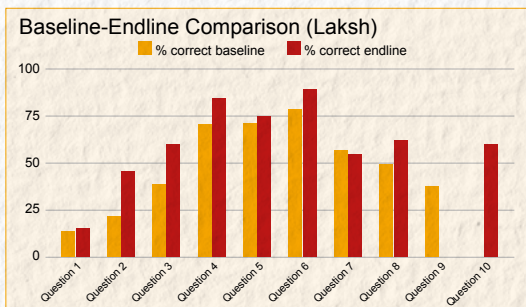
Background of the Project

Mudita Foundation's goal is to establish community level prevention and response mechanisms which are active and effective to tackle abuse, violence and exploitation against children and women. The approach is centered in engagment with communities to equip them with the information, skills and access to resources that can help them to make their own spaces free of violence.

In 2021, Mudita Foundation initiated a collaboration with Laksh Foundation which is based out of Faridabad District in Haryana and primarily focuses on providing free educational support by running rural tuition centers. Currently Laksh is working in 6 villages through 10 centers and reaching out to about 1500 children and adolescents in the age group 6 - 18 years. These centers are run by community youth as teacher trainees, most of whom have been students at these centers themselves.

This collaboration helped the Laksh team identify the need to build the capacity of its team of over 30 teacher trainees on identifying, tackling and responding to child abuse. As part of its Leher programmes, Mudita Foundation conducted a capacity building intervention on Creating Safe Spaces for Children'.

As a result of the training, the team was better equipped with information and confidence to initiate conversations on issues related to safety. The questions mentioned in graph 1 were based on facts and knowledge related to child abuse.

Baseline-Endline Comparison (Laksh)
- % correct baseline
- % correct endline

Do you feel more confident to talk about issues of safety, abuse, violence and exploitation? / क्या इस प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम में शामिल होने से बाल सुरक्षा, बाल शोषण/हिंसा के बारे में बातचीत करने में आपका आत्मविश्वास बढ़ा हैं ?

- Yes / हाँ — 91.7%
- No / नहीं
- Somewhat / कुछ हद तक — 8.3%

After the training, over 30 teachers started initiating regular conversations on safety with the children at the centers and began to integrate safety into their work at Laksh. Our continued interactions with the team helped us learn of the prevalence of child abuse in the forms such as corporal punishment, child marriage, child sexual abuse, domestic violence and child labour, in the villages and helped strengthen the commitment of the team towards making their communities safe.

Safety wall at Mangur Centre

Safe Spaces Project

As the next step, in 2022, a pilot project towards 'creating a safe space' in Mangar, one of the villages where Laksh Foundation has been running a learning center.
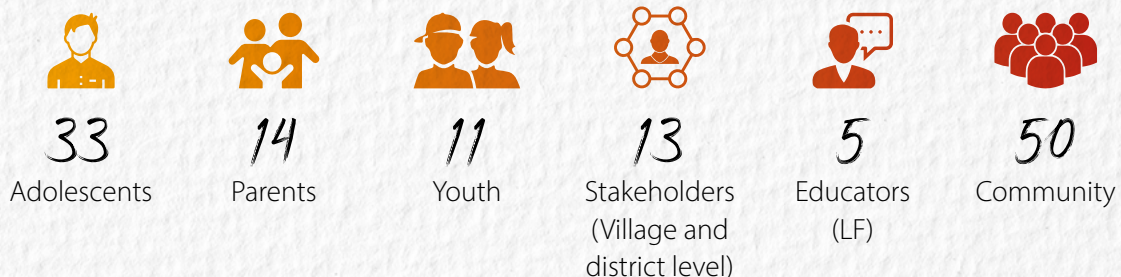
The key objectives of this project are to:

- **Create a physical "Safe Space" in the village** that is dedicated and always open to conversations and knowledge-sharing related to issues of safety and protection among children and adolescents.

- **Nurture awareness and capacity** among children, adolescents, parents, educators and community development practitioners using participatory and experiential tools, about the issues of safety of children and women from abuse, violence and exploitation.

- **Initiate Stakeholder Interactions** to create awareness within the community on existing child protection mechanisms and structures through interactions and dialogues with the concerned stakeholders.

- **Build capacity of the local partner organisation,** Laksh Foundation to integrate safety within their ongoing work at Mangar.

The outcomes desired from the project are -

- **Safety champions and advocates** for the safety of children, women and others who are vulnerable from amongst the adolescents, youth, parents and key stakeholders.

- **A community-based response mechanism** that is active and effective.

Outreach and Structure of the Programme

33	14	11	13	5	50
Adolescents	Parents	Youth	Stakeholders (Village and district level)	Educators (LF)	Community

Project Road-Map – Outline, Objectives, Activities, Impact

Group / Activities in each quarter	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4
Adolescents	2 sessions with adolescents	3 sessions with adolescents	2 sessions with adolescents	1 winter camp
2 sessions with adolescents				
Parents		1 meeting		1 meeting
Educators – LF Mangar Team	2 training sessions	1 training session	2 training / planning sessions	Puppetry camp
Youth	1 meeting			
Stakeholder Interactions	Mangar team with other teacher trainees visited govt. stakeholder offices – Child Welfare Committee, Mahila Mandal, Police station	Mangar teacher team and Mudita team met the School principals, Child Welfare Committee chairperson and Aanganwadi helpers from the village	Mangar team visited Cyber Cell	Mangar team and Mudita team had a meeting with Mangar Panchayat members and village Asha workers

Objective 1

Create a physical "Safe Space" in the village that is dedicated and always open to conversations and knowledge-sharing related to issues of safety and protection among children and adolescents

Activities:

a) Establishment of a physical 'safe space' at the Mangar center dedicated towards open conversations, awareness, resource and information sharing with a Safety Wall displaying important information.

b) A Parent-Teacher meeting, conceptualised by the Mudita team and executed by the Laksh team to give parent information on available child protection mechanisms and the Safe Spaces project

c) Meetings for all stakeholders were held in this space – Parent meetings, Meeting with Aanganwadi helpers, Panchayat members, Adolescent group meetings and the winter camp were held here

Outcome:

Close to 100 people (14 parents + 30 parents + 8 stakeholders + 35 adolescents + 12 teachers from Laksh (across centres)) knew about the Centre as a safe space

Children reflecting on the Puppet show

First parent session on identifying and acknowledging risk in their own village

PTM held in November 2022

Objective 2

Nurture awareness and capacity among children, adolescents, parents, educators and community development practitioners using participatory and experiential tools, about the issues of safety of children and women from abuse, violence and exploitation.

Activities:

a) 9 sessions done with adolescents and awareness on abuse (types and forms), child sexual abuse, online abuse and personal safety was created through the group.

b) A 3-day Puppetry camp held for 30 adolescents.

c) 2 sessions with parents during which they identified the risks in their village for children, realised they do not know about laws and protection mechanisms for children (other than the police and discussed the need for collective responsibility.

d) 1 session with youth.

Outcome:

A comparison of the baseline (B) and endline (E) data shows an increase in the number of adolescents who had accurate knowledge of factual data and confidence in the same.

भारत में शादी के लिए कानूनी रूप से न्यूनतम उम्र क्या है?	Baseline	Endline
लड़कियों और लड़कों दोनों के लिए 18	1	0
लड़कियों के लिए 18 और लड़कों के लिए 21	19	21
लड़कियों के लिए 16 और लड़कों के लिए 18	1	0
मालूम नहीं	0	0
भारत में काम करने, और जोखिम भरा काम करने के योग्य होने की न्यूनतम उम्र क्या है?	B	E
स्कूल के बाद बच्चे कोई भी काम कर सकते हैं	0	0
अगर काम जोखिम भरा हैं तो 14 साल के बाद, और सरल काम को 10 साल के बाद	0	0
अगर काम जोखिम भरा हैं तो 18 साल के बाद, और सरल काम को 14 साल के बाद	19	21
मालूम नहीं	2	0
बच्चे की सार्वभौमिक रूप से स्वीकृत परिभाषा क्या है?	B	E
18 साल के नीचे	16	20
14 साल के नीचे	5	1
जो दिखने समझने में छोटे हो	0	0
मालूम नहीं	0	0

क्या इंटरनेट पर बच्चों का यौन शोषण हो सकता है?	Baseline	Endline
YES	19	21
NO	0	0
DONT KNOW	2	0

Testimonials after the puppet camp

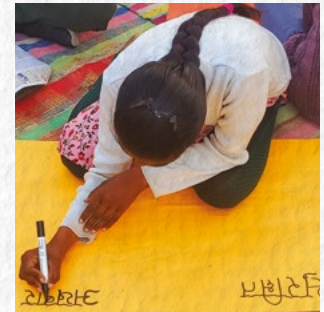*Creating a newspaper that talks about issues of safety and risk in their own village*

"मैंने यह कभी नहीं सोचा की कटपुतली बना पाउगी पर मैंने बना लिया। हमने गांव वालो को जाकर कटपुतली का गेम दिखाया मुझे बहुत अच्छा लगा ।"

"मुझे सबसे अच्छी बात यह लगी की आपने हमारे अंदर जागरूकता पैदा की। कुछ अच्छा करने की इच्छा जगाई। आप लोग हमारे गांव के लिए क्या-क्या कर रहे है यह बहुत अच्छी बात है ताकि लोग गांव में हो रहे इन अत्याचारों से सावधान हो जाये।"

"मैम मुझे चाहे तो गेम से बाहर कर सकती थी क्योंकि उस समय टीम दो दो बच्चो का समूह बनाये गए थे जब की मै अलग से एक थी उसने मुझे विश्वास दिया ।"

"हमें खेलो से बहुत ज्ञान प्राप्त हुआ है। और कटपुतली बनाने में और शोषण के बारे में बहुत ज्ञान प्राप्त हुआ है।"

Similarly the baseline for the parents (P) and youth (Y) brought out the following perceptions and level of awareness which reinforced the need for more sessions with these groups in year 2.

Session on Cyber Safety

Adolescents learning how to make puppets and creating their own puppet shows

Adolescent sessions showing games and other interactive tools

The first ever puppet show on issues of safety being held in the village 'chaupal'

क्या आपके इलाके के बच्चे (0-18 वर्ष) समुदाय में शोषण या हिंसा के खतरे से खुद को असुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं?	Parents	Youth
YES	0	0
NO	9	3
DONT KNOW	0	6
क्या आपके समुदाय में बच्चे इंटरनेट का इस्तेमाल करते समय असुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं?	Parents	Youth
YES	0	3
NO	2	0
DONT KNOW	7	6
महिलाओं और बच्चों की शोषण या हिंसा से सुरक्षा करने वाले भारतीय कानूनों के बारे में आप किस हद तक जानते हैं?	Parents	Youth
0 (बिलकुल जानकारी नहीं है)	9	1
1 (बस कुछ कानूनों के नाम मालूम है)		8
2 (कानूनों के बारे में कुछ हद तक जानकारी है)		
3 (पूरी जानकारी है)		
क्या आप जानते हैं कि शोषण का सामना कर रहे बच्चों की मदद कौन सी सरकारी संस्थाएँ कर सकती हैं?	Parents	Youth
(know nothing) किसी एक के बारे में भी नहीं जानते	0	0
(know just the police) पुलिस के अतिरिक्त अन्य के बारे में नहीं जानते	10	3
(know more than one) पुलिस और सीडब्लूसी/डीसीपीयू/सीपीसी/चाइल्डलाइन में से किसी एक को जानते हैं	0	5
Asking prompt (know most) अधिकांश संस्थाओं को जानते हैं	0	1

Meeting with CWC Chairperson (Faridabad District)

Objective 3

Initiate Stakeholder Interactions to create awareness within the community on existing child protection mechanisms and structures through interactions and dialogues with the concerned stakeholders.

Activities:

a) A Puppet show with 4 short stories was held as a culmination of the Puppetry Camp.

b) Meetings with Principals of the Primary and the Senior School in the village, with the two Asha workers and with the newly elected Panchayat members.

c) Initiating contact with district level stakeholders – District Child Protection Unit, Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Cyber Cell and others.

Outcome:

1) Over 50 children, youth and adults witnessed the first ever puppet show on stories related to domestic violence, child marriage, bullying and online abuse / exploitation.

2) First time interactions with district and village level stakeholders, initiated by the Laksh teacher team.

3) Continued communication with CWC chairperson.

4) Committed support from Panchayat and Asha workers for the project Openness expressed by school principals to have awareness sessions in school.

Meeting with Panchayat members (Mangar)

Objective 4

Build capacity of the local partner organisation, Laksh Foundation to integrate safety within their ongoing work at Mangar.

Activities:

a) Fortnightly sessions with the Mangar team are being conducted and safety has been integrated into the work of the centre and the organisation - even the PTM centred around sharing information on child protection.

b) Two meetings with whole Laksh team on identifying key stakeholders for for child protection.

c   Safety core team to drive the programme across all centers – they attended trainings and winter camp and worked to integrate safety issues into their centres.

d) 10+ sessions on topics related to personal safety (safe and unsafe behaviour, trust circle, child abuse, cyber safety, human trafficking) in Mangar and all other centres.

e) Online discussion on understanding risks in other regions of Haryana with other NGOs working in the state.

Outcome:

1) 5 teachers in Mangar team are aware, informed, committed to working towards child protection.

2) Increased awareness within the Mangar team about the existing child protection response structure at the government level – they know where to go to for help.

3) Increased skill and confidence in the Mangar team members in initiating conversations with children, parents and stakeholders through home visits, meetings, sessions with younger children at the Mangar Centre.

4) Integration of safety issues and sessions into their monthly programme at each centre.

5) Finding synergy and shared commitment with other field organisations working on gender-based violence and learning from their experience.

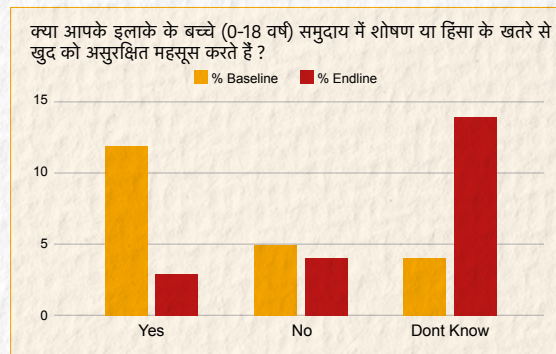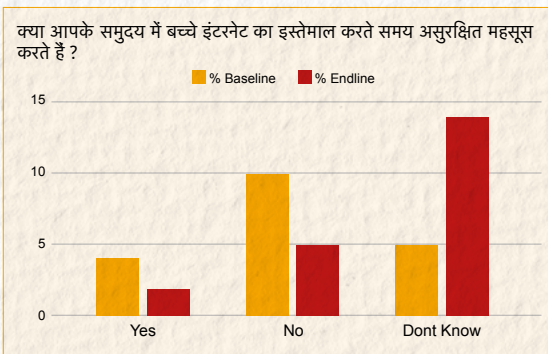*Core team of teacher trainees preparing for the puppet show*

Training with the whole Laksh Foundation teacher team
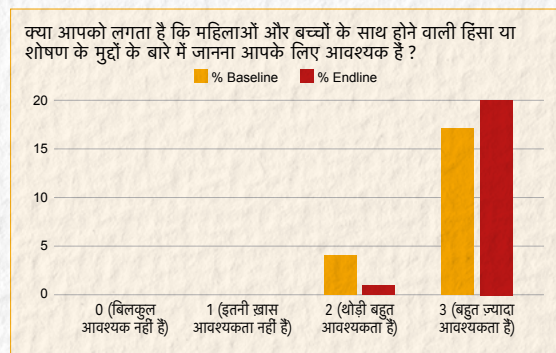
Impact of Year 1

Impact - Adolescents

The adolescent group are the real drivers of this project as they evolve into safety champions. From the first session in May 2022 to the 10th interaction with them to end Year 1, the group has grown in many ways. From being sure of safety or risk in the baseline, they now understand the complexity of these issues and their dependence on various factors. They identify the need to study these factors and behaviour in their village more.

क्या आपके समुदय में बच्चे इंटरनेट का इस्तेमाल करते समय असुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं ?

क्या आपके इलाके के बच्चे (0-18 वर्ष) समुदाय में शोषण या हिंसा के खतरे से खुद को असुरक्षित महसूस करते हैं ?

At the start of the project, very few had attended any training on issues related to child sexual abuse (2 had attended), online abuse and exploitation (7 had attended) and human trafficking (2 had attended). However, the need for the same was felt by all of them.

क्या आपको लगता है कि महिलाओं और बच्चों के साथ होने वाली हिंसा या शोषण के मुद्दों के बारे में जानना आपके लिए आवश्यक है ?

In terms of knowledge, during the endline all knew correctly the legal age for marriage and for work and the law for protection of children from sexual offences – POCSO. There is clarity on the age of a child and what human trafficking is. What is most encouraging is that false notions about child sexual abuse have also changed through the year. For example –

लड़के लैंगिक शोषण का शिकार नहीं हो सकते.	Baseline	Endline
TRUE	10	0
FALSE	4	21
DON'T KNOW	7	0

In the end-of-year reflection they identified what they have learnt and what they would like to know –

WHAT I LEARNT -

- How to keep myself safe (3 children)
- Internet abuse (5 children) - false friends on the internet and the risk
- Types of abuse (4 children)
- About Human trafficking (3 children)
- Child Marriage (3 children) - the age of marriage
- Child sexual abuse (2 children)
- Abuse on women / children
- Domestic violence

WHAT I WANT TO KNOW / DO -

- How to empower women
- More puppet shows in other villages
- Make people aware through puppets
- More on online abuse
- Laws
- Other issues of women
- Make my friends aware
- New games

What they still need to know or explore further are the legal framework and the child protection mechanisms of the state. While these have been mentioned in the sessions, visits to district stakeholders and discussions will help them to understand these in depth.

The teachers of Mangar centre have also grown in skill, perspective and awareness in the context of the project. From learning skills of conducting non-competitive games to documenting to networking with government and other stakeholders, the team is deeply committed to the vision of a safe space and a safe community for everyone.

Challenges

Various factors have influenced the progress and impact of the project and we hope to work towards addressing these in Year 2.

- Attendance of children
- Difficulty in being able to meet some Govt. stakeholders despite regular follow-ups
- Change in school team at the senior school
- Difficulty in getting parents to attend programmes
- Attrition of teachers across Laksh team

Year two is going to focus on meetings with parents at neighbourhood level, community events and a core team of adolescents and teachers driving the group at Mangar even as the project now expands to two new villages.

CONCLUSION -

Building resilience in the context of abuse and violence includes being prepared with information on risks and protection mechanisms; having a space for expression and solidarity; building a collective identity as a group, a community and taking responsibility for everyone's safety. The Safe Spaces project has taken sure and certain steps towards building resilience amongst the adolescents and children in Mangar by working consistently with them. Building resilience also includes building community-based response mechanisms to ensure the protection of all children. This is what the project aspires to do by inculcating collective responsibility in all stakeholders and bringing them together fulfilling this responsibility, as we move ahead into year 2.

Registered address:

6, CSC, Sector B-1, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi 110070
E mudita@muditafoundation.in   **W** www.muditafoundation.in
M +91-9810015625 / 9971076326